

# **English Ice Hockey Association 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting**

## **Company Report to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022**



# Who are the EIHA?

The English Ice Hockey Association is the National Governing Body for ice hockey in England and Wales. Its purpose is to promote and provide opportunities for people of all ages to take part in the exhilarating sport of ice hockey.

The EIHA is member owned organisation. All of our members are involved in ice hockey and play a key part in delivery of the Association's objects.

The EIHA is made up of a Board of Directors who hold voluntary appointments and who lead on strategic direction and a vast number of volunteers who deliver the Company's operations and underpin everything we do.

This past year our work as a governing body has been split into four key areas:

- Retain & grow participation at all levels
- Begin to create a world-class talent system
- Develop and enhance our infrastructure
- Set-out to become a high performing NGB



# EIHA Board of Directors



Mohammed Ashraff  
Chair



Gary Apsley  
Board Director



Barrie Archer  
Board Director



Thomas Lillie  
Board Director



Andrew Miller  
Board Director



Daniel Smith  
Board Director



# Board Chair's Report

It is fair to say the period this report covers, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022, was one of the most challenging for our sport and, as I reflect on the past year, I am reminded of the quote from Rudyard Kipling “If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you, if you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, but make allowance for their doubting too.”



Our aim for this period was to establish a safe and effective start to the 2021/22 season and ensure the survival of the sport and of the rink operators and we achieved many milestones: -

- Ensure a full season to be run at all levels
- Continue with key services such as fixtures, discipline, registration, and safeguarding
- Remove historical barriers to allow clubs, players, coaches and volunteers to participate
- Flexibility in ensuing fixtures were played
- Absorbing increased costs

I make no apologies for paying tribute to the rink operators who have managed numerous challenges because of the knock on effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Without them, we do not have a sport, and I am eternally thankful that we have most of our rinks open.

No annual report would be complete without also paying tribute to the thousands of club volunteers and coaches who gave up their time to create playing experiences for so many. These experiences, facilitated by you, have never been more important.

There are still hurdles to overcome, but my hope is, that with the support and dedication of EIHA membership and our new members of staff, we can look forward to a brighter future.





# NIHL

The NIHL returned in 2021/22 to deliver a full calendar of events including league, league cup and challenge cup across five divisions. Additional flexibility was provided to teams during the period whilst players were isolating due to covid as the impact of the pandemic presented challenges to clubs through the year.

The season culminated in the five playoff events across England to showcase the best of the respective divisions.

The league has continued to recruit volunteers to support operations behind the scenes including online platforms that will see a video hub for all divisions provided for 2022/23 in addition to the InStat performance analysis platform for the NIHL National Division. Our thanks to Tony Lack for his long term support of the NIHL who decided to step down from his role in July 2022.





# WNIHL

This season has been a learning and building year. We have seen the creation of the WNIHL Programme Team, and welcomed the newly formed Bristol Huskies into the WPL, as well as an entry into WD1 for Whitley Bay, to compliment their established Elite squad.

We've also created the WNIHL Development Cup, in partnership with the EIHA Rec Section. Hopefully this new initiative will continue to grow and provide opportunities for those new to ice hockey to learn and develop.

The WNIHL Playoff Weekend was a resounding success over the Jubilee bank holiday weekend and we received an approved 5 new applications for teams to join our WNIHL 2 North and South, and U16s divisions.

Finally we re-branded our divisions to provide more consistency with the NIHL senior divisions: WNIHL Elite, WNIHL1, WNIHL2



# Juniors

There were a number of positives for the last year including the introduction of the Puck Stop/Bauer Netminder loan programme and the distribution of video analysis systems for each junior team. The jamborees make a significant impact on providing young people access to shared opportunities and the national finals were a positive celebration of junior hockey.

The situation with fixtures proved challenging internally; the delay with being able to publish the fixtures was undoubtedly disappointing and the EIHA apologise unreservedly for the disruption caused.

It is important to thank Tony Lack for all his work with fixtures historically and for Gary Dent for stepping in to salvage the situation.

It is also important to thank the Junior Management Committee for all of their hard work, especially during the 21/22 season in order to ensure that junior hockey was able to be delivered with minimal disruption.





# Universities

The BUIHA had specific challenges having had little student activity for 18 months that also spanned two undergraduate recruitment periods. This has presented two specific challenges in the experience of student leaders to deliver activities who may not have experienced a full year of regular activity and the retention of students entering their second year of studies who were not engaged within their first year.

During the 2021/22 season, to take account of these uncertainties, the regular season was delivered as a challenge cup series where teams

could arrange fixtures flexibly around their changing circumstances whilst still providing valued competition. The season culminated in the National Championships weekend at Ice Sheffield which saw the trial of a new two-phase format to support more competitive fixtures that will be continued in 2022/23.

2021/22 also saw the return of the development camp in Vieramaki, Finland, which was delayed from January to June 2022 in addition to continuing preparations for the World University Games in Lake Placid in January 2023.



# Recreational hockey

Rec hockey returned from Covid at a slower rate than other areas of the sport. This was an agreed approach with concerns for its members and the potential return of the virus.

Our three Annual tournaments were cancelled, instead relying on clubs running their own competitions, with our support, thus enabling the sport to come back to life. It proved to be a successful approach as we have now returned to a much healthier state, exceeding pre pandemic levels with over 4000+ players now registered.

Whilst the EIHA Board can be said to have had a tumultuous year, the Rec 4 executive officials were re-elected unanimously to keep the ship on a stable course.

There has been a shift in Rec hockey's playing schedule with the majority of teams now playing the game year round. Reasons for this are twofold. Firstly the Gentleman's agreement of league in the winter and Rec in the summer was no longer working as teams stretched their league schedules past the agreed 1 May cut off date.

Secondly ice rink managers themselves wanted to ensure that all available ice was being used as they tried to recover from the Pandemic. As was said at an Ice Rink Managers Association meeting, "Rec is a Godsend, they commit to 12 months of the year and are very little hassle".

The way forward seems to be quite clear, as teams will continue to develop at this level which is seen by many as the biggest growth area of the sport. Next year our three major weekends will return.

Rec hockey remains affiliated to the EIHA after frank and open discussions with the new Board were very positive. There is little doubt that Rec will continue to support the sport financially, as it is now the biggest contributor with the lowest budget.

This is not an issue as Rec looks at the sport as a whole and being realistic, the present set of juniors coming through are the next generation of Rec players.







# Officials

The relationship with IHUKR (referee section) continues to grow; it has been highlighted that there is a need to recruit more officials within the organisation and the EIHA are working with the IHUKR to develop new recruitment streams to this important area of operation. The EIHA are working with IHUKR to revisit the costs of officiating to the members and new prices for season 22/23 will be available before the commencement of the season.





# Discipline

The discipline section has grown to include a representative for each league structure. Since the last reporting period the level of work has increased as the EIHA has returned to play following the COVID pandemic. The discipline team have appointed an Appeals Chair to hear all appeals to supplementary discipline matters; George Ellison is a Barrister of Law and has previous experience working in this field within other sports and will be a valued asset to the organisation.



# Safeguarding



The safeguarding team continues to develop with the appointment of our first SEND safeguarding lead and the team has developed to offer support to all clubs with the EIHA community.



The team continues to work in partnership with Vibrant Nation to ensure all those requiring Data Baring Service (DBS) are completed in a timely manner and the EIHA has access to an up-to-date record of all DBS held within the organisations.



# Inclusion and diversity

A new section has been created to look at inclusion and diversity within the sport. Whilst in its early stages, the EIHA are committed to explore ways in which accessibility to the sport can be widened for communities that are currently underrepresented. During the 22/23 season roles and responsibilities for the section will be released, along with a step-by-step plan to assist clubs with recruitment in these underrepresented communities.





# Education section

Having set-out in August 2021 a plan to bring about the transformational change to the EIHA's Coach and Education Programme (CEP) that was long overdue, the scope of work required and existing workload of our small team of senior coaches and managers, who were all busy with their roles at club level, proved to be a major challenge to find the time to get the work done.

We knew that we needed to bring a fresh approach to the training and support for our volunteers if we are to deliver the improvements in capability and performance that everyone wanted to see implemented and this took time to establish.

At a strategic level the main piece of work that has been undertaken without much visibility involves a review and drafting of a strategic plan under the working title "Volunteer Game Plan". This was presented as a draft document at the Board meeting in May. It is not yet complete and is based on the considerable work done over the past four or five years around the theme of coaching development and alignment with National Standards for Coaches and the deployment of coaches in sports settings.

These National Standards will drive our Volunteer Education to new levels of ability and performance.

Since late March, the strategic work being considered is now supported by UK Coaching and a number of consultants who have been engaged to undertake pieces of work that will enable the EIHA to up-skill existing and recruit new volunteers who will be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the demands of the modern game.

At the same time, the EIHA's senior Coach Leadership Team (CLT) has been reviewing the legacy ice hockey specific course content used for coach education and have undertaken a needs and wants assessment based on the current understanding of coaching in EIHA member clubs. The following phased action plan is being implemented for the transformation of Coach Education from where they are now, to where we want them to be in the next three years.



We have reviewed the Coach Pathway with the intention of modernising and aligning it with UK Coaching designated roles. The EIHA's new designated roles for Coaches are:

- Foundation Coach (new entry level coach role)
- Assistant Coach (formerly Level 1)
- Team Coach (formerly Level 2)
- Advanced Coach (formerly Level 3)
- High Performance Team Coach (formerly Level 3)
- Elite Performance Team Coach (formerly Level 4+)
- Master Coach (Formerly Level 5+)

Underpinning the new designated roles will be the introduction of, and alignment with, recognised coach education content that meets the requirements of Sport England. The EIHA has established partnerships with UK Coaching and Bob's Business who will provide a new level of support to the EIHA's Coach and Education Sections and will support our training ambitions with online content in both course and webinar content.

The most significant aspect of this new partnering arrangement is that ALL EIHA registered volunteers will have free access for the 2022/23 season to the online training modules that make-up the new **minimum standards** as part of their EIHA registration

This is major step forward in the EIHA demonstrating financial support to our Member Clubs as well as making a substantial investment in volunteer development for the first time in more than a decade.

More information will be provided on the developments for coaching and our other volunteer groups in the next few months but we are now on our way to bringing about UK Sport/UK Coaching recognition for our coach community credentials which has been on the EIHA's agenda for the past ten years and until now had not been delivered.





# Manager programme

The Manager Programme has undergone a major transformation in the last year which culminated in the two manager recertification training events held in July and where more than 200 managers were recertified and trained to the association's new minimum standards.

We did encounter some push-back from certain quarters of the Association's manager and club community but in the end the feedback we received following the events was very supportive of the new content and collaboration with Coaching, Elite Pathways, Safeguarding, Discipline, Officiating, Athlete Development and Wellbeing is established on a solid footing and the programme is moving forward at pace.

Another major piece of work has been the creation of the Manager Steering Group and resumption of the Manager Forum. Both initiatives have been working well to improve communications and support to managers as well as redefining the manager pathway which was issued in March 2022.

There is more development work currently in progress with advanced manager courses and new training and development workshops for Club Officers. Expect news on these in the New Year.





# Volunteer Force 2021/22

Designation	Registered
Level 1 Coach	195
Level 2 Coach	325
Level 3+ Coach	21
Manager	143
Manager+	79
CPO (DSL)	9
Medical Professional	17
Off-Ice Team Official	78
Off-Ice Game Official	123
<b>Total</b>	<b>990</b>

A plan to develop the volunteer workforce has been drafted as part of the Association’s ambition to further support clubs and provide development opportunities.

We would like to thank all EIHA volunteers that support our programmes and all registered volunteers at clubs. You are vital to the success of the sport. We truly appreciate all the hard work and time you put in.





# Showcase



The EIHA's old Conference Programme was rebooted last January and became **Showcase** with the restated aim to allow players to 'showcase' their skills and capabilities in regional teams. The age groupings were changed and the annual tournament was held at Ice Sheffield which was widely regarded as a success. There were some significant challenges around the timing and the decision not to extend an invitation to the Scottish Association's teams.

Due to a change in the approach to ice provision to National Governing Bodies under Ice Sheffield's legacy arrangements with Sport England, the continuance of the Showcase programme is placed in doubt. This issue has become a greater concern with the recent economic challenge which is facing all householders in the UK. The EIHA have secured some ice time in the diary for 2023 and there may be opportunities for a regional competition, but members should note that the EIHA is mindful of the costs which are substantial and value for money and affordability of participation are primary concerns at this time. Of course it is acknowledged that the omission or postponement of Showcase will have an impact on the development of players. This continues to present a real and significant challenge to the association and Board.

A final decision is expected to be made in December 2022.



# England programme

There are a number of challenges around maintaining and providing the opportunities for player development within the England programme. In particular, the costs for hosting ENTP and events are substantial and face rising pressure.

In 2022 the ENTP development events were planned for U13, U14, U15, U17 boys, U23 men and U13 and U17 girls. Plans for other age teams are currently on hold due to concerns over budget.

As part of the ambitions for player retention in the Association's playing programmes, we hosted Denmark U23's in a two-game series. The events received a mixed reaction from spectators and on-lookers but a very positive reaction from players and staff. We were able to see exactly how a top-tier Nation operated and we made some significant strides forward with our development of coaching staff and players. We are using the experiences and lessons learned to great effect and shall roll-out the benefits of those learnings going forward.

For 2023, the ENTP will be continuing and plans are in progress for spring and summer events internationally which has been made possible due to lifting of Covid restrictions.

The full and complete resumption of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 development events has not been possible due to limitations on ice time and the availability of staff. It is recognised that there has previously been a huge support for the Stage 1 and 2 events such as Mighty Mites, All Stars and Power of events. Members are advised that a re-start of these initiatives can be expected to commence in Q1/2023.





# Athlete Development Team

The Athlete Development Team (ADT) was seen as a major success in the ENTP and Showcase events this past year, largely due to the work begun by Alex Green who regrettably resigned from his post. The ADT has continued on and provides support to the Elite Player Pathways as originally intended and the team is split in to two main roles; Sports Therapy and Strength & Conditioning.

The team has produced a plan to roll-out work with club teams. This is currently under consideration due to economic uncertainty and questions around financial viability. But there is a desire and willingness to roll-out to Clubs in due course.

In addition, work on the development of a First Aid course and a refresher of the EIHA Head Check (Concussion) Protocol is in progress and is one of the Association's top priorities.

# Athlete Wellbeing Team

The redefined Athlete Wellbeing Team, now led by Sara Vernon, will provide a joined-up approach between the safeguarding and welfare programmes, and the athlete development and wellbeing programmes. We are now beginning to consider the wider dynamics of athlete development as we move towards becoming more player focused than ever before.

With the appointment of new Advocates in a voluntary capacity, we have increased the resources to deliver support to the playing programmes and, in time and once the learning modules are more accessible and available with specific content, the Wellbeing Team will join the Athlete Development Team to offer a wider supporting role to clubs.

We intend to roll-out these new initiatives in 2023.



# Legal and external affairs

Work is well underway to prepare new articles of association for the EIHA to modernise our governing documents to better serve our membership and the interests of the association more effectively. A consultation exercise is planned in the coming months so each member will have the opportunity to contribute to this process before the new articles are presented for approval in 2023.





# External stakeholders

It should be for the benefit of all participants in our sport for its governing bodies to work effectively together, with mutual support and respect, to develop and grow our sport and to work with other stakeholders across the community.

The EIHA maintains many key relationships with external stakeholders, including:

Ice Hockey UK (IHUK) - the EIHA is a member of IHUK, the sport's national governing body. Over the last year we have supported a number of initiatives. Supporting IHUK in winning significant new funding

for our sport. We seek to represent the interests of our members with IHUK and the parts of the sport that are under the IHUK umbrella, including the management of the UK Referee Section and managing the IIHF International Transfer Card (ITC) system. A number of exciting opportunities are planned in partnership with IHUK in the coming year.

EIHA is working to enhance relationships with other ice hockey stakeholders within the UK beyond, such as the Scottish Ice Hockey Association and the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF).





# Sport England

In December 2021 EIHA were delighted to announce funding of £465,000 over three years from Sport England. This money is to fund the EIHA staffing resource to manage the organisation's operational challenges, modernise and support with COVID recovery. This investment will enable the EIHA Board to focus on strategy development and governance reforms. This should help establish the organisation as a high performing NGB.

In April 2022 we were granted £30k to provide sport survival funding to assist with governance and business transformation within the sport, specifically within EIHA affiliated clubs.





# Communications, digital and marketing



The EIHA are committed to improving communications. With Craig Simpson resigning, the media strategy is currently in transition and has been taken in-house. A strategic approach will be developed in early 2023.



The introduction of Spordle as replacement for fixtures live has proved challenging but will be fully implemented by January 2023, bringing with it a comprehensive membership and game management system.



A new brand identity will be launched in 2023 to bring greater consistency across the EIHA portfolio. Work is underway to bring the website up to date so that information is more easily accessible.

# Finance

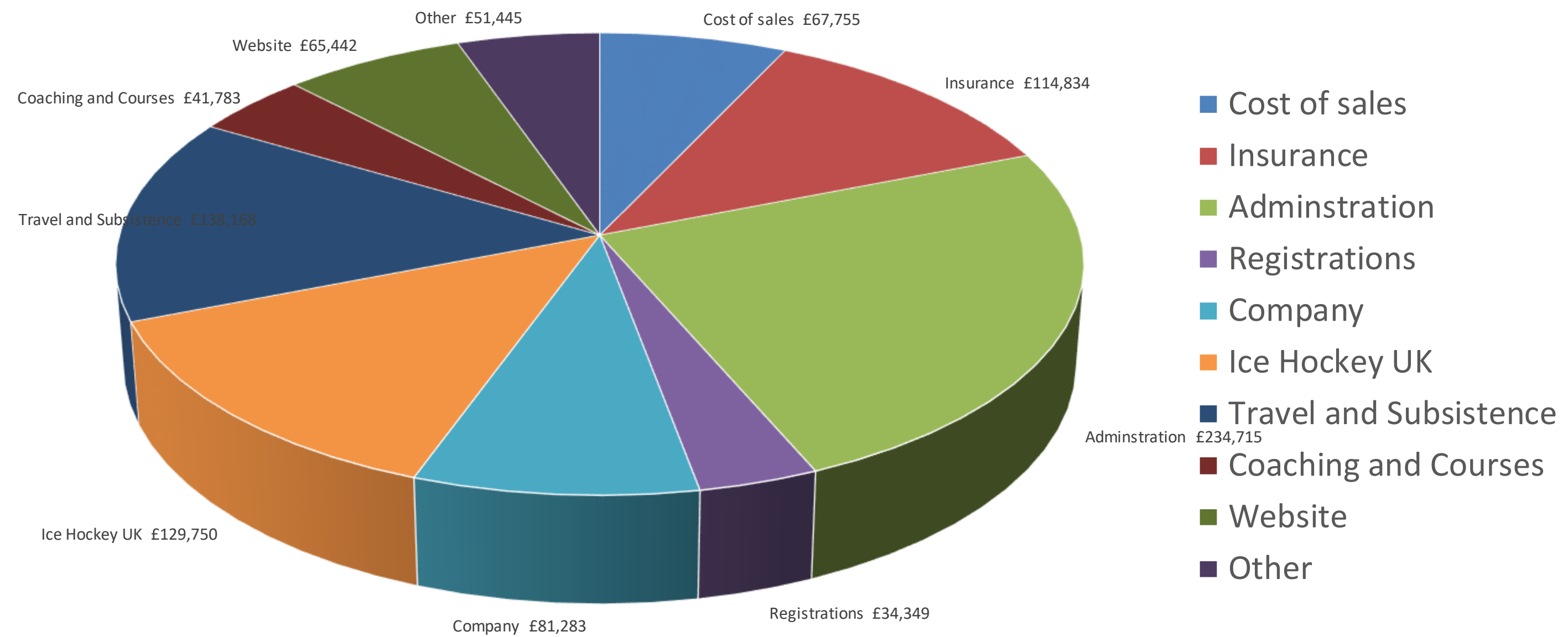
The association has moved to a position to have a centralised accounting function that includes all operating costs for the association including regional and other costs that were previously excluded from our auditing processes.

This has seen a significant increase in our turnover but provides greater transparency to our organisational finances to the membership.

	<b>2022</b> £	<b>2021</b> £
Turnover	959,524	355,735
Surplus	1,117	(280,155)
Members Fund	342,055	340,945







# Thank you

