

SFN Team · Nov 22, 2024

Squash Ireland: New Branding and Initiatives to Drive Squash Forward



New logo of Squash Ireland

In an insightful conversation with Markus Gaebel of the Squash Facilities Network, Scott Graham, CEO of Squash Ireland, shared details about the federation's recent rebranding efforts, new programs, and future plans for developing squash in Ireland.

Comprehensive Rebranding for a Modern Look

To reposition squash as an exciting and vibrant sport for a younger audience, Squash Ireland embarked on an extensive rebranding journey. "Our previous identity was outdated and no longer reflected the dynamism and uniqueness of squash," explained Scott Graham. The old branding had remained unchanged for over a decade, prompting the need for a fresh, modern approach.



Squash Ireland's dynamic new branding, featuring colorful "bubbles" symbolizing the immersive environment of a squash court

The new logo is at the heart of this transformation, featuring colourful "bubbles" that represent the immersive nature of the squash court. "When you step into a squash court and close the door behind you, you're in a unique environment where the ball can be in front, beside, behind, or above you. This is something truly special about squash and sets it apart from other racket sports," noted Graham.

Digital-First Branding Strategy

In addition to the logo, Squash Ireland has developed a comprehensive suite of brand assets designed specifically for digital platforms and social media. "We've introduced animations, graphics, and cohesive color schemes to create a vibrant and consistent visual identity," said Graham. These assets not only enhance the federation's online presence but are also utilized at events to strengthen brand recognition.

Boost in Online Presence and Engagement

The impact of the rebranding is already evident. Visits to the newly launched, mobile-friendly website have doubled, thanks to its user-centric design and integration with membership systems, event calendars, and rankings. "Our social media channels have also seen remarkable growth, with reach and engagement doubling or even tripling on some platforms," shared Graham.

Squash Ireland has also ventured into TikTok to connect with younger demographics. "Being present where young people spend their time is essential. TikTok allows us to showcase squash in a fun and creative way," he added.

An Edgy, Startup-Like Approach

Describing Squash Ireland's approach, Graham remarked, "We're like an 89-year-old startup. While we have a rich history, we're embracing bold, innovative ideas to stand out." This mentality is reflected in the new brand identity and the federation's future plans.

Supporting Clubs and Facilities

Clubs are central to Squash Ireland's strategy. Alongside the rebranding, the federation has developed a range of resources to support clubs, including templates for constitutions, funding guides, and advice for setting up junior sections. Clubs can also book consultations with development officers for tailored support. "We aim to equip clubs with everything they need to grow and thrive," said Graham.

In addition to supporting traditional member-based clubs, Squash Ireland is committed to working closely with facility managers, including those operating pay-as-you-go models. "We are an all-island body so the focus is equally on development and support in both the Republic and Northern Ireland.

'We want to develop closer relationships with facilities in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Within Northern Ireland, many facilities are run by councils rather than traditional clubs,' Graham noted.

To enhance these relationships, Squash Ireland is recruiting a development officer for Northern Ireland. One of their key responsibilities will be building partnerships with councils to improve court accessibility and ensure courts are actively used. "We're aiming for a balance between member-based setups and flexible pay-as-you-go options, allowing more people to engage with the sport, whether they are regular players or just trying it out for the first time," Graham added.

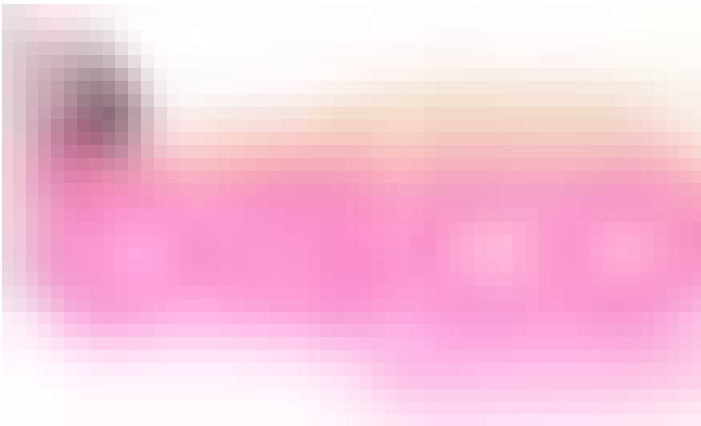
Innovative Programs to Attract New Players

To complement the rebranding, Squash Ireland has launched new initiatives aimed at bringing fresh faces to the sport:

- **HIT Squash:** A six-week high-intensity fitness program tailored for women, combining cardio workouts with squash skills. "It's a fun way for women to get fit while trying out the sport," explained Graham.



- **Disco Squash:** A program designed for teenage girls, blending squash with music and a lively atmosphere to engage this demographic.

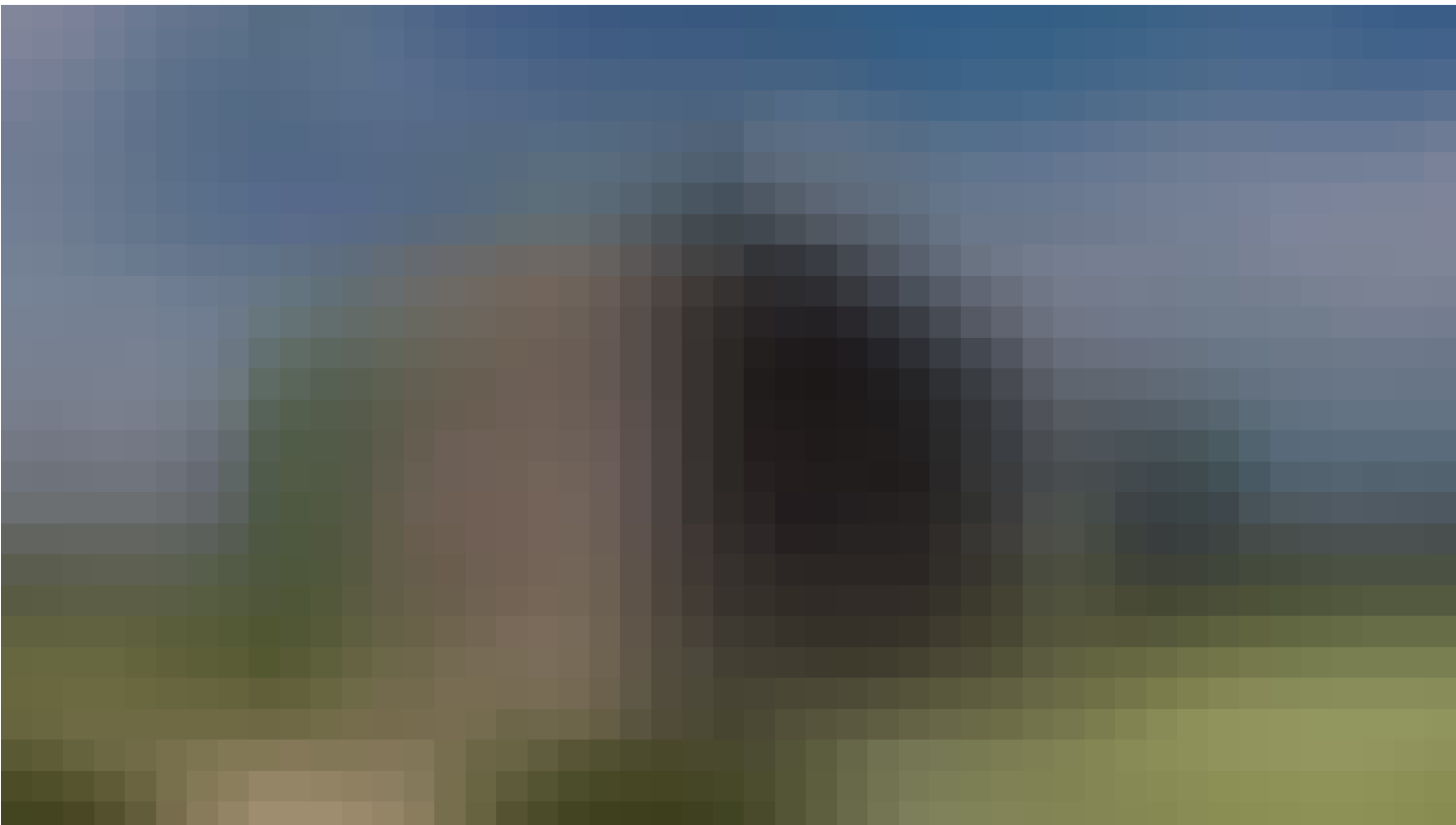


- **Social Squash Tour:** A series of one-day events held across Ireland where people meet, play squash, socialize, and have fun. "Everyone plays everyone. No winners or losers, no final ranking. Just a lot of games, chats, and fun!" said Graham. The initiative has been a resounding success, with 28 beginner females attending the first pilot tournament.

These initiatives are being piloted in select clubs and will be expanded nationwide to attract more members.

Success in Infrastructure Funding

Squash Ireland has also made significant strides in improving squash infrastructure across the country. Despite narrowly missing out on funding for a national squash center, Graham remains optimistic. "We’ve completed a lot of groundwork, and we’re on the reserve list. This positions us well to move quickly when funding becomes available," he said.



Design of the new Athlone Squash Club

Several clubs have already secured substantial grants:

- **Athlone Squash Club:** €480,000 for building multiple courts.
- **Ballina Squash Club:** Over €525,000 for facility development.
- **Glenville Squash Club:** €15,000+ for court upgrades.
- **Freshford Squash Club:** Nearly €16,000 for court improvements.
- **Sligo St. Bridget's Hall in Tubbercurry:** Over €24,000 for infrastructure enhancements.

In total, over €1 million in funding has been directed toward squash facilities. "We actively support clubs in their grant applications and work closely with local authorities and universities to promote the sport," Graham emphasized.

Looking Ahead and International Collaboration

As Squash Ireland continues to innovate at home, the federation is also making strides on the global stage. At the upcoming elections during the WSF Annual Meeting in Hong Kong, Squash Ireland President Rosie Barry will run for a VP position within the World Squash Federation. "She has a clear vision for the sport and would bring innovative ideas to the global squash community," Graham stated.

Through its comprehensive rebranding, innovative programs, and significant investment in infrastructure, Squash Ireland is setting new standards for growing the sport. The modern brand identity and focus on younger demographics are already driving results in online engagement and member interest. With a strong emphasis on supporting clubs and facilities, the federation is ensuring a sustainable future for squash in Ireland while positioning itself as a leader in the global squash community.

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