

ALL-ISLAND FORUM PUBLICATION

Playing Fair: The Role of sport and leisure in our lives



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Foreword

Co-operation Ireland works to promote practical co-operation between the people of Northern Ireland and of the Republic of Ireland. Its programmes are aimed at youth and school groups, community organisations, local authorities, the media and business networking organisations.

The Local Authority Programme has as its vision the building of strong sustainable relationships and aims to advance mutual understanding and respect through co-operation between local authorities on the island of Ireland.

The Local Authority All-Island Steering Forum was established in January 2002, under Co-operation Ireland's Local Authority Linkages Programme. The Forum is a partnership of representatives, five in each case, from Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and County and City Managers' Association (CCMA). The establishment of the Forum is intended to formalise relationships and to encourage strategic sustainable approaches to cross-border co-operation. Co-operation Ireland provides the secretariat support.

The work of the Forum to date has focused on providing learning, leadership and shared best practice for the discussion and development of integrated approaches to issues which affect the whole island. The network created through the projects led by the Forum is island-wide, rather than regional. It has also included many examples of intersectoral / interdepartmental partnerships.

It is the belief of Co-operation Ireland that working with and supporting the work of the Forum will lead to an ability to find a harmonious way to share the island, protect the environment, create outward looking healthy communities and make best use of resources.

This Booklet is the work of the Recreational Facilities Sub-Group, which had for its brief the examination of models of best practice in the provision of recreational facilities. Its membership drew on the expertise from Local Authorities North and South, and Co-operation Ireland has facilitated meetings of senior Council officials to prepare a series of study papers relating to current and potential sport, recreation, arts and cultural issues being faced by Local Authorities on the island of Ireland.

Papers were prepared by individual or paired officers and presented to members of the Sub-Group. The group commissioned an independent Consultant to review and add relevant and comparative material, including examples of best practice. Five core topics were identified and substantive papers were prepared on each topic:-

1. Arts, Culture and Local Government in Ireland
2. Sport and Leisure - Accessibility and Participation
3. Sport and Social Issues in Ireland
4. Sport – Building Community Cohesion and Capacity
5. The Changing Scene of Leisure Facility Provision and Management in Ireland

Some of the issues relate to cross-cutting themes such as planning; healthy living; anti-social behaviour; community development; capacity; accessibility; cost and resources; strategic local provision; standards of provision and the current and proposed policy and strategic direction of relevant Government Departments and the respective Sports Councils.

It is our hope that these papers will stimulate further discussion and debate across the entire island and create positive opportunities to continue with similar initiatives into the future.

We thank all concerned in the completion of this work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ned Gleeson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Ned' and the last name 'Gleeson' clearly distinguishable.

Ned Gleeson

Chair of the Recreation Facilities Sub-group & Limerick County Manager

Playing Fair: The Role of sport and leisure in our lives

A sincere thank you to the members of the Recreation Facilities Sub-Group who gave so generously of their time, knowledge and skills in compiling this publication. Thanks also to Jim Sanderson of Leisure NI for his work on the publication.

Recreation Facilities Sub-Group Members:

Chairs: Ned Gleeson, Limerick County Council and Liam Hannaway, Banbridge District Council

Members: Tom Barry, Carlow County Council, Tom Enright, Limerick County Council Senan Turnbull, Fingal County Council, Michael John, Ballymoney Borough Council, Sharon O' Connor, Down District Council, Daniel McSorley, Omagh District Council, Gerard Houlahan, Armagh District Council and Paul Tamati, Banbridge District Council.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Sheridan', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Peter Sheridan, OBE

Chief Executive

Co-operation Ireland

The Changing Scene of Leisure Facility Provision and Management in Ireland

Leisure Provision

Direct Local Authority Provision Northern Ireland

Leisure provision in Northern Ireland (NI) is predominantly a traditional local authority directly funded activity. Each of the 26 local councils has made direct provision of a range of indoor and outdoor sport and recreation facilities and amenities. There is a statutory obligation placed on NI Councils under the Recreation and Youth Service (NI Order) 1986 which re-enacts the previous 1973 Order to:

“secure the provision for its area of adequate facilities for recreational, social, physical and cultural activities and for that purpose may, either alone or together with another District Council or any other person:

- establish, maintain and manage such facilities;
- organise any such activities;
- assist by financial contributions or otherwise any person to establish, maintain and manage any such facilities or to organise any such activities;
- provide, or assist by financial contribution or otherwise in the provision of leaders for such activities; defray or contribute towards the expenses of any such persons taking part in such activities.”

In recent years, this direct provision has extended to a range of cultural facilities.

Within the UK and Northern Ireland local authority setting, leisure is a discretionary service usually delivered by District or Unitary Councils. As such, levels of provision have developed incrementally and vary significantly according to the priority placed on the service at a local level. Estimates of the number of these facilities vary. A survey by the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (newly named the Institute for Sports, Parks and Leisure) (2005) suggests there are 1,642. The type of provision and quality of service also varies significantly.

Many of the facilities in both NI and GB mainland are showing signs of their success and usage but also conversely signs of major lack of investment. The current average age of the facilities is 25 years, which is greater than an assumed economic life of 21 years. A number of local councils are already in the process of major refurbishment or replacement and it is at this time that some are considering alternative procurement options such as Private Finance Initiative and Private Public Partnerships. In addition, the opportunity to consider alternative management options has arisen.

This lack of investment has resulted in the number of users of the traditional ‘leisure centre’ falling as out dated facilities begin to appear unattractive to consumers whose expectations have been raised by better, newer private sector facilities. (Attendance at Local Authority provided facilities in 2000 – 318m, in 2003 – 305m).¹ There is evidence to suggest, however, that where Local Authorities are investing in facilities it is resulting in a net increase in participation. For example, the estimated fitness membership

¹ Leisure Database Co: State of the Industry 2000-2003

of the UK's 3,738 public sports centres (including dual use) rose to 2.9% in 2003, just over 2.5million people, representing 4.3% of the UK's population.²

A Leisure Database report shows that new facility development in the public sector, (primarily focused on investment in facilities co-located with education through the education investment programme), is outstripping that in the private sector and for the first time since 1980, in 2003 there were almost as many private health club closures, (75), as there were openings, (89).³

With investment required in the local authority owned leisure estate and limited capital funding sources available, there is a clear need to engage more closely with the private 'owner operator market' to facilitate investment. Although recent growth has slowed, most operators agree that there is further untapped demand in the market. Recent results published by the Fitness Industry Association shows that market penetration in UK continues to grow (12%) with the feeling in the industry that saturation point has not yet been reached.

A number of issues relating to future investment in local council facilities in NI include the Review of Public Administration (RPA); Competing internal priorities for limited financial resources; Lack of Central Government funds; Lottery Funds being focussed/redirected to 2012 Olympic Games.

Funding programmes such as the NI BIG Lottery PE and Sport Fund assisted projects linked with schools to make provision, which was to ultimately benefit both school children and local communities. The potential for joint provision between Councils and schools was opened through this programme as was that of dual use arrangements of the new facilities.

The lack of capital resources places councils in the position of having to consider alternative funding mechanisms and potential partnership working with the private/commercial sector.

Examples emerging include commercial operators of fitness centres entering partnership agreements with councils to refurbish or build new fitness facilities on the basis of achieving a medium-long term management contract on the facility.

Inevitably, there are significantly improved facilities provided and the associated commercial management ethos to ensure bottom line profit but perhaps more importantly, satisfied customers.

In the lead in to RPA and the success of a number of councils in their bids for Lottery Olympic funding, some councils are currently considering private sector involvement in Design, Build, Manage and Operate (DBMO) contracts.

The Irish Sports Council began to operate as an executive agency on 1 July 1999 and since then the profile of sport and physical activity has significantly improved. The role of local authorities in the development of sport through the establishment and management of Sports Partnerships has likewise seen major transformation in the role of sport in local communities.

The National Lottery-funded Sports Capital Programme (SCP), which is advertised on an annual basis, allocates

funding to projects that are directly related to the provision of sports facilities and are of a capital nature. This means that the project must involve:

- Improving or building an asset; or
- Buying non-personal sports equipment that will be used for at least five years.

² Fitness Industry Association – State of the Industry Report 2004

³ Leisure Database Co: State of the Industry 2000-2003

Funding can be allocated to the following organisations under the programme:

- Voluntary and community organisations, including sports clubs;
- National governing bodies of sport and third level education institutions, where it is evident that the proposed facility will contribute to the regional and/or national sporting infrastructure; and in certain circumstances, primary and post-primary schools, VECs and local authorities.

Grant-aid from the Exchequer is made available to local authorities and bodies supported by local authorities, through the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme (LASPP) towards the cost of providing new swimming pools or refurbishing of existing pools. Applications are invited in response to an open call for projects within a set timeframe. As stated above the programme has been affected by interruptions to its implementation. The capital grant from the department is capped at 3 million and has been set at this amount for a number of years despite the rising construction costs.

Joint Provision/Dual Use

Another route for leisure and recreation provision is through the development and dual-use of facilities provided on Education sites. There are approximately 2,100 such centres in GB and a number now have been established in NI. Community use is usually restricted to evenings, weekends and school holidays. Although the concept of dual-use is not new, developments in this sector in NI have only recently (in the last 5 – 10 years) been accepted as an economical, cost-effective and community focussed method of providing facilities. Further opportunities lie ahead for joint provision on education sites because Government investment in sport and leisure is being increasingly channelled through Education service providers through the Big Lottery Fund, Building Schools for the Future programme and the Private Finance Initiative.

Fingal County Council

Historically the design and provision of full sports facilities in schools, especially at primary level, has been limited.

Department of Education and Science standards now require the provision of ‘General Purpose Rooms’ in all new schools but these can be as small as 70 meters square and up to 195 meters for 16 classroom schools which cater for over 400 young people.

Access to these facilities by the general public outside of school times is generally very limited and where granted is only suitable for some activities given the floor space and ceiling heights of 3.5 metres.

Fingal County Council has entered into an agreement with the Department of Education and Science whereby new schools to be built in the County will have halls of 600 meters with 7 metre ceiling heights together with associated changing and storage facilities.

These will enhance the capacity of the school to provide wider PE programmes and will benefit sports clubs and leisure interests with access to high quality facilities at their peak demand times.

A number of other local authorities are now following this model.

Keady High School, Armagh

A process that began in the late 1990's and involved all sections of the local community, was completed in May 2005 when the Keady Recreation Centre was opened as part of Keady High School's infrastructure.

Funding was secured in 2001 from Sports Council Lottery Fund and increased to over £1.3m through an innovative partnership agreement with Armagh City and District Council which enables the wider community to avail of the superb facilities.

This "Dual-use" scheme has released the school's existing 500m² games hall and changing facilities for public use and the funding has created a state of the art synthetic pitch with floodlighting, a new four changing room pavilion with meeting room, a new grass pitch and a two floor fitness suite.



Commercial/Private Sector

In the UK there was very little private sector (management contractor) or voluntary sector (Leisure Trust) activity in the local authority leisure facility sector until CCT was introduced in 1988. Leisure Management was a 'defined activity' in the Local Government Act and as such councils could not manage services in-house unless the service had been subjected to competitive tender. Opportunity for private sector interest and engagement in councils' leisure management was created by the legislation.

The experience in NI however, was that little interest was expressed by the private sector initially and there was no critical mass of facilities to ensure viability. The local reluctance for CCT introduction in leisure services was supported at a political level and the legislation did not really take effect.

The time that has passed has allowed local authorities to view the private sector not as a threat but more of a commercial partner who can provide much needed financial resources to improve existing leisure stock. With this comes the need to consider different management options whether through direct local authority management; private sector management or by the establishment of a leisure trust.

The commercial sector has been established in ROI for a long period in the form of commercial "private members' clubs" such as fitness, health and racquet club centres and also through hotels offering limited public access to their "residents' " health and fitness facilities.

A number of Councils have already entered partnership arrangements for the management and operation of fitness and health suites. Some have also entered DBMO / PPP (Design, Build, Manage and Operate and Public/Private Partnership) arrangements and attracted private sector capital investment in the process.

The commercial fitness and health centres have tended to be centred in areas with large population catchments and generally in affluent markets, but what has emerged since the introduction of the DAST funding programmes and the development of leisure centres in provincial towns and cities is the emergence of a private sector operator industry with many of the new-build projects now involving the private sector in their design, build and/or management. Some local authorities, however, operate their own facilities.

Kingfisher Club, Waterford

The new club is a public/private partnership between the Kingfisher Franchise and the City Council. The Group has a prominent base of leisure and fitness centres in the west of Ireland. Its facilities in Waterford include:

- 25 metre 6 lane swimming pool
- Children's Pool
- Sauna, Steam Room & Hydrotherapy Pool
- State of the Art, 100 piece, gym facility
- Cafe
- Crèches
- Meeting Room
- Full equipped Resistance training area
- 2 Studios incorporating a full studio timetable
- Outdoor Astroturf facility available for two 5 a side football pitches
- 2 Outdoor Astroturf tennis courts
- Separate Team changing facilities
- 3 Outdoor Pitches
- Over 60 pieces of CV equipment incorporating Cardio theatre equipment
- Sportshall – available for all indoor sports, and available for international basketball matches (seats 200)
- Spa : Incorporating Sauna, Steam Room, Experience Showers, Ice Fountain, Heated Benches, 8 Treatment areas



Aura Leisure - Letterkenny

Aura Leisure operates 11 centres throughout Ireland on behalf of local authorities and offers “Pay as you Go” options which cater for users who do not wish to pay club joining fees.

Facilities at Letterkenny include:

- 25 metre pool and Learner pool
- Kiddies' fun pool
- Two twister adventure water slides
- Large multi-purpose sports hall suitable for various indoor sports
- Large fitness gym
- Aerobics studio
- Health suite
- Full size all weather pitch
- Junior soccer pitch
- Tartan running track



The Changing Scene of Leisure Facility Provision and Management

This development is addressing, to some extent, the marginalised sections of the community who could not, for reasons such as cost, lack of transport and programming, access the private sector facilities. The model now in operation in RoI mirrors to a great degree the experience in GB with private sector operators over the last 15 – 20 years.

Whether it continues as the dominant management option will become evident in future years.

Leisure Facility Management

The table below illustrates the current GB market position in relation to the management of the 1,642 (non dual-use) facilities. In recent years the growth of the private sector contractors has been steady, even static. It is the not for profit leisure trusts that have increased market share substantially.

Market Share of Leisure Facility Management in GB

Form of Management	Market Share
Managed in-house	611 (37%)
Managed by private sector contractor	386 (24%)
Managed by not for profit Trust	645 (39%)

Direct Management

Facility provision in N I has to some degree been as a result of Government's financial enticement and intervention to political unrest and the strategic approach of providing alternative activities for youth to participate in which would distract and remove them from the "front-line" anti-social activities. Having secured substantial capital funding support from central government, local councils have been responsible for the financial management, employee recruitment/management, maintenance and further development, and programming of such facilities.

Social Enterprises/Leisure Trusts

Social enterprises are businesses set up to tackle a social or environmental need. Whilst many commercial businesses would consider themselves to have social objectives, social enterprises are distinctive because their social or environmental purpose is central to the work that they do. Their aim is to generate profit which is then used to further their social and environmental goals, rather than to maximise shareholder value.

Recent government data suggests that there are more than 55,000 social enterprises in the UK with a combined turnover of £27bn. Social enterprises account for 5% of all businesses with employees, and contribute £8.4billion per year to the UK economy.

The social enterprise movement is inclusive and extremely diverse, encompassing organisations such as leisure trusts, development trusts, community enterprises, co-operatives, housing associations and 'social firms'. These businesses operate across a wide range of industries and sectors from health and social care, to renewable energy, recycling and fair trade.

One strand of the social enterprise "industry" is that of Leisure Trusts. Over the period 2003 – 08 on GB mainland, there has been a significant increase in the number of leisure sites managed by Leisure Trusts - from 367 to over 920 (125% in 5 years).

Date	Total No of Trust-managed sites	% increase
As of Jan 2003	367	
As of Jan 2004	457	24.5%
As of Jan 2005	567	24%
As of Jul 2005 ½ yr	645	14%
As of January 2008	800 +	24%
As of June 2008 ½ yr	920	15%

Sporta

These sites have a combined annual turnover in excess of £625 million, attract more than 210 million customers each year and employ over 26,000 employees.⁴

To date, no leisure trusts have been established in NI and similarly, no leisure trusts operate in RoI as legislation is not in place.

Private Sector

As referred to earlier, the private sector has not yet secured a contract to manage council leisure centres in NI, however, a partnership has already been established in a number of facilities where the private sector operate (and have invested in) new fitness facilities.

In RoI, a number of private sector leisure operators have management contracts on local authority facilities. The term of the contracts vary up to 20+years.

Partnership – Healthy Living Centres

Grove Health and Well-being Centre

The Grove Health and Well-being Centre in North Belfast is a flagship regeneration development on brownfield land which incorporates a range of services which serve one of the most deprived areas in the City.

The Centre brings together a number of providers including Belfast City Council, Belfast Health and Social Services Trust and Belfast Education and Library Board in a partnership to provide facilities in a one-stop environment. The facilities include GP surgeries, a full range of community health services, a day centre for the elderly, leisure centre, library and retail pharmacy.



It is anticipated that the development will build stronger communities through a focus on integrated health, fitness and information. Further investment is planned for wider regeneration projects including housing, retail schemes and environmental enhancements.

⁴ Sporta

Operational Issues

When considering the operational responsibilities of local government leisure departments, combined with the abundance of recreational facilities in NI, it stands to reason why leisure and recreational employees make up a significant proportion of any council structure in NI.

In the attempt to operate these facilities in a cost effective and equitable manner a significant amount of corporate and strategic leadership is required to compliment the day to day necessity of competent and qualified front line staff. Therefore, when considering the staffing structures of leisure departments in NI there are often a number of levels and chains of command that evolve as a result.

In RoI, due to the fact that many of the local authority facilities are managed by the private sector, staffing structures are more commercially aligned.

On closer inspection of service delivery there have been a number of measures imposed on managers over the years with the aim of delivering quality services. These initiatives have been driven at corporate level and rolled out through various departments and sections. Examples of these measures are quality management initiatives such as 'Best Value', 'Charter Mark', ISO 9000 and more recently 'Quest'.

Whilst there are arguments that consider the quality award process to be merely a paper exercise, council to council partnerships in the form of benchmarking groups have led to the collation of National performance indicators in an attempt to stimulate better performance through knowledge sharing. A closer look at current operational practises sees public sector leisure facilities increasingly developing what would be considered a traditional private sector ethos with increased emphasis being put on the reduction of costs and maximisation of income generation while still maintaining quality service provision.

Where NI has delivered its leisure provision as a statutory responsibility, ROI like GB is not obliged to make such provision as leisure is a discretionary service. Leisure provision has historically, been made by local sports clubs and community groups with local hotels providing the swimming, health and fitness opportunities to those in the community who could afford to use the facilities. Hotels were not obliged to make such provision but used it as a sales tool to offer visitors/guests to enhance their experience. There is a strong community club ethos which has catered for the recreational and sporting needs of communities for years, specifically in ROI, the GAA in a voluntary capacity has successfully provided recreational amenities in almost every part of the country. However, the customer has become more discerning and has experienced quality facilities elsewhere. Local demands are and will result in further provision of publicly accessible leisure facilities in future years.

With these developments will come the challenge of which management option best suits the particular situation.

International Model

New Zealand (NZ) is well known for its obsession with sport and as a small country it punches well above its weight internationally. In the past, the roots of this obsession has led to a very committed community driven sports sector with the majority of facilities developing through this voluntary commitment, similar to that of GAA. To aid in the development of sports facilities in NZ, sporting bodies often created partnerships with local schools and other community bodies in an attempt to develop affordable facilities owned and operated by the community (joint provision and dual-use). In contrast to this, aquatic or wet facilities in NZ have always been owned and operated by government departments either via local government or the education board.

More recently the NZ government has placed even more emphasis on the importance of sport and taken on board the concept of multi purpose leisure facilities. As a result, the stimulation and support for the creation of Leisure Trusts was established in the anticipation of these trusts managing and operating of leisure facilities.

A snap shot of NZ's new innovative approach to leisure operations sees councils now appointing new boards under an initiative called Council Controlled Organisations (CCO) (or Arms Length Companies). As part of this new style there is a pooling of management and recreation reserves, arts facilities, aquatic centres and generally any community-owned facilities revolving around leisure pursuits. Essentially a board of directors is then established which governs the new structure with a chief executive overseeing the management of all facilities and implementing operational structures accordingly.

Conclusions

This paper has considered varying legislative contexts between N I and RoI as well as issues relating to direct provision and joint provision/dual use of leisure facilities.

There has also been consideration of commercial and private sector procurement for the development and management and operation of leisure facilities; the role of social enterprises and trusts as well as operational issues pertaining to leisure facilities.

Obviously there are different legislative frameworks relating to leisure provision where there is a statutory obligation on N I Councils to provide but this is not the case in RoI.

NI provision has to date been managed professionally by in house departments and over the past 30 years leisure in NI Councils has developed into a strong industry with many models of good practice.

RoI provision has more recently begun to flourish in terms of new provision but more importantly, it has predominantly relied on the commercial and private sectors to provide its management and operation.

Opportunities lie in future partnerships or outsourcing of facility and programme management as has been evidenced in numerous examples in the Republic of Ireland. But therein lies further opportunity to engage with local communities and voluntary groups in the community to establish need and the most appropriate procurement model and ultimately the best management option.

Local Authorities have a key role in the planning, development and regeneration of communities. Recreational amenities form an integral part of sustainable communities and help to improve the health and well being of the people in those communities. The provision of recreational facilities can provide a focus for social interaction in a community and encourages young people to engage in active leisure pursuits and helps to counteract anti-social behaviour. Recreational facilities are most successful where there is community support and involvement in the planning and management of the facilities. The current economic climate is placing severe restrictions on local authorities' ability to develop and manage recreational facilities. However, there are many direct and less tangible benefits in developing sustainable communities and local authorities must continue to engage with all stakeholders in the provision of a wide range of recreational amenities.

Arts, Culture and Local Government in Ireland

A Review of Practice

“...art should extend beyond itself to become an act of ethical reform, influencing public opinion, public action, and public contribution...”GB Shaw

The role of the Arts in Local Government

Those of us who believe in the transforming power of the arts need no persuasion to assert such a view but increasingly formerly cynical policy makers are persuaded that the arts should also be valued for its contribution to the economy, urban regeneration and social inclusion.

In terms of economic development it is also accepted that creativity is a key asset in our post-industrial society where factories and farms experience diminishing returns and the transactional value of ideas and imagination grows exponentially.

In regeneration terms we are witness to the elevation of the importance of design, and art and culture in “place-making” with major new cultural buildings and high spec public realm of central importance.

Policy makers are further convinced of the key role for the arts in health, education and to the wider community/voluntary sector in raising people's self-esteem, enhancing well-being and empowering individuals.

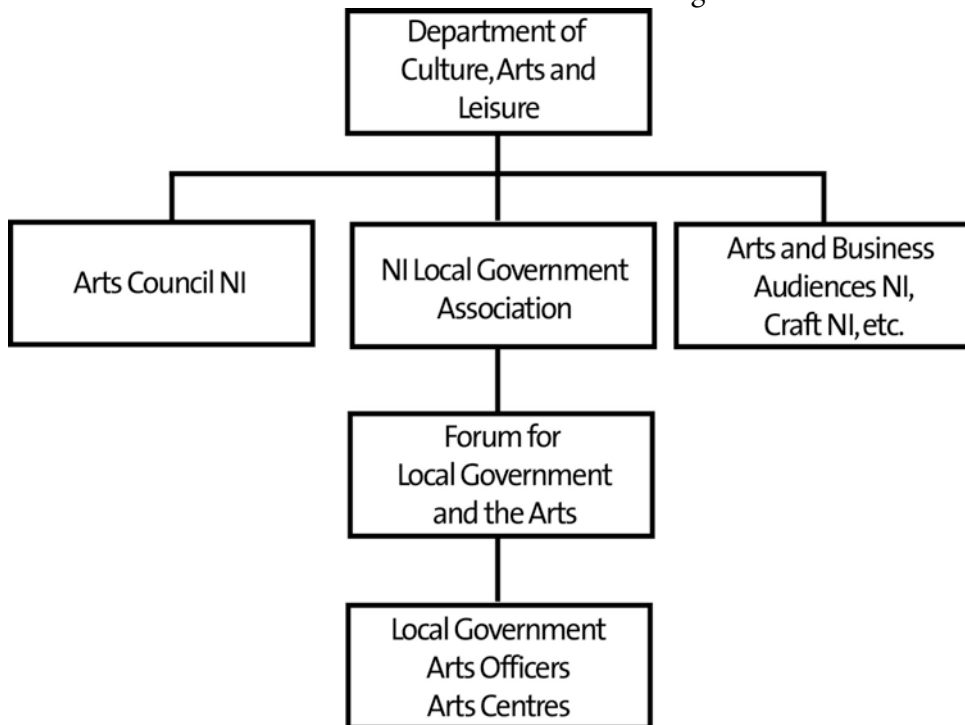
In Northern Ireland (NI) every district council has a statutory duty to provide cultural activities under Article 10 (1) of ‘The Recreation and Youth Service (NI) Order 1986’. As District Councils are the principal democratic agencies responsible for planning and development of services at a local level, our role is a strategically important one. Further, in light of the Review of Public Administration and the intention to transfer a portion of the regional funding to the local level this is likely to be a growth function within the new local government organisations.

There is however extremely wide variation in the priority given by individual Local Authorities. Most Local Authorities consider the Arts to be a small sub-set of a leisure service department; still others give little consideration to support of the Arts beyond the existence of a local Arts advisory panel whilst others simply rely on the Arts provision of other adjacent councils.

Local government bodies are not of course the only interested parties and in this region we have a highly developed community voluntary arts sector that relies on a range of funding mechanisms of which local government is but one. In recent times central and local government funds have been bolstered by contributions from Lottery funds⁵ and EU sources.

⁵ National lottery funds to support capital and projects, currently in suspension

The Structure for the Arts in NI is illustrated in the diagram below:



A key commitment in the Review of Public Administration is the development of a strong local government, where councils are at the heart of the local community.

Requirements of this strengthened local government will be to lead a community planning process. In addition, councils will have a new power of well-being, which will allow them to take any action, linked with the community plan, that will improve the well-being of the local community or the local area.

The arts will have a powerful role to play in achieving these objectives.

The RPA will also impact on arts funding as it is anticipated that some funding responsibilities will transfer from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) to local Authorities.

Local government investment in the Arts in Northern Ireland

Total Expenditure on the Arts by NI Councils	
2003/04 - £19.5m	2004/05 - £19.8m
Average Spend per Capita	
2003/04 - £7.70 with the median being £4.54	2004/05 - £8.10 with the median being £5.11
Numbers Employed	
2003/04 - a total of 253 people were employed in full-time and part-time arts related jobs. Including casual employees - 497	2004/05 - a total of 252 people were employed in full-time and part-time arts related jobs. Including casual employees - 525, 24% of all Councils do not have any strategic plan or policy for the arts. ⁶

⁶ It should be noted that these statistics include both Belfast and Derry. Source Arts Council NI

Key agencies

ACNI are the lead agency in regional arts strategy and planning, they work with and through local government organisations to deliver on regional strategic objectives such as their aim to ensure easy access to high quality arts provision throughout the region. Throughout NI a number of important local government projects with a town regeneration purpose house modern and in a number of cases outstandingly well equipped arts centres including theatres, galleries and studios. One recent example is the Strule Arts Centre in Omagh, short-listed for the Sterling prize, the highest award in Architecture.

Local Government are also represented in their dialogue with central government (Department of Culture Arts and Leisure [DCAL] and ACNI) via the Forum for Local Government and the Arts (FLGA) it has the primary intention of formalizing the mechanisms and working arrangements through which the Arts Council of Northern Ireland may consult district councils and in order to engender a stronger sense of partnership working. The main aims of the FLGA are:

- To act as a co-ordinating and lobbying body to ensure that the arts are a prominent feature in local politics.
- To raise awareness of the value of the arts and develop arts provision at local community level, by building partnerships between local councillors, council officers and arts representatives, however all councils are autonomous in terms of their arts provision.

The size of council is not a reliable indicator of local government commitment to arts and culture and in major centres such as Belfast, central government also supports capital provision outside of ACNI provision.

Central government collects data to provide the annual return in respect of arts expenditure but these figures do not include:

- Archives
- Heritage
- Museums

In a number of Council areas such as Down, expenditure in these areas may also support arts and cultural activities such as gallery and performance space. Furthermore the data does not factor in tourism related expenditure, which may also support arts and cultural events.

Arts strategy

Twenty of the twenty-six local authorities in Northern Ireland have some kind of Strategic plan for the development of the arts; this represents 76% of all Councils. It also implies that 24% of Councils in Northern Ireland do not have a strategic plan or policy for the development of the arts.

Of the 76% of Councils who have a strategic plan, the breakdown is as follows:

- 77% of the local authorities have an arts strategy.
- Of those that have an arts strategy, 65 % (11) also have one or more of the following: a local arts policy; a local cultural strategy with an arts element; or a local strategic partnership plan (including a local cultural strategy)
- 23% of the local authorities have either a local cultural strategy or a local strategic partnership.⁷

⁷ Source ACNI review of local government expenditure 2007

The Social Impact of Culture and the Arts

Inevitably, the social impact of an intervention, programme or project is difficult to define. Social impact can cover many different aspects of life, whether the impact is personal (e.g. increased confidence, self-esteem, enhanced skills), 'structural' (e.g. better housing conditions in a regenerated area, more pleasant area to live in) or a combination of both, where, due to participation in a particular cultural or arts activity, a more confident sense of self is developed, leading to increased social networking, employment or a better job, more activity in the community leading to the creation of a better place to live, improved health and well-being leading to a better quality of life, civic pride etc.

Social impact is not only difficult to define, it is also difficult to measure in a robust way, and although 'hard' quantitative methods can measure the extent of participation across a particular population, 'softer' qualitative research methods are required to explore the type and depth of social impact on individuals and communities. For the purpose of this review, social impact will be defined as any impact on individuals or communities that manifests itself in the areas of:

Personal Development - increasing individuals' or communities' confidence and sense of self-worth; providing a sense of empowerment; creating a sense of control over one's own life and self-determination; improving self-image and creating increased understanding of diversity

Social Cohesion - increased friendship, increased contact with other cultures, enlarged social network, sense of 'belonging' to a particular group/club/network/community

The Community (e.g. volunteering, helping organise local events etc), working in partnership with other organisations for the community, people feeling more positive about where they live, feeling safer in where they live, pride in own culture or ethnicity

Health and Well-being - improved physical and/or mental health, stress reduction, pain reduction, reduction in morbidity, increased physical and mental activity, positive response to therapies, sense of well-being and positive outlook, improved quality of life

Education and Learning - development of transferable skills to the workplace, building arts/sports skills for employment in these areas, enhanced employability (e.g. increased creativity), increased enjoyment of arts/sports activities, stimulated life-long interest in culture, the arts and sport, increased volunteering network.⁸

Francois Matarasso's (1997) seminal report, "Use or Ornament? - The Social Impact of Participation in Arts Programmes", identified 50 social impacts of participative arts programmes and concluded that participation in the arts can benefit individuals and communities, these included:

- Increasing individual and community confidence
- Creating transferable skills
- Building confidence in minority groups
- Promoting contact, social networking and contributing to social cohesion

Matarasso's study was the first large-scale attempt in the UK to gather evidence of the social benefits and impacts of participation in the arts.⁹

⁸ "Hand in Hand - Arts Based Activities and Regeneration" - March 2008 Arts Council of Wales

⁹ Matarasso, F (1997) Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in Arts Programmes, Comedia, Stroud, UK

Arts and well-being

The new legislative environment for local government in the Review of Public Administration encourages local government to consider supporting arts and culture as a means to fulfilling a community planning function as it relates to well-being. The spirit of this change is to encourage local government planning processes to consider the arts as a key theme as opposed to an optional theme in strategic plans.

The nature of individual Council commitment to Arts and Culture is directly proportionate to the importance or otherwise placed on the Arts by its elected members.

Arts as a regeneration tool

A number of Councils have attempted to harness the role of the arts in giving tangible symbolism to regeneration work in their towns and villages. Some like Omagh, Armagh, Ballymena as well as Galway and Kilkenny have placed the arts at the very heart of regeneration schemes making commitment to new buildings and the public realm which place high value in terms of the aesthetic and clearly view these signature schemes, buildings and sculpture as visual representation of community ambition and hope.

Others have placed more emphasis on funding the efforts of locally based arts organisations as a vehicle to support confidence building.

Below are examples of two recent infrastructural developments in NI, which have contributed to the regeneration of the local town and community – Strule Arts Centre in Omagh and the Braid Arts Centre in Ballymena.

Strule Arts Centre, Omagh

“Arts and culture have a critical role to play in rebuilding individuals and communities. Arts can help to strengthen the spirit and build pride in a place. It helps people to understand and move forward, to rebuild relationships and help to deliver positive change, like that occurring through Omagh’s regeneration plans”.

“The Strule Arts Centre is an example of a regeneration initiative which places arts and culture at the centre of social, cultural and economic regeneration in Northern Ireland. Having a strong infrastructure in place, such as this facility, for our creative people to develop and grow is the first step in the process”.

Edwin Poots Arts Minister Jan 2008

The Strule Arts Centre, costing £10.5m is part of a major urban regeneration scheme to transform the riverbank and surrounding area, creating civic spaces, walkways and a pedestrian bridge across the river, to link up with the Further Education College on the other side.

Strule Arts Centre is purpose-built to house, nurture and present a hive of artistic talent, offering creative outlets and opportunities for the people of Omagh and beyond. This state of the art centre produces a diverse programme of events encompassing music, theatre, comedy and dance performances, lectures, workshops and exhibitions.

This landmark Arts Centre, which is Omagh District Council owned and operated, boasts a 398 - seat auditorium, 125 - seat studio theatre/film/conference room, dance studio, recording studio, print workshop, ceramics workshop, photographic studio, rehearsal rooms, outdoor amphitheatre, exhibition space and tourist information centre, all this alongside a bar and The Weir cafe bar.



The Braid Arts Centre, Ballymena

The Braid, a £16.8m investment project received funding of £2m from the Arts Council through its National Lottery funds towards its new arts facilities. The building project has seen the conservation-led refurbishment of the Town Hall and its beautiful auditorium as well as the creation of a brand new Museum and Arts Centre. The contemporary design of this striking new building complements the architecture of the Town Hall and transforms the urban streetscape of central Ballymena.



Named after the river that runs through Ballymena – and as tribute to the local flax linen industry - the venue weaves local history, arts and culture alongside contemporary conference, tourism and civic facilities on a site that has been for centuries the centre of local civic life.

From a regional museum and gallery space, this multi purpose venue for the whole community now includes a 420-seat auditorium, regional museum for Mid-Antrim, business centre, tourist information centre and café.

Arts in Tourism development

Another significant area for arts investment has been in the application of an Arts/Cultural agenda in tourism development. This has been particularly evident in some areas where the adoption of a very clear “events led strategy” led to tourism development. The development of music events and festivals which range from pipe band competitions, traditional music, jazz, blues and opera point to an explosion of effort and investment from local government.

The verbal arts are also to the fore in some areas with drama and events such as the John Hewitt Summer School in Armagh.

Galway Arts Festival

Galway has long been considered a centre of cultural excellence. The fastest growing city in Europe, Galway is a vibrant university city with its city centre, a labyrinth of winding medieval streets, squares and waterways.

Galway Arts Festival is the defining cultural expression of Galway and is at the heart of all aspects of life in the city. The Festival’s contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of the west of Ireland is immeasurable and while



the Festival celebrates Galway in July each year, Galway itself is a city in celebration during the Festival.

Over its 30 year history the Festival has become a vital showcase for Irish arts and international arts and is now firmly established as Ireland’s leading arts festival.

Regarded as one of Europe’s key cultural events Galway Arts Festival is an international celebration of the performing and visual arts. Over 100,000 people attend the Festival annually with hundreds of writers, artists, performers and musicians creating theatre, street art, music, comedy, literature and music to produce a stunning fortnight of cultural activity and celebration. The 2008 Festival enjoyed its most successful year ever with record attendances and box office records broken.

The City expects a windfall of €25 Million from the two weeks of the Festival.

Challenges

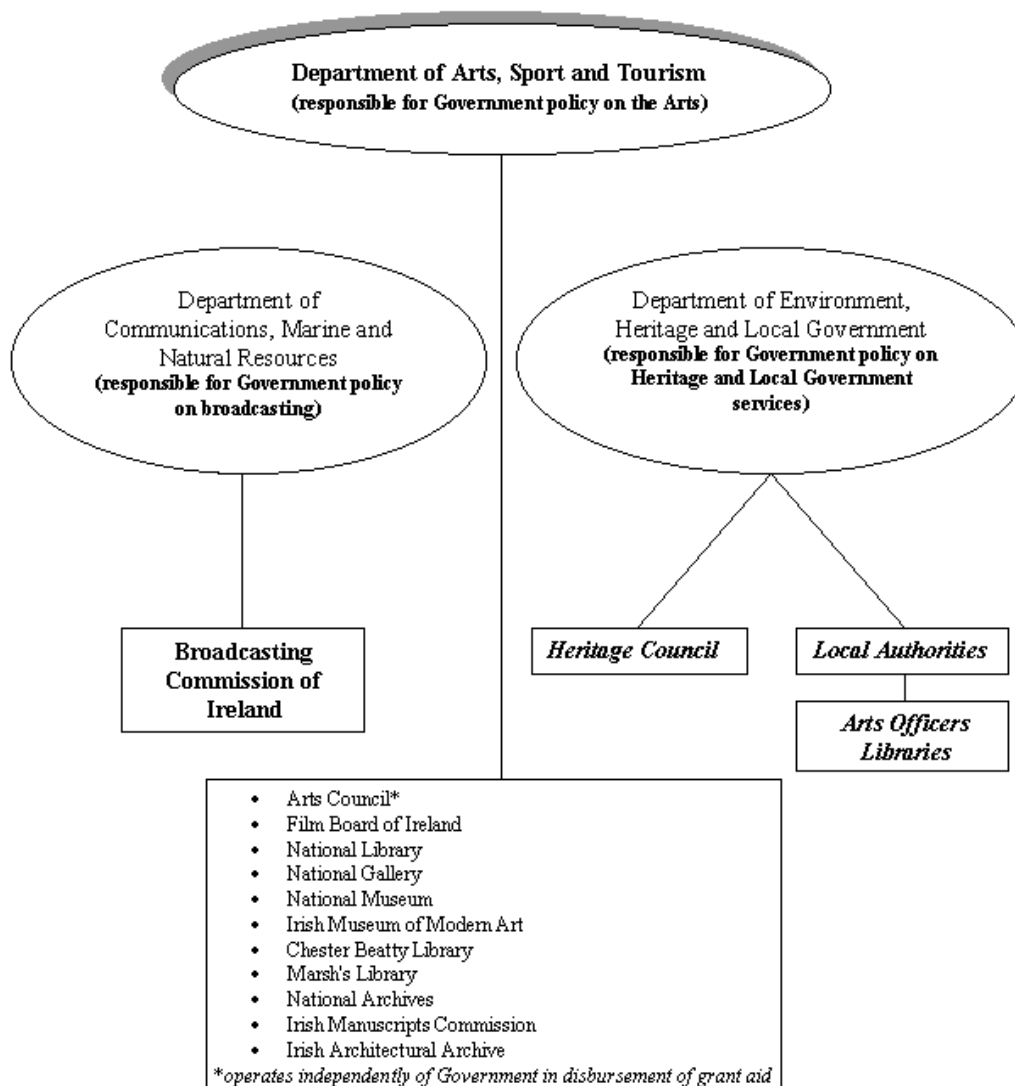
The role of local government outside of Belfast in terms of supporting the arts generally should not be underestimated although it represents only a small percentage of the overall arts funding pie, local public funding has been the largest and most stable form of revenue support, compared with central spend whether via ACNI or direct from government departments, DCAL and the Department of Education NI who are disappointingly small contributors to the arts even in schools.

The Lottery funding streams (now closed due to the demands of London 2012 Olympics) were used to advance the strategy of investing in arts facilities across rural towns. This was extremely beneficial, however, even the most committed local councils may now find themselves challenged by the tension between supporting the running costs of arts facilities and the direct investment in arts activities.

Central government investment in revenue support tends to go to Belfast supporting key arts assets such as the Ulster Orchestra, Grand Opera House, Lyric Theatre and others. Little major intervention occurs in the rural context.

There is no reason to suppose that additional monies will be found to support the arts and local government will need to plan and resource the arts in a consistent manner.

The key challenge remains the attitude of the NI public, which (to generalise) is, that as a society we do not value the arts in the same way as we value sports or leisure centres even though in truth we may not actually utilise those either.



Whilst there is no specific definition of culture, the arts in RoI are defined in the Arts Act 2003 as:

"any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and includes, in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture, and includes any medium when used for these purposes".

Responsibility for the political, legislative and structural context of the arts and culture in RoI lies with the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism (DAST), established in June 2002. As the lead body, DAST, as part of its enactment of the Programme for Government, is charged with the establishment of an appropriate legislative framework for the development of the sector and includes responsibility for:

- the funding of the Arts Council;
- the enhancement of the cultural infrastructure via the implementation of capital cultural projects throughout the country;
- international and public art;
- the development of the film and music industries;
- the preservation, conservation and display of national moveable heritage via the national cultural institutions; and
- the promotion of Irish arts and culture overseas.

The Department has publicly set out its goals, strategies, expected outputs and performance indicators in respect of these tasks in its three year statement of strategy. Within this framework, the Arts Council operates as an autonomous, arms length, development body for the arts.

The arts agenda for local government (enabled to fund the arts by the 1973 Arts Act), was largely devised and driven by the Arts Council, which after a brief period of engagement with regional authorities, appointed the first County Arts Officer jointly with Clare County Council in 1985.

The partnership approach adopted by the Arts Council has delivered results in terms of the appointment of arts personnel, improved planning and budgetary provision.

Net expenditure on the arts by local authorities (excluding grant-aid from the Arts Council and earned income) was €55.3 million in 2005. Though local government expenditure on the arts is still low by international standards, this figure, excluding provision for capital, still represents a four-fold increase in direct spending in a 12-year period.

In 2008 the Arts Council allocated approximately €20 million to 143 organisations and 34 local authorities towards their Annual Arts Programmes.

Recent local government reviews reflect the enhanced importance of the arts in the local government agenda, to the point that cultural matters are now regarded as an indispensable dimension of integrated local development.

Central government introduced the Arts and Cultural Capital Enhancement Support Scheme (ACCESS) in 2001 to stimulate investment in arts infrastructure throughout the state. A total of €75 million grant aid has been allocated over a 7 year period to 67 projects of both national and regional importance. In this context, local authorities have become the promoters of a significant number of new arts venues.

The Source Library and Arts Centre, North Tipperary

Description: Integrated Library and Arts facility incorporating branch library, local studies, exhibition hall and 250 seat theatre.

Cost: €11million of which Arts Centre element accounted for €5.5 million A grant of €2.9 million was received under ACCESS with the balance provided by North Tipperary local authorities.

Opened: August 2006

Operation: Limited Company/Professional Staff



(Photo by Christian Richters)

VISUAL Arts Centre, Carlow

Description: Contemporary Arts Venue incorporating 4 exhibition spaces and 350 seat theatre

Cost: €18 million of which €3.1 million provided under ACCESS with the balance provided by Carlow Local Authority

Opening Date: Mid-2009

Operation: Limited Company/Professional Staff



The Arts Council has adopted a similar approach vis à vis other local authorities, working with some regional health boards to develop an arts and health strategy and with Údarás na Gaeltachta to improve provisions for Irish-speaking areas. It also currently supports the arts development programmes of 33 local authorities and Udarás na Gaeltachta.

In 1994 there were 28 venues supported by Arts Council funding, further sub-divided as 14 arts centres, eight theatres and six exhibition spaces. In 2005 that number was 72, sub-divided by the Arts Council as five producing theatres, 13 galleries and 54 multi-disciplinary arts centres and performing arts venues, including three 'traditional arts venues'.

Arts festivals are another important focus of public engagement with the arts. In 1994, 35 festivals were funded by the Arts Council, compared with 193 festivals and events funded in 2006. Of these, 53 received funding amounting to €6.56m and 140 were awarded €800,000 through the Council's 'Small Festivals Scheme'.

Apart from the increase in the number of festivals, there are other noteworthy changes. The scale and ambition of most festivals, and in some cases their duration, has increased significantly.

There is a wider range of festivals than existed in the mid-1990s. To the large multi-disciplinary arts festivals (such as Galway and Kilkenny) and the international single art form festivals (like the three major film festivals, Dublin Theatre Festival and Wexford Opera Festival), were added a wide range of local and regional arts festivals, many community festivals, and an increasing number of 'specialist' festivals and summer or winter 'schools', defined by art form or genre (e.g. story-telling; fringe theatre; chamber music; early music; poetry; puppetry; dance), or by target audience (older people; children).

The Association of Irish Festival Events (AOIFE) reviewed the scale and activities of festivals in Ireland in 2002. In terms of content or focus, 25% were music festivals; 19% were multi-disciplinary; 14% were

street-event or carnival based; 7% were in literature; 4% were theatre; 3% were visual arts; 3% in Irish language / culture; and 2% were dance. A further 3% were in the 'other arts' category.

Conclusions: Role of the Arts in Local Government

Policy makers are persuaded that the arts should be valued for their contribution to the economy, urban regeneration and social inclusion. In terms of economic development it is also accepted that creativity is a key asset in our post-industrial society.

In regeneration terms, the elevation of the importance of design, art and culture are of central importance.

Policy makers are further convinced of the key role for the arts in health, education and to the wider community/voluntary sector in raising people's self-esteem, enhancing well-being and empowering individuals.

There is a wide disparity in the priority given to the Arts by local Councils. Following the Review of Local Government in NI, Councils will be tasked with leading a community planning process.

In addition, councils will have a new power of well-being, which will allow them to take any action that will improve the well-being of the local community or the local area and the arts will have a powerful role to play in achieving these objectives.

The Arts in Ireland are governed under two jurisdictions and with differing legislation.

The Arts Council of NI is the lead agency in regional arts strategy and planning, it works with and through local government organisations to deliver on regional strategic objectives such as its aim to ensure easy access to high quality arts provision throughout the region.

A partnership approach adopted by the Arts Council, and working with Local Authorities in ROI has delivered results in terms of the appointment of arts personnel, improved planning and budgetary provision.

Local public funding has been the largest and most stable form of revenue support, compared with central funding whether via ACNI or direct from government departments such as DCAL or Dept of Education in NI.

Capital support however, previously accessed through National Lottery funding is now redirected towards London 2012 hosting the Olympic Games.

In 2008 the Arts Council of Ireland allocated approximately €20 million to 143 organisations and 34 local authorities towards their Annual Arts Programmes.

Irish Central government introduced the Arts and Cultural Capital Enhancement Support Scheme (ACCESS) in 2001 to stimulate investment in arts infrastructure throughout the state.

Arts festivals are another important focus of public engagement with the arts and contribute significantly to the local economy.

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Sport and Leisure - Accessibility and Participation

Accessibility

There is a broad public (Central and Local Government) commitment to the provision of a full range of facilities for leisure and recreation (whether sporting, cultural or local community purposes) and that these are available to the widest number of users, primarily through making them accessible in terms of distance from where people live and also in terms of disabled / mobility impaired people being able to use them.

Legislative Framework

Disability Act 2005 (Ireland)

“to make further and better provision in respect of the use by those persons of public buildings ... and thereby to facilitate generally access by such persons to ... services ... and to promote equality and social inclusion”

Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), as originally enacted, contained provisions making it unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person in relation to employment, the provision of goods, facilities and services, and the disposal and management of premises. The Order strengthens and extends the coverage of the DDA 1995. Article 4 imposes a duty on public authorities to make reasonable adjustments for disabled persons where such persons are – by reason of their disability – disadvantaged in some way by, or in relation to, the carrying-out of the function. The duty requires public authorities to anticipate the requirements of disabled persons and the adjustments that may need to be made for them.

Section 75 of the N I Act 1998

Section 75 and Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998 placed a statutory obligation on public authorities in carrying out their various functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity –

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

Wider Interpretation of Accessibility

Accessibility, in the above terms does not ensure that facilities will be used by all, or even a large percentage of the population. There is clearly a differential between accessibility to sport and leisure facilities and the programmes and activities, which are available at them.

The challenge therefore in terms of provision is not simply of ensuring that each geographic area has facilities, but in ensuring that once provided, there are policies and strategies developed by Councils which enable officers to address deficiencies in management and programming, which will encourage popular participation in a wide range of activities, which are a response to expressed needs and demands of the local population. This in itself suggests that there is a requirement to establish what range of activities potential users are likely to participate in.

The term “accessibility”, therefore, also relates to and needs to consider other (personal) issues including:

- Time – discretionary time to participate
- Affordability of participation – *Before* - costs of preparing to participate (training gear, leisure fashion, team kits, etc); transport; competition fees; *During* – cost of equipment/facility hire; *After* - socialising
- Level of disposable income
- Programming – compatibility of activity schedule
- Cost of Transport – to and from the venue
- Individual v Group participation

The following information highlights how significant some of these issues are when related to levels of consumer spend:

Table 1 Sport-related Consumer Spend in N Ireland

	1998 / £m	2004 / £m
Sports clothing and footwear	84	130
Sports equipment	15	31
Participation subscriptions and fees	43	67

Source: Sport NI - Economic Importance of Sport in NI - Nov 2007

Planning for Accessible Provision

The first limitation encountered in facility planning and policy relates to the capital funding available to construct and operate facilities. Not every town / suburb can have state of the art indoor and/or outdoor buildings, courts, pitches etc and this is not just because of the lack of capital funds but primarily because the recurring operating costs are not considered as a priority when set against budget demands for what are perceived as far more essential services.

One of the difficulties in presenting a case to support the necessary investment in new provision is the absence of scientific or easily discernible criteria against which to justify investment. National standards of provision have been in effect for a number of years in England through agencies such as The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) and Sport England. Electronic programmes are available to planners and providers to establish levels of surplus and deficit provision of facilities such as swimming pools; sports halls; fitness stations and bowling greens. This model has been developed from an extensive audit of facilities and a database of provision throughout the Country.

Sport NI has recently launched its version of Active Places, which locates provision throughout N Ireland. Standards of local, regional and national provision may follow. The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism (DAST) is currently establishing the extent and scope of sport and leisure provision in Ireland through a nation-wide audit of sports facilities. It is anticipated that following the conclusion of the audit, the Irish Sports Council and DAST will develop a new sports strategy, which may set the scene for the introduction of a set of standards for levels of capital provision.

Widening Opportunities for Participation

Northern Ireland

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure published findings in April 2008 from the Continuous Household. Surveys up to 2006/07 relating to the level of participation and satisfaction with sports provision in N Ireland.¹⁰

Some of the findings include:

- In 2006/07, 53% of persons aged 16+ had participated in sport in the **last year**. This figure compared to 51% in 2005/06, 54% in 2004/05, and 55% in 2003/04
- Sports participation (in the last 12 months) was highest amongst those in professional occupations (78%) and those aged 16-29 years old (77%)
- In 2006/07, 54% of all persons surveyed aged 16+ were satisfied with sports provision in Northern Ireland. This figure was 57% in 2005/06, 55% in 2004/05, and 58% in 2003/04.
- There is consistency throughout of highest participation by 16-29 year olds and those in professional occupations.
- Satisfaction with sports provision in Northern Ireland in 2006/07 (participants and non-participants) was at similar levels amongst all socio-economic groups analysed.

Republic of Ireland

Evidence from an Economic and Social Research Institute¹¹ report in early 2008 suggests that according to the broad participation measure, 78 per cent of adults had been active in sport or physical exercise on at least one occasion in the previous twelve months with 22 per cent of adults completely sedentary.

Participation varied strongly by gender and age. Men participated more than women and the young more than the old.

It also varied by social class, in that higher socio-economic groups had higher levels of participation, particularly in regard to activities other than walking.

Overall participation (i.e. including walking) differs only slightly by social class but participation in activities other than walking is more sharply differentiated by social class.

The participation rate in the professional classes (52-58 per cent) is double that of the unskilled manual class (27 per cent).

Recreational walking is by far the most popular form of leisure-time physical activity – about 60 per cent of adults had taken a walk in the four weeks prior to the survey. Women engage in walking more than men. However, much walking entails little intensity of effort or is engaged in too irregularly to contribute a great deal to the minimum recommended levels of physical activity. About 25 per cent of people walked often enough and vigorously enough to meet those standards.

Programmes Targeting Participation

There have been a series of programmes, which have targeted staff and funding resources towards particular groups. In particular senior citizens, teenage\young women, unemployed (males), at risk young people have all been beneficiaries of positive discrimination initiatives in various areas.

These programmes have been promoted via the agencies and through partnership initiatives with certain, mainly sporting, governing bodies and affiliated clubs.

¹⁰ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure - "Sports Participation and Satisfaction with Sports Provision in N Ireland" - April 2008

¹¹ Sports Research Centre ESRI and Irish Sports Council – "Sports Participation and Health among Adults in Ireland" - 2004

Community development programmes (looking at broader personal and group development needs in disadvantaged areas) and groups have become very well established over the past twenty years. They have primarily been funded through various EU and subsequently state funded programmes to support citizen participation in, and benefiting from, other mainstream education, health, employment and community projects.

The broader strategies for the development of culture and society in N Ireland acknowledge that participation in sport is one way of addressing social disadvantage. Sport NI has supported the delivery of a pilot Community Sports Programme (CSP) at a time when there is a significant focus for government policy on improving health and wellbeing, community cohesion, and social need. Policies and strategies across departments and organisations, at both regional and local levels, recommend actions to address poor health, poverty and unemployment, and build social capital using the media of sport and physical activity.

The long-term focus of the CSP is on improving health and people's quality of life. Through work conducted over the past 20 years, Sport NI suggests it has learned that the kind of benefits that can accrue from upholding these values are relatively easy to secure among groups of people with already strong sporting networks – largely the sporting middle classes in N Ireland where there are high levels of belief and confidence, and a strong capacity to deliver sporting opportunities.

The challenge is to secure benefits for people who often lack such self confidence and capacity and, who at the same time, lack the levels of resources of already well established sporting networks. The establishment of the CSP aims to address these key issues and sets targets for increasing sustained participation in sport and physical activity and building the structures to support this long term objective.

One of the objectives of a recent review of the CSP was to identify the key enablers of success and inform the planning and delivery of similar programmes. A number of case studies are included below:

DERRY TRIAX PROJECT

The Derry TRIAX CSP started in July 2004. TRIAX is the name for the pilot Neighbourhood Renewal Taskforce for the Bogside, Brandywell, Fountain, Bishop Street and Creggan areas of the City of Derry. The Derry CSP is focused in the inner city and TRIAX wards of Derry. These areas are characterised by high unemployment, low educational achievement, poor health, and poor or low community safety.

The CSP in Derry has focused on working with primary school children (the Neighbourhood Renewal Taskforce identified children aged up to 15 years as a major target group) and has prioritised creating partnerships and encouraging people to work together to provide a holistic approach to health and well-being. The programme has strong links to the community and to the Health Forum.

A recent success of the Derry CSP has been the creation of a teenage health programme that is being rolled out across the TRIAX area. Teenage boys and girls are being targeted by local youth leaders to take part in a broad health education programme 'Back to Basics', that includes six weeks of healthy cooking and eating, physical activity and health awareness in areas such as sexual health, dental health and drugs and alcohol awareness. The initial programme worked with five groups of ten teenagers. To date three programmes have been delivered in partnership with local healthy living centres, and more courses are to be delivered over the next six months.

Ballymena/Ballykeel Project

The main focus of the CSP in Ballymena was cross-community work. There was also some drug awareness work undertaken. The vast majority of people on the programme in the early stages were children, this was a result of children being easier to target and to access. A lot of work was invested in building a rapport with the community through the residents' association and via local schools. There were programmes for older people as well but the focus was primarily on children.

The CSP was a community led project so the Community Sports Forum guided the Development Officer and made decisions. The forum had a high degree of ownership and was strategic in its role. The area is characterised by high unemployment levels and crime. Incomes are low, alcohol consumption is high and there are issues with anti-social behaviour and sectarianism.

The Ballykeel project used sport as a vehicle to address peace and reconciliation. The greatest impact resulting from the project was that the members of the local community became aware of the importance of sport, how it can play a role not only in peace and reconciliation but also how powerful a tool it could be in the future if used for diversionary measures. The project demonstrated that sport and physical activity can connect people.

It connects young and old, boys and girls, people with and without disabilities and people from across cultural and religious divides. With the impact that the Ballykeel Programme has had, local community representatives now recognise that, by gaining sustainability, local children and young people can avail of opportunities that they may otherwise never have had.

Lessons from the programme show that integration with other agencies' programmes and objectives, through a bespoke approach, along with prioritised targets and effective programme management are critical factors for success.¹²

Leisure and recreation initiatives are effective vehicles through which to engage with disadvantaged groups. Adequate and appropriate provision of facilities and programmes are crucial to social bonding and personal development. They have the potential to succeed where more direct methods of engagement might not.

The challenge therefore is enormous but there are examples, which could be included in a policy proposal as best practice for formatting through National Governing Body and other social and developmental agencies.

Participation Programmes – Irish Sports Council Initiatives

The Irish Sports Council has, as part of its strategic plan, acknowledged the need to address current low levels of participation in sport and by doing so tackle the poor standards of public health.

"The Irish Sports Council aims to have more people, more active in sport, and by achieving that goal assist in the building of a healthier society"

It has developed and is currently delivering a series of initiatives, which are directed at increasing participation levels generally, and through specific target groups and activities:

- Local Sports Partnerships (LSP)
- Sport for Older People (Go for Life)
- Recreational Sport Programme
- The Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport

¹² Sport NI - "Pilot Community Sports Programme - Evaluation Report" - Dec 2007

- Buntús
- Way marked Ways / National Trails Office
- National Governing Bodies of Sport
- Youth Field Sports
- Women in Sport
- National Coaching and Training Centre / Coaching Ireland
- Active Leadership
- Sports Inclusion Development Officers

The Irish Sports Council is currently developing its first participation strategy, which will be implemented in 2009.

Role of the Local Sport Partnerships (LSP's)

The key aims of the LSP are to increase participation in sport and to ensure that local resources are used to best effect. These are directed at:

- Club development
- Volunteer training
- Enhanced planning of sport at local level
- Local directories of sports bodies & facilities
- School, club, community and national governing body (NGB) links
- Increased levels of local participation, especially amongst specific target groups such as older people, girls & women, people with disabilities, unemployed people, and those who live in identified disadvantaged communities

Membership of the LSP is made up of statutory bodies and organisations and groups with an interest in local sports development. There is full national coverage with an LSP in each County. Many are established as Limited Companies and are positioned as a substructure of the Local Authority. LSP promoted projects are illustrated below:

MAYO LSP

Be Active 55 aims to promote physical activity in the over-55s and to make leisure centres more attractive and friendly places for this age group. The project is a partnership between the Mayo Sports Partnership, the HSE West and the leisure industry in Co Mayo. The Be Active 55 project involves a programme of mobility type activities and "fun and fit" classes specifically aimed at the over-55s.



MEATH LOCAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

The Girls in Action programme is a joint initiative between Meath Local Sports Partnership and the HSE. The programme targets teenage girls attending secondary schools who do not normally participate in physical activity and/or sport.

The programme co-ordinators liaise directly with participating schools, their teachers, activity instructors and the girls themselves. Activities include Dance, Yoga, Pilates, Martial Arts, Belly Dancing and Thai Chi to name but a few.



The programme has grown since its inception in 2006 with a total of six secondary schools involving over 100 girls. One of the conditions of the Girls in Action programme is that it must take place as an extra curricular activity with sessions being carried out at lunch-time or after school. This has not deterred the schools. Teachers give up their own time to ensure the programme is offered to the girls within the school.

The Girls in Action programme for 2007/2008 concluded with a Dance Fest held in Simonstown with over 70 girls from Eureka Secondary School in Kells, Beaufort College, Mercy Convent and Loreto Navan participating.

LIMERICK CITY SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

Limerick City Sports Partnership and Limerick Community Garda Cycle Division completed a very popular project in 2007 - 2008, which involved local primary schools from the Northside and Southside of Limerick City. This initiative started on June 12th 2007, with one school chosen to pilot the project. It proved very popular with the students, principal, teachers and parents, and it was decided to extend the project city-wide.

The Garda Community Cycle Squad visited each school and put the children through a series of cycling skills, with the emphasis on 'Safe Cycling in Safe Areas'. The long-term plan is for parents/guardians to get involved and take the children to safe areas and use the cycle paths, such as areas within and surrounding the University of Limerick, while the Limerick City Sports Partnership is lobbying for more cycle lanes to be developed in the City. This project aims to increase awareness of cycling as a sustainable form of exercise in their everyday lives.



Part 2 of the project involved a series of skill drills, specially designed by the Garda Cycle Squad, in which the pupils from each school pitted their cycling skills against each other. A team of eight children from each of the participating schools were judged on a three-tier basis: Safety, Behaviour and Skills. There was a points system devised to select an overall winning team from the eight competing schools in the Northside and the six schools in the Southside. The BDO (BDO Simpson Xavier) Get BACK Challenge, which supports sporting disadvantage, sponsored the overall project, and donated a computer to each of the schools judged as the overall winners.

Participation Programmes and the Individual

Another programmes aimed at getting the individual to participate in activity in the outdoor environment through walking— part of its “green exercise” drive.

The Irish Trails Strategy, launched in January 2007 is a cross-sectoral initiative that aims to enhance the health, well-being and quality of life of all Irish residents and also attract visitors from around the world by developing a world class recreational trail network in Ireland.

Recreational trails use natural outdoor environments from National Waymarked walking routes to health focused Sli na Slainte routes, urban greenways, canal towpaths and forest trails.

Trails offer excellent opportunities for people to become more active in outdoor recreation and offer a balance of activity with nature.

The Regional Development Strategy 2025 (NI) aims to provide safe and environmentally attractive walking facilities in Northern Ireland.

The Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN) is an umbrella organisation, which brings together groups and bodies that have an interest in, or involvement with countryside recreation in NI.

CAAN is responsible for developing, managing and promoting walking across NI by working in partnership with a wide range of organisations e.g. local authorities and the National Trust.

Walk NI is a project led by CAAN, which has produced an extensive and detailed guide to walking in NI.

Cycle NI was a joint marketing initiative between Sustrans and CAAN which promoted the benefits of cycling and produced a NI – wide guide.

Whilst different approaches are taken North and South to the promotion of walking as an activity, there appears to be a captive audience willing to participate in this natural activity and in natural environments. The benefits include:

- Reducing the risk of developing heart disease and strokes
- Helping to prevent high blood pressure
- Helping to control weight
- Reducing stress
- Maintaining good mental health
- Improving performance at work

Policy Implications

There is a clear need for a strategic and consistent approach to sports and leisure (and wider cultural) policy and provision to enable planners and providers to plan for appropriate and meaningful sports and leisure facilities in Ireland.

The problem of provision has historically been masked by the incremental development of facilities by the voluntary sector whether by sporting / cultural or faith based groups.

This scenario is unlikely to continue in the future however as the population demands higher quality / comfort and the issues of capital costs (especially for land), the regulatory operating environment, and a diminishing volunteer corps become more evident.

A clear policy commitment with regard to future provision, which avoids duplication and creatively permits joint and multi use of facilities is required.

Councils have a number of options to consider in respect of capital and revenue investment through potential partnerships with the private and commercial sector in designing, building, maintenance and operation of contracts.

Where does this leave planners and managers of leisure facilities and programmes?

Planning for and delivering future sport and recreation programmes must address target social groups and promote particular activities, which are likely to draw new participants into healthy physical activity.

Future programming will include taster sessions in life and social skills and will include targeted activities for less advantaged children. They will also be delivered in partnership with school activity linked with extra-curricular programmes. Those case studies highlighted above are typical of new and innovative approaches to increasing participation in physical activity.

Future Local Authority/Council infrastructural developments and in particular leisure centres will be multi-sport as opposed to single sport facilities; will be developed in partnership with other providers such as Education Authorities and Health Trusts and will provide a facility mix of leisure and other social venues such as health centres/healing centres; doctor's surgeries; libraries, etc.

An historical challenge facing planners and providers is that of transport. Provision is predominantly made at central venues, which inherently require users to travel. Many rural and large urban populations are deprived through lack of access to facilities. This is also true of many schools, which do not have their own facilities. An innovative transport arrangement must be found to overcome this challenge. One possible solution would be through "community" use of education transport in evenings and at weekends. Similarly daytime transport of remote users to a central location on a regular schedule to participate in activities could provide funders with alternative approaches to revenue support of facilities and programmes.

What is the priority and who will determine it?

Currently, there are a number of programmers/promoters of the natural environment including Central and Local Government; Sports Councils and National Governing Bodies with competing needs and aspirations.

The priority at National level must be the protection of the natural environment and assessments of likely impact on the environment through development are essential.

Is there a balance to be found between the provision of specific sports and leisure facilities and the sensitive development and protection of our natural environment to accommodate popular activity?

Our natural environment is precious and must be sensitively used to open opportunities for healthy recreation options. One of the challenges, which must be addressed is the need for alteration to the natural environment to accommodate activities. Planners must adopt a pragmatic approach to use of natural amenities and limit potential damage through excessive use/misuse. Implications for policing of the natural environment arise when new activities are permitted.

Sport – Building Community Cohesion and Capacity

Measuring sport's contribution to community cohesion or its impact on building community capacity are exercises, which have challenged researchers for a long time.

A number of studies have been undertaken which have examined issues such as: the role of sport in regenerating deprived areas; the community impact of sports clubs; the role of sport and volunteering in developing positive social behaviours and organisational cohesion; sport's role in developing peer relationships and the meaning of sport for minority ethnic groups with differing attitudes to social and cultural integration. This paper considers the role of sports clubs in building community cohesion and capacity.

Driscoll and Wood¹³ explored the role of sport clubs in periods of social and economic change and their contribution to development of social capital in a rural Australian community. Their study concluded that sports clubs can deliver a range of community capacity-building functions including leadership, participation, skill development, providing a community hub, health promotion, social networks and community identity.

For many years, the local sports club has been the core and sometimes only social activity base in communities throughout Ireland. This was due, in part to the strength of the GAA and to the lack of public investment in sport and leisure provision, particularly in the Republic of Ireland and to a lesser extent, in rural and some disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland. Clubs provided a venue for many of the family events such as birthday parties; family christening and funeral gatherings and some operated as training and entertainment venues.

GAA clubs have, in modern days, established extended sports coaching and training programmes for players as young as 4-5 years old and mature members in senior years. Many clubs remain as the only social outlet for many rural communities.

More recently, Central Government funding and Sports Lottery grants have enabled local investment in community-based clubs to develop playing facilities but also social facilities such as halls and licensed bars.

This paper presents a number of case studies illustrating where local sports clubs and community groups have contributed to a wider community development process.

The first two examples consider sports club community integration in Northern Ireland. Essentially, the journey at their grass roots is identical. The clubs – Ballymoney Rugby Football Club and Teemore Shamrocks are indicative of how generally in Northern Ireland both GAA and rugby clubs have had to be self reliant, exemplifying the self help model of building a highly valued community asset. The third case study looks at a similar sports club development project at Simonstown Gaels GAA club in Co. Meath and finally, two examples of community-led approaches to major capital investment projects involving sports and social provision – Cappoquin Community Development Company in Co. Waterford and Clones – Erne East Community Forum, Co. Monaghan illustrate how a local community has secured significant funding towards major capital sports projects.

It is only relatively recently that such sports have turned to their local authorities, if at all, seeking support for capital projects. In contrast to both GAA and rugby, grass roots soccer has in the main, not embraced their self-help ethos, but has looked to local authorities to provide core facilities at heavily subsidised rates.

¹³ Driscoll and Wood - "Sporting capital: changes and challenges for rural communities in Victoria" 1999

Successful sporting clubs are not merely those that excel on the pitch, because such success can be relative, transient and indeed elusive. They are those that are strongly identified with their community. Whilst to some they may simply be perceived to be particular 'interest' communities, those that thrive are much more, time having ensured that they are sustained by multiple linkages to their place, their locale.

Ballymoney Rugby Football Club

Background

Ballymoney Rugby Football Club, sandwiched between its older neighbours Coleraine and Ballymena continues to expand. It was founded in 1952 and due to lack of active support was nearly wound up six years later. For many years it tottered along, a minority 'interest' community without real roots or assets other than determined men who enjoyed the game and the craic afterwards.

Social Integration

The local grammar school – Dalriada, played a vital role in the club's development not only as a source of players but in providing pitches, changing rooms and training facilities which would have been very difficult to find elsewhere. As society gradually changed, in lieu of a clubhouse a town centre pub fulfilled that function, becoming synonymous with the club and then also fulfilling a similar role for those ladies playing for their local hockey club. This social alliance has proved both important and significant.

Establishing a base

The club ended its nomadic existence in the mid-seventies when the sum of £10,800 was paid for an 8.8 acre site on the edge of the town. That step of faith was followed by another with the launch of an appeal to build a state of the art clubhouse - a dream realised in 1979 with contributions from 'friends' around the globe and with the help of government funding. Since then further investment has taken place. Additional land was purchased. Lottery funding was utilised to provide two new sand mattress pitches. The function room was extended and as the new Millennium approached, the clubhouse was refurbished.

Popularising the Game

Catering for those playing the game, from minis to oldies, is a business. Ballymoney Rugby Football Club is no different from other clubs in that the 'players' are a minority taking the membership as a whole. Rugby is now played as much in the local state secondary school as in the grammar school and so its appeal has broadened. In consequence the game is viewed in less elitist terms, the preserve but of certain classes.

Bedrock of the Community

The rugby business model is underpinned by the club's social members and activities. Although societal norms are changing, it is still true to say that for many whilst a certain stigma remains about frequenting a pub, the private club pub is not viewed in the same manner. In troubled times the social club was viewed as a safer haven. In identifying its niche and catering for the 'sociability' need for many in its locale, Ballymoney Rugby Football Club has become embedded, an integral part of its community and indeed a community in its own right offering valued social networking in a private setting.

Teemore Shamrocks

Background

Teemore Shamrocks is a small rural club situated in south-west Fermanagh on the border with Co. Cavan. The club moved to its present location almost 16 years ago, having sold a smaller area for its gravel reserves. As part of this deal, the successful bidder, agreed to provide £30,000 in cash and to leave a new area ready for playing. The club's cash windfall was supplemented by a fundraising draw, which generated £60,000 and this funded the current clubrooms and store as well as the erection of fencing and floodlighting. About 12 years ago the club assisted with the installation of an old style 'all weather pitch' at the local primary school. The club now has excellent facilities including banked terraces, a stand for 1000 and an electronic scoreboard and its plans for the future include the installation of a 3G synthetic surface.



The club currently has 132 adult members, with 43 of these being players, 83 juvenile members aged up to 18 and all these participate in training or games.

The club has existed in its current state since 1904.

Although the most successful club in Fermanagh in terms of club championships, it has become obvious over the past 10 years that the nature of its community and wider society was changing and while the club might certainly change, progress would be optional and therefore needed to be managed and indeed planned.

There was also a growing awareness that the club was in fact nurturing the 'perceived' best and neglecting the rest. Added to this was a desire to involve more adults in meaningful voluntary activity and both these factors resulted in a strategic review of the club's direction. A number of key gaps in its performance emerged from this:

- The development of young players was being left to 'natural selection' and only young people aged 6 and over were being targeted.
- Very little was being done to formally promote 'health and well-being'.
- Involvement in the club was not very broad, despite interest being shown by people new to the community.

The club decided to address each of these issues. In the last 5 years the club has developed models and approaches, which work well and have resulted in it being awarded the Irish News Award for Underage Development for the last two years and again being short-listed in 2008. This Award is open to all clubs in Ulster.

Training Courses

Initially an in-house training course was organised, with 17 people participating, 15 of whom were parents not already involved with the club. 13 of these were mothers.

Participants have benefited from the training courses organised, gaining in confidence and readily accepting responsibility within the club.

A three-hour course for parents of toddlers was also organised prior to the implementation of a toddler programme, with 13 mums participating. This looked at how and what to organise by way of activities which would benefit toddlers in terms of social, emotional and motor skill development.

Coaching Programmes

While every club organises coaching activities, it was realised that young people were not being developed in the way that they should. Staggered annual programmes are not ideal for skill development or enhancement. The club's answer to this was to undertake an indoor programme for children aged 2-10 based on assessment at different levels.

This assessment is rolling and designed to give children a regular sense of achievement. It also demonstrates how children are developing and highlights areas in need of further attention. Parents are an integral part of this and the club could not operate without parental engagement.

Coaching Academy

It was realised early on that the model outlined above needed to be applied to the older children and young people. The club's Coaching Academy targets young people aged 12 to 18. This is more intensive but revolves around quality rather than quantity. It is open to all boys and girls within the area.

Participants are assessed under 4 areas:

- Technical Ability
- Tactical Ability
- Emotional Strength
- Physical Strength

Sessions are held monthly, lasting for 3 hours and focus on the above elements. The responsibility lies with the participants and if they consistently fail to attend, without excuse, they are asked to reconsider their commitment. Both approaches are child centred and have the welfare of the child at their core.

The club's 'Long-term Athlete Development' programme is designed to take young people from 2 years of age through to adult football.

Health and well-being

Lifestyle balance is now seen by the club as the foundation of its training ethos. Emphasis is also given to nutrition and hydration. The integral consideration of health and well-being has been a vital component in the club's approach over the past five years. The growing debate on childhood obesity and sedentary lifestyles is obvious but parents advise that they struggle to know what to do for the best.

The club's first venture in this area was a specific coaching block and Summer Camp under the title 'Fit for Fun'. As part of this, all families were issued with a leaflet, containing the following information sheets: 'It's Cool to Drink Water'; 'Smart Snax'; and 'Healthy Lunchbox Menu'. Club water bottles with the slogan: 'Be The Best You Can Be' are freely available to all young people. This reflects the club's emphasis on young people achieving the full extent of their own potential. Judgements are not made on the group, the focus is on the individual.

The club's annual Summer Camp had 85 participants last year; whereas the local primary school enrolment is 63.

The most pleasing aspect of the camp is the voluntary/parental input, which over the course of the week, comprised of 15 adult helpers, many of whom are mothers. Research shows that voluntary effort can have a significant mental as well as physical benefit for participants.

The club now has a Health and Well-Being Policy, which affirms its commitment to the whole area.

Club/School Links

Like many clubs, Teemore Shamrocks has good links with its local primary school. Traditionally the school was supported simply by the provision of coaching and equipment. However, it was realised that the club ought to expand the support given. Health and well-being is a major area for the school and a natural synergy in what both are doing has been achieved. Over the last 3 years, the club has:

- Helped the school develop its health policy.
- Provided a pack for all parents covering appropriate physical activity, healthy breaks and including a fridge magnet, which outlines salt and sugar contents of food labels.
- Assisted in the design of and obtaining funding for an outdoor play environment.
- Provided water coolers for classrooms, based on research carried out which suggested that hydrated children can concentrate more, especially in the afternoons.

In a recent Focus Inspection on Health and Well-Being, the school was highly commended for their efforts and specifically the relationship with the club.

Playboard

The club was the first in Northern Ireland to be involved with Playboard in the Playquest programme. The primary school was seen as integral to the initiative and Playboard staff spent 3 days in the school working with all classes on designing play programmes.

A joint seminar for parents was held with 21 out of 34 school families represented. This looked at the benefits of free play and what parents could do at home.

The final part of the programme looked at the 'real' involvement of young people in physical activity programmes. A Children's Committee was established within the club, which is both consultative and proactive and represents young people aged 4 to 11.

Leading the Way

Teemore Shamrocks is committed to the local community and over the last 5 years has reinvented itself to take account of changing attitudes and situations in our society. The club is dedicated to providing young people with information and equipping them with the confidence to make effective and appropriate lifestyle choices. It is acutely aware of the impacts it can have in terms of physical and mental well-being across the age spectrum.

The club has demonstrated its ability to provide leadership within its community and be a genuine force for positive change. It is also reaching out via its health and well-being initiative across the traditional divide. Conscious in these days of falling birth rates that sitting back and sticking with the tried and tested 'sports club' approach may no longer be relevant, Teemore Shamrocks is developing a model which can be used in any club setting and indeed across a range of sports.

Simonstown Gaels GAA Club

Background

They may not be the oldest club in county Meath – their formation in 1965 means they are far from it – but the awards picked up by Simonstown Gaels in recent years safeguard their proud claims of being amongst the most progressive.

Their impressive club facilities and grounds are evidence enough to establish why accolades such as the Meath Club of the Year awards from 2000 to 2003 and the Leinster award in 2002 and 2003 have been justly received.



Facility Development

Simonstown Gaels GAA Club embarked on an ambitious plan to re-develop their sports facility in 2000. Following extensive consultations and a detailed analysis of demand for sports facilities in light of the huge growth in population, especially of young people, in the area, the club came up with a plan to transform their local GAA club facility into a large community recreational facility.

At a cost of €2.5million and with lottery grants totalling €660,000, what once was a small clubhouse with 2 dressing rooms, a small hall and 2 pitches used mostly by the GAA club has been transformed into a large multi-sports centre with a large indoor sports hall, 6 dressing rooms, 2 redeveloped full-size floodlit pitches and a large floodlit synthetic all-weather pitch.

Both the indoor sports hall and the all-weather pitch opened during 2002 and are in constant use by the surrounding community for a huge range of activities such as basketball, badminton, soccer, tennis, hockey as well as gaelic games. Apart from the wide range of sports clubs that come from all over the county and beyond to use it, the facility is in use by 7 local primary and secondary schools, including 2 special needs schools.

Its main floodlit grass pitches have played host to many inter-county matches and are frequently used by the Meath County teams.

Coaching and Education Programme

Regular coaching programmes are organised for Under 8, U10; U12; U14 boys and U 10; U12; U 14 and U16 girls teams along with senior teams in each.

A series of coach education and learning programmes are offered at the Club. Courses include Drugs awareness; First Aid and various Coach Qualifications training classes.

Facility use and hire

There is a strong social element to the Club with regular entertainment and events hosted. The facilities are also available for hire.

The function room is used as a venue for parties catering for up to 120 people and is very much in demand for family gatherings such as surprise parties, christenings, first communion and confirmation. The newly refurbished hall is perfectly suited for larger parties, and is a popular venue for 21st birthday parties and other large-scale events.

Cappoquin Community Centre

Background

Cappoquin, situated in the heart of West Waterford, nestles at the foot of the Knockmealdown mountains in the Blackwater Valley. Cappoquin Community Development Company Limited was established in May 1993. The objective of the company is “to improve Cappoquin and its environs, physically, socially and economically”.

It is a company limited by guarantee and has been granted charitable status by the Revenue Commissioners.

In the past, the people of Cappoquin and surrounding areas have experienced periods of significant change socially, politically and economically and it was realised that there was a need to provide facilities which meet the demands of a dynamic community.

The Cappoquin Community Centre complex incorporating sport, leisure, childcare, culture and education was conceived to enhance local neighbourhoods and provide the local community with flexible facilities for recreation, enjoyment and development of essential life skills.



Cappoquin Community Centre

Achievements

The company already had an excellent record of achievements as illustrated below:

- 1993 Purchase and renovation of premises for use as company office.
- 1995 Publication of Cappoquin Development Plan. This was the first non-scheduled town in the County to have prepared a development plan.
- 1996 Purchased four acres of land to make sites available for private housing within the town.
- 1997 Purchase of former Calmark factory premises at Lefanta and conversion into two Enterprise Units.
- 1998 Provision of car park and landscaping at Twig Bog
- 1999 Published “Cappoquin - A Walk Through History”, the only comprehensive history of Cappoquin from earliest times to the Millennium.

- 2000 Construction of six additional Enterprise Units at Lefanta, Cappoquin
- 2001 - 2003 Planning permission received for Cappoquin Community Centre; former Mill Site leased from Waterford County Council and construction commenced.

Local Marketing and Sales “Help Build a Better Tomorrow... Today”

The company embarked on an extensive fundraising and marketing process and through time secured sufficient funding to commence the building project. Its target for local funding was €1.2m of a total cost of €2.3m.

The Facility

There were a number of specific spaces planned

- IT Rooms and General Classroom
- Creche and Playschool
- Sports Hall and Leisure Facilities with
- Cultural Facility – Art, Drama and Music

On 5 April 2007, the centre was officially opened by John O'Donoghue, Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism.

This project is an exemplar model of effective community planning with sport and cultural facilities and programmes as the core product

Clones Community Forum

Background

Clones is a rural town which has suffered from deprivation and reduced spend (previously a large trading post). It has a natural cross-border hinterland, with historical links to Fermanagh. However, as a result of road closures and the impact of the troubles, the community now strives to renew the links and reclaim its position as a cross-border trading town.

Despite lack of facilities there have been many famous sporting achievements (most notably Barry McGuigan). Clones is a multi-sport town that encourages social inclusion by promoting sport to all people of all ages. Prior to 1998, the local clubs acted independently; teenagers had nothing to do and there was a desire to address this void. It generated a huge community response and subsequently action was organised collectively for the Town. A community umbrella group (Clones Community Forum) was established to represent a variety of local needs including sports under ‘One Voice’

The local athletics club sold land for the benefit of a community school and the local GAA club gave first rights to their pitch to the Ulster and County Boards for the benefit of the town. Both clubs then needed facilities to meet existing and growing demand.

In 2000, the Clones community Forum commissioned research, with a feasibility study launched in 2002. Land was gradually made available to clubs, through a supportive landowner and the local soccer club secured neighbouring land for its new pitch.

Commitment of Clubs

There was an initial difference between the individual needs of clubs and those of the Forum. Athletics led the way for joint development and long-term mutual goals. Partnership, not competition, was the key.

The geographic nature of clubs required sharing facilities. It was important for the Forum to sell its ‘vision’ to the clubs. No one person but several ‘people champions’ helped. The professional people (in-

situ) at the Forum were vital to the success along with volunteer sub-committees as back-up. This led to buy-in, formally and informally and through cross-sport participation led to acceptance. The Clones Forum also facilitated the development of a specialised committee to focus on the sports project – the Clones Erne East Sports Partnership (CEESP).

Preparation and Delivery

It took a long time from initial buy-in to the planning for delivery stage, in particular turning individual wish-lists into a common wish-list. A high degree of community sacrifice/ethos as demonstrated by the Athletics and GAA clubs, helped to establish what would suit everyone.

The plan needed a visual/physical layout of what was required. The clubs negotiated the pitch/track location, with the land then legally held in trust. Once the plan and site layout was settled, long and arduous fundraising programme began. Every stakeholder at every level was contacted, consulted and lobbied to support the project. The Clones Town manager was brought on board and the concept was included in the regional plan.

The community came together to raise funds. Smaller clubs (e.g. boxing) were involved. Local need for a home and venue are the major objectives for clubs and the community. There is no community centre within the town which can host events. In comparison to other towns, there is a significant lack of venues with little room for expansion of existing small halls. Local school facilities are prohibitively expensive.

Special Olympics clubs have been established within the town, to build on the legacy of 2003 World Special Olympic Games. This has also led to a desire to promote basketball among the large Lithuanian immigrant population. Clones was host to the Lithuanian Special Olympics Team prior to the 2003 Games.

Planning and Funding

The Forum secured £50k towards the costs of engaging outline design team professionals. With costed plans, the Clones Erne East Sports Partnership with Monaghan County Council as lead partner group applied to PEACE III and has been successful in securing over €7m towards the capital costs. The project is currently at design review stage.

The initial project includes a 400m, eight lane athletic track; a synthetic bowling green; a multi purpose synthetic pitch to accommodate GAA, Rugby or Soccer; tennis courts; a basketball court; cricket crease and a walking track.

"This project will be a beacon for the community of Clones – a place our young people will have a venue where they can engage in sporting activity and where parents will know that their children are safe and fulfilled."

"Clones will be the proudest town in County Monaghan and will boast a Community Sports Facility which will have no comparison in the county or the surrounding counties. It will attract families to come to live in Clones where it will compliment our existing excellent school facilities"

Brian Morgan, Chairman of the Clones Regeneration Partnership

Conclusions

This paper considered a number of case studies of clubs and community development groups, which have successfully contributed to building community cohesion and pride.

Sport - Building Community Cohesion and Capacity

This has been achieved through major capital building projects but also by effective sports development work in the community “of the club” and within the wider local community.

Sports development in the community and community development through sport are different approaches, which in the projects explored here, can bring about major positive benefit to local communities. Neither approach can deliver a quick fix because there is a process of change involved – change of mindset, belief and individual vision and planning.

Success, in these examples, comes from a range of inputs including strong community/club leadership; partnership between club, community and a variety of agencies; and the support of the local Council.

Lessons for other clubs and community groups which have the potential and will to “make a change in the community” include having an agreed vision and development plan; funding and marketing plan; strong leadership within; effective partnerships in the community, with statutory agencies and local Council support; committed and skilled team members; resilience; and a driving force – project officer/person who pushes through with delivering on actions and agreed targets.

Sport and Social Issues in Ireland

Introduction

There are many studies of the relationship between participating in sport and a person's health. The Economic and Social Research Institute in conjunction with the Irish Sports Council have recently produced four important baseline studies of sport in Ireland, namely:-

- Sports Participation & Health Among Adults in Ireland (2004)
- Social & Economic Value of Sport (2005)
- School Children & Sport in Ireland (2005)
- Fair Play? Sport & Social Disadvantage in Ireland (2007).
- Sporting lives: an analysis of a lifetime in Irish Sport (2008)

These studies provide a valuable insight into sport activity among adults and children in Ireland and the implications for sports policy and a national strategy.

Similarly, Sport NI has commissioned a series of research projects covering areas such as:

- Improving Physical Literacy (2008)
- Economic Importance of Sport in NI (2008).

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure NI (DCAL) and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) have respectively published the following:

- Sports Participation and Satisfaction with Sports Provision in Northern Ireland (2008)
- Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006 -16 (2006)

DCAL and Sport NI have produced a *Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation – 2007–2017* (Draft). The purpose of the Strategy is to establish the key priorities for the future development of sport and physical recreation in Northern Ireland and to inform the direction of future investment.

There is an imminent launch of a Draft Play Policy for Northern Ireland through OFMDFM. It is anticipated that this will be followed by strategic recommendations with direct implications and responsibilities for local Councils.

This brief paper looks at the above studies under the following headings:

- Children's Health and Sports Participation;
- Overweight and Obesity in Children;
- Adult Health and Sports Participation;
- Sport and Social Disadvantage;
- Social and Economic Value of Sport;

and considers what implications there may be for local authorities in addressing these issues.

Children's Health and Sports Participation

Organised children's sport in Ireland rests on three main pillars:-

- Physical Education (PE) in schools
- Extra-curricular sport played in schools
- Sport played in sport clubs.

There is a fourth important form of children's sport consisting of unstructured sport engaged in as part of children's informal play both in school and outside it. This informal sport is essential to children's development.

Play opportunities enhance the mental health of children and young people. Research highlights the importance of children being able to play, take risks and to use their own initiative. It is essential for them to have opportunities to practice making and consolidating friendships and to deal with and resolve conflict – these are the basic skills needed to become “emotionally literate”.

The ESRI Report ‘School Children and Sport in Ireland’ (2005) provides an up-to-date analysis of children's levels and patterns of participation in sport and outlines the public policy implications, with particular reference to education, policy and sports policy.

The report is based upon a survey and study of 7,300 school children in 217 primary and second-level schools in Ireland. The samples included students from fifth class in primary schools up to sixth year second-level schools. The principals of the sampled schools were also surveyed.

Some of the main findings of the survey were:-

- ❖ Students in second-level schools receive less PE per week than is recommended in the PE syllabus (69 minutes against 120 minutes)
- ❖ Mix of activities delivered in PE is dominated by a limited number of team sports, especially soccer, basketball and badminton
- ❖ Certain recommended core activities such as dance, swimming, gymnastics and adventure activities are taken by less than 1 in 5 students in PE classes
- ❖ Second-level students took part more frequently in extra-curricular sport in schools and in sport outside the school than they did in PE
- ❖ Sport participation generally declines as students move up through second-level school due to time pressures of school work
- ❖ 20% of second level schools lacked a qualified PE teacher
- ❖ 25% of second-level schools did not have access to a multi-purpose indoor hall
- ❖ Second level and particularly primary level schools rely on off-site sporting facilities
- ❖ Parents' participation in sport had a positive effect on children's participation in sport
- ❖ The level of sports facilities available in school had a positive effect on sports participation in school
- ❖ Television viewing occupied a substantial part of the second level students day with around 40% watching 2 to 3 hours TV per day. Time spent watching TV showed no decline over the second-level school cycle at the expense of participation in sport.
- ❖ Television viewing had a negative effect on sports participation outside the school.

The Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006-2016 suggests that only 36% of children (aged under 16 years) participate in sport/physical activity 3-5 times per week.

Sport NI has investigated issues around the development, implementation and measurement of the area of children's physical development currently referred to as physical literacy (PL) which is defined as:

“The ability to use body management, locomotor and object control skills in a competent manner, with the capacity to apply them with confidence in settings which may lead to sustained involvement in sport and physical recreation.”

The development of PL is a key issue for PE in primary schools.

The Declaration of the National Summit on Physical Education in January 2005 states that:

“The aim of physical education is systematically to develop physical competence so that children are able to move efficiently, effectively and safely and understand what they are doing. The outcome – physical literacy – is as important to children’s education and development as numeracy and literacy.”

The draft Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2007-2017 identifies PL as a main area for development and a number of the ‘Key Steps for Success’ are related to it.

The Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model was first proposed in the UK in 1998 (Balyi, 1998). This model was originally a four-stage process, designed for the preparation of elite athletes, but later, the model was developed to include an initial ‘FUNDamentals’ phase upon which the subsequent stages are built (Balyi, 2002). Together the first and second stages of the LTAD model (FUNDamentals and Learning to Train) represent the period when PL is established.

The LTAD model, or a version of it, is now the development model of choice for many sports clubs, governing bodies of sport and local, regional and national sports development agencies, across Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, the UK and beyond.

The Young Person’s Behaviour and Attitude Survey in NI (2003) showed that 23% of all young people in the survey (Year 8 to Year 12) had used drugs/solvents and 60% had used alcohol. One third of survey respondents (35%) had been offered drugs or solvents. The mean age that young people first started using drugs (including solvents) was 12.5 years. The mean age when they first started using alcohol was 11.9 years.

Smoking is a serious health problem in terms of the health of Northern Ireland’s children. The survey also indicated that 33% of those young people surveyed had smoked; 11% of those who smoked had their first cigarette before the age of 9 years; and 54% of those who smoked had their first cigarette before the age of 12.

Sport and Recreation Policy needs to consider the importance of a child’s growth and learning experience through play activity and also of the need to address a range of anti-social behaviors which deny children and young people the opportunity for healthy lifestyles and contribute to increasing expenditure and resources being targeted at areas of prevention as opposed to maintenance and development of positive activities.

The implications of the LTAD and PL approaches will have significant relevance to future programming by clubs and sports facilities. Strategically, consideration should be given to the merits of supporting and developing multi-sports clubs as opposed to sport specific clubs. Further examination of club and sport models from Europe and Australia in particular would add perspective to future opportunity for planning and development of sports facilities.

Overweight and Obesity in Children

A particular concern with the health of children in Northern Ireland is the increasing levels of obesity found in children. Research by the Queen’s University and the University of Ulster, carried out as part of the Young Hearts study, indicates that, among 12 to 15 year olds, the percentage of children that are overweight or obese has increased by more than a quarter in the past decade.

Obesity is the result of an excess of energy intake (i.e. food consumption) over energy expenditure. The National Taskforce on Obesity in Ireland in its 2005 report identified that obesity and excess weight are now a major public health problem among both children and adults.

The “Fit Futures” (DHSSPS published March 2006) task force for Northern Ireland, in examining the options for the prevention in the rise in levels of obesity in children and young people highlights the role of play in developing in young children an active and healthy lifestyle and states that government departments and agencies have a major role in ensuring opportunities for active play are available and accessible to children.

“Fit Futures” calls for investment in and joined planning for the creation of an environment where children are motivated and supported to access a range of readily available, quality, enjoyable opportunities to be active and eat healthily.

Obesity is economically costly and the number of premature deaths it causes is estimated at 2,000 per year. It is estimated that the treatment cost for patients with obesity-related problems costs approximately €70m per annum in Ireland.

The ESRI study identified that:-

- 15.4% and 16.6% of second level boys and girls respectively were found to be overweight
- 4.5% and 3.8% of second-level boys and girls respectively were found to be obese.

Obese children and adolescents face many immediate and long-term health risks. Type 2 diabetes and other weight related diseases are being increasingly observed in children. Another complication of childhood obesity is the metabolic syndrome, diagnosed when a person has at least three of five metabolic abnormalities. This syndrome is now present in at least 30% of obese children in the United States.

Apart from the physical health risks, obesity is also associated with psychological problems such as social marginalisation and low self-esteem. The physical and social effects of obesity may carry through to adulthood and reduce life expectancy.

Evidence in the US suggests that family socio-economic status is inversely related to obesity prevalence in children. However, in Ireland the proportion of children who are obese does not vary consistently by socio-economic group.

In Ireland, as in many countries, measurement of obesity among children is too recent and unstandardised for it to be possible to assess trends over time with any precision. However, one thing is certain, obesity in children is increasing and obesity is linked to health problems.

The research concluded that there were no strong patterns between measures of sports participation and Body Mass Index in school children. This may seem surprising but is in keeping with research in other countries. This lack of a strong relationship may arise because measures of physical activity do not adequately capture real variations in energy expenditure.

Sport and Recreation policy should therefore maintain a broad perspective on children's activity, and adopt a cross-disciplinary approach, and should not become overly focused on its relationship with body mass.

Adult Health and Sports Participation

International research shows that physical inactivity is a major contributor to poor health and premature mortality. It increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, hypertension, diabetes, colon cancer, breast cancer and osteoporotic fractures. It also contributes to various mental health conditions, particularly depression, anxiety and negative mood.

In 2003, the ESRI interviewed over 3,000 adults and determined that Ireland is in line with international experience with 40% of adults participating in physical activity to a level recommended by the World Health Organisation. The ESRI compiled a report in 2004 entitled Sports Participation and Health Among Adults in Ireland where the results of the survey were published. Some of the main findings of the report are:-

- 1 in 5 adults in Ireland take no physical exercise
- Only 2 in 5 meet minimum standard of physical exercise
- Recreational walking by far the most popular form of exercise

- For men most popular sports are golf, soccer, swimming and GAA
- For women most popular sports are swimming and aerobics
- As people age they tend to drop out of sport
- Sports participation can lead to higher levels of alcohol consumption.

The main recommendations of the report are:-

- More attention should be paid to encouraging older people and women to participate in sport
- Provision of increased sports facilities may not necessarily raise levels of sports participation.
- Physical planning is important in providing suitable, safe walking and cycling routes to encourage people to walk and cycle.

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in Northern Ireland published findings in April 2008 from the Continuous Household Surveys up to 2006/07 relating to the level of participation and satisfaction with sports provision in Northern Ireland. Some of the findings include:

- In 2006/07, 53% of persons aged 16+ had participated in sport/physical activity in the last year. This figure compared to 51% in 2005/06, 54% in 2004/05, and 55% in 2003/04
- Sports participation (in the last 12 months) was highest amongst those in professional occupations (78%) and those aged 16-29 years old (77%).

Finland has succeeded in stemming the rise in obesity/ overweight levels through a combination of healthier eating and increased levels of participation in sport and physical recreation. In Finland, 70% of the population attain physical activity levels recommended by the Chief Medical Officers in UK (at least 30 mins 5 times per week) compared to only 32% in the UK.

Sport and Social Disadvantage in Ireland

The 2007 ESRI report *Fair Play? Sport & Social Disadvantage in Ireland* examines the impact of social disadvantage on various forms of participation in sport, using data from more than 3,000 Irish adults. It found those with low income or low educational attainments are many times less likely to participate. This effect is so strong that the large majority of people who play sport in Ireland are from higher income and better educated social groups. Placed in the context of Irish Sports policy, this means that public spending on sport is very likely to be regressive with the less well off subsidising the activities of the better off. If public spending on sport is to continue to be justified on the grounds that it benefits all in Irish society, greater priority needs to be given to policies that are of clear benefit to the disadvantaged.

Sport NI commissioned an evaluation of its pilot Community Sport Programme (CSP) funded by DCAL. The CSP focused on the development of communities through sport, rather than the development of sport in communities. This emphasis generated the requirement for Development Officers to have a wider focus, potentially redefining what is understood by traditional sports development and instigating an holistic approach to community development.

Several interventions have succeeded in developing a joined up approach between schools, community initiatives (for example, health, nutrition, alcohol and drugs awareness) and the CSP. There were examples of cross-community work that had been carried out in such a way as to contribute to a reduction in anti-social behaviour and crime. A focus on nutrition and oral health has been effective in increasing awareness and improving the health and lifestyles of people within target communities. Similar initiatives have also linked up with drugs and alcohol awareness programmes.

Lessons from the Programme include:

- **Taking a bespoke approach**
The diverse nature of the CSPs and the differences in demographic factors, existing

infrastructure, capacity to deliver, and personnel and management structures within each CSP area, highlight the need for bespoke planning and delivery rather than a standardised approach.

- **Setting realistic and focused targets**

There is a requirement to set focused targets to be achieved within a feasible timescale, which take into account the existing baseline measures, infrastructure and the capacity for delivery. A 'true' baseline measure must be available to enable the assessment of any programme outcomes.

- **Implementing successful programme management**

There needs to be clear guidance and direction from within effective management support structures to enable the achievement of objectives.

- **Adopting an integrated approach**

The analysis identified that a holistic approach to influencing lifestyle was required. The case studies highlighted the importance of not tackling issues in isolation and of providing an integrated programme to address a range of health issues collaboratively. It was suggested that programmes focusing solely on physical activity are insufficient to have a significant effect on community development.

Policy implications include a targeting of funding and resources at areas of deprivation and integrating with the communities to deliver achievable outputs such as increases in physical and lifestyle activities coupled with inter-disciplinary interventions on health, diet, substance abuse, education, etc.

Social and Economic Value of Sport

Sport NI suggests that people in Northern Ireland value sport and physical recreation as an important dimension of their culture. Interest in sport and physical recreation spans the entire community. People value the chance to play, compete, spectate and volunteer. Sport and physical recreation provides heroes, heroines and moments of inspiration. It can also promote important cultural values in society, including honesty, fair play, respect, tolerance and teamwork.

In addition to its intrinsic importance, there is a growing awareness of the significant contribution sport makes to improve society including:

- Community Cohesion
- Public Health
- Education and Skills
- The Economy
- NI's image at home and abroad.

In 2004, £446 million was spent by consumers on sport-related goods and services in Northern Ireland. Consumer expenditure on sport as a percentage of total expenditure is estimated at 2.8% compared to 2.4% in England. Whilst the major expenditure occurred in the purchase of sports clothing and footwear, the expenditure on participation subscription and fees rose from £43m to £67m.

Sport-related employment in Northern Ireland grew from 11,600 in the year 1998 to 13,700 in 2004. As a percentage of total employment, it increased from 1.7% to 1.9% respectively compared to a similar rise in England from 1.5% to 1.8%.

An analysis of district council expenditure on "Recreation, Sport, Culture and Heritage" suggests that collectively, NI's 26 District councils expend £135m per annum on sport and physical recreation, including capital and revenue projects and programmes.

Summary

Ireland is changing. The last fifteen years has seen an unprecedented economic boom. People's lives have changed significantly; people are working longer hours; people are spending more time commuting;

children are more likely to be cared for in childcare facilities rather than at home; people are eating a more diverse and often unhealthy diet; overweight and obesity are starting to cause concern and significant cost.

The changing lifestyle of people has impacted on their participation in sport whereby people have time to participate actively or as a volunteer in sport. The health benefits of sport are well documented for the adult population and the wider social and economic benefits have been identified. It is more difficult to link obesity in children with lack of participation in sport, however, anecdotal evidence would suggest that more active children are healthier.

The four main sporting outlets for children which were identified earlier are:-

- PE in schools
- Extra-curricular sport played in schools
- Sport played in sports clubs
- Informal sport and play (outside school).

While local authorities can have little impact on sports played in school, they have a role in the physical planning of built-up areas to ensure that safe walking routes and cycle-ways to and from schools are provided in order to provide an alternative option to encourage parents not to transport children to and from school by car.

Local authorities have an important role to play directly or indirectly in the provision of sports facilities for children and young adults. Local authorities use their statutory role under planning legislation to zone lands in built up areas for the extension or the new provision, of schools and recreational facilities. Schools often avail of local authority provided and operated recreational facilities such as playing pitches, swimming pools, community centres etc, during normal school time. Some local authorities have facilitated schools with land for new buildings and recreational facilities. Children's playgrounds are provided for the very young, while green and paved areas can be used by older children for field and other sports.

The ESRI study has shown that school-going children spend an increasing amount of time watching television and there is a need to promote alternatives to this sedentary lifestyle by providing safe, accessible and affordable outdoor and possibly indoor play areas.

Many sporting organisations particularly GAA, Soccer and Rugby clubs have also availed of local authority owned land to provide or expand their facilities and clubs also use local authority recreational facilities as their operating centre or for training purposes. The ERSI study has shown that the enhancement of recreational facilities in a community has a much wider impact than solely the benefits of actively engaging in sport, such as the positive social and economic effects gained through the participation of volunteers.

Local authorities provide recreational facilities for individuals who may not be a member of a club or participate in team sports. These facilities include swimming pools, golf and pitch-and-putt courses, etc, and are one of the greatest areas of influence that local authorities have in meeting the informal sport and play recreational demands of young people.

All local authorities provide and maintain public open spaces which can be used for a multitude of types of informal sports and play. Public walkways can be used for cycling or walking which has been identified as the most common form of sport activity engaged in by adults.

Local authorities should ensure that the physical planning of built up areas facilitates the provision of safe walking and cycling routes. Some local authorities also are involved directly or indirectly in the provision of rural walking and cycling routes through scenic areas and along disused railway lines.

Sports clubs and schools tend to provide very adequate facilities for a limited range of mostly team sports such as soccer, GAA, basketball, etc. The ESRI studies have shown that people alter the type of sporting activity that they engage in as they get older.

In providing sports or playing facilities local authorities should provide alternative types of facilities and not replicate facilities already adequately provided but diversify into other forms of recreation which may be used by individuals as well as groups.

Local Authorities must be aware of the implications of increasing population levels and the future need for green space. There will also be significant issues with land cost and therefore Councils should plan for future needs and ensure that appropriate space is available for leisure development whether it be green space or new infrastructure.

The ESRI identified that as people age they tend to take part in sporting activities less and less. Local authorities should consider the needs of older adults when planning and developing recreational facilities.

Local authorities should also target the socially disadvantaged when planning and developing recreational facilities.

The planning, development and operation of sport facilities in Ireland is a complex and diverse one involving many stakeholders both public and private at national and local level. There is no doubt that increasing the engagement in sport by active participants and volunteers provides huge benefits not only from a public health perspective but also from a social and economic one.

Local authorities have a key role to play as sport policy formulators through their planning and community functions and also as sports service providers through the development of recreational facilities. A new responsibility for the communities "well-being" will be adopted by district councils in Northern Ireland under the Review of Public Administration. It is important that when planning and developing sports facilities local authorities are aware of the demands and requirements of all sectors of the community in order to target those most in need.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It is important that financial resources allocated to the development of sport are targeted correctly and that their full impact, apart from health and wellbeing is understood. The ESRI studied the social and economic value of sport and published its findings in 2005 in its report "*Social and Economic Value of Sport in Ireland*".

The report identified the large level of volunteerism in sport in Ireland and highlights the unique contribution of the GAA as "one of the great generators of social capital" and a model of what the voluntary, community-based sports organisation can contribute to society.

The report recommends that funding for sport should be shaped with a view to supporting the social as well as the physical benefits of sport, particularly by encouraging the development of community-based models of sports organisations; sustaining or increasing the numbers who volunteer for sport; enhancing the volunteer experience; promoting social membership as well as playing membership of sports clubs; and facilitating attendance at sports events, for example with funding for sports stadiums and club facilities.

Sport and Recreation Policy also needs to consider the importance of a child's growth and learning experience through play activity and also of the need to address a range of anti-social behaviours which deny children and young people the opportunity for healthy lifestyles and contribute to increasing expenditure and resources being targeted at areas of prevention as opposed to maintenance and development of positive activities.

In the Republic of Ireland, there is a growing emphasis on children's play policy and its significance is further identified in the National Children's Strategy and the role of the Office of the Minister for Children.

Northern Ireland places similar emphasis on children through the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister which has produced a Draft Play Policy for NI and Councils ongoing commitment to providing safe play environments for children in the community.

The implications of the LTAD and PL approaches will have significant relevance to future programming in facilities and by clubs. Strategically, consideration should be given to the merits of supporting and developing multi-sports clubs as opposed to sport specific clubs. Further examination of club and sport models from Europe and Australia in particular would add perspective to future opportunities for planning and development of sports facilities.

Policy should maintain a broad perspective on children's activity and adopt a cross-disciplinary approach and should not become overly focused on its relationship with body mass.

Recommendations for policy makers include the need for an holistic approach to health and participation in sport and physical activity. This requires a cross-disciplinary and inter-departmental approach to address the varied components of healthy diet, participation in sport, education programmes etc.

In providing sports or playing facilities local authorities should provide alternative types of facilities and not replicate facilities already adequately provided but diversify into other forms of recreation which may be used by individuals as well as groups.

Local Authorities must be aware of the implications of increasing population levels and the future need for green space. There will also be significant issues with land cost and therefore Councils should plan for future needs and ensure that appropriate space is available for leisure development whether it be green space or new infrastructure.

The ESRI identified that as people age they tend to take part in sporting activities less and less. Local authorities should consider the needs of older adults when planning and developing recreational facilities.

Local authorities should also target the socially disadvantaged and those with physical disabilities when planning and developing recreational facilities.

The planning, development and operation of sport facilities in Ireland is a complex and diverse one involving many stakeholders both public and private at national and local level. There is no doubt that increasing the engagement in sport by active participants and volunteers provides huge benefits not only from a public health perspective but also from a social and economic one.

Local authorities have a key role to play as sport policy formulators through their planning and community functions and also as sports service providers through the development of recreational facilities. A new responsibility for the communities "well-being" will be adopted by district councils in Northern Ireland under the Review of Public Administration. It is important that when planning and developing sports facilities local authorities are aware of the demands and requirements of all sectors of the community in order to target those most in need.

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