

Labour's Plan for Sporting Communities



Labour

One Ireland
jobs, reform, fairness

Labour's plan for sporting communities

Executive Summary

For Irish people, sport is a national passion. It is a cornerstone of our national identity, bringing together different communities, walks of life and nationalities through a wide range of activities and events. Acts of sporting greatness are a part of the fabric of our nation, which live on in memory long after the final whistle has blown.

The benefits of participation in sport are clear: a healthy lifestyle, social interaction, civic cohesion, promoting self-confidence and national identity, and tackling obesity and mental health difficulties. Over 1.3 million people in Ireland regularly participate in sport and physical exercise. 400,000 people volunteer every year to help in clubs. The ESRI estimated in 2005 that combining the cost of playing, club membership, attendance at events and volunteering, the economic value of sport was about €1.4 billion.

Labour's approach to sport is simple: we need to build participation from the bottom up, while also supporting our elite athletes from the top down. Sport should be something that happens in the community, not exclusively behind high walls or expensive membership fees.

This is the principle that underpins Labour's approach to public investment in sport.

MAKING SPORT ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

- **Successful Local Sports Partnerships which increase participation will be mainstreamed, and support will be maintained for the Community Games.** Local Sports Partnerships have the potential to build participation from the bottom up. Labour will mainstream successful sports partnership pilot projects that have proven their effectiveness in broadening participation, using funding from a reformed betting levy. The Community Games will continue to be supported since they help to widen participation, while providing elite athletes with a vital first step on the road to elite success.

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO PROVIDING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- **Funding will be provided from a Community Development Fund for core, integrated, multifunctional community amenities,** such as Youth Cafes, Arts Centres, Indoor Recreational Space, facilities for older people **and other amenities which have the capacity to generate income streams identified by local communities.** These income generating amenities would sustain the operation of the core amenities. One amenity, which meets this criterion and is valuable in its own right, is the provision of synthetic grass playing pitches, which can be hired to users on a commercial basis, and which could generate an operational surplus of €60,000 per annum. This dual

approach to facilities would address the current problem whereby the provision of capital funding alone and the lack of an income stream for operating costs means many community facilities are unable to sustain themselves for maximum community gain.

- **The Community Development Fund will receive funding from the reconstituted Beneficiary Fund of the National Lottery.** Efficiency savings of €15.6m from a reconstituted Beneficiary Fund of the National Lottery will be used to fund up to 12 pilot projects in the first year of operation.
- **The application process will be reformed and ownership of the multi-functional facilities will be vested in the recognised community group.** This will be the Community Group registered with the Voluntary and Community Directorate of the relevant Local authority. Failure to maintain the amenity will result in ownership reverting to the control of the Local Authority. Ownership of the synthetic grass pitch will be vested in the local school on which the facility is constructed.

A COHERENT APPROACH TO DEVELOPING SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

- **The National Sports Facilities Strategy will be the blueprint for developing facilities.** Capital investment in multi-use sporting facilities will be prioritised. Labour believes that funding of Irish sport should be re-allocated away from capital projects, and towards employment and promotion of sport on a local and national level, which is proven to be more effective at increasing participation in sport.
- **Any future grants will reflect the National Audit of Sports Facilities.** Grants allocated under the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme will reflect the National Audit of Sports Facilities and the amount of private facilities in the area. It will place most emphasis on the refurbishment of derelict pools; on ensuring provision in areas which have experienced rapid population growth; and areas that demonstrate a clear need.

SUPPORTING IRELAND'S ELITE ATHLETES

- **The International Carding Scheme will continue to support our elite athletes subject to review after London 2012.** Through the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport we will review the current structures and strategic plans of sporting bodies, examining the implementation of High Performance Plans and long-term coaching plans within the bodies.

ADOPTING A MORE JOINED-UP, STRATEGIC APPROACH TO SPORT IN IRELAND

- **Policy making will be the responsibility of the Department. Agencies will implement and assess outcomes.** It is in the interests of all stakeholders that national policy for sport should be effective and funding transparent and strategic.
- **Funding for state agencies and governing bodies will be made more transparent** and structured, with the Minister holding ultimate responsibility for funding decisions. In future, funding will be conditional on beneficiaries signing up to dispute resolution services, such as the Just Sport Ireland initiative, and adhering to mandatory codes of conduct regarding child protection in sport.
- **The Irish Sports Council will be renamed Sport and Recreation Ireland, with an expanded remit.** Sport and Recreation Ireland will partner local authorities, OPW, Waterways Ireland and Coillte to identify appropriate outdoor facilities such as treks, walks and cycle ways, camping and water sports. It will also work with the local authorities to improve recreation facilities. A number of positions on the Sports Council's Governing Board will be made directly electable.
- **Partnerships between schools and local clubs to share facilities will be encouraged.** Building partnerships to share sports facilities can be self-financing.

CHANGING THE FINANCING OF THE HORSE AND GREYHOUND FUND

- **The Horse and Greyhound fund will be maintained, though without direct subvention from the Exchequer.** Instead, Labour will introduce a betting levy of 1.5%, extended across all media and on-course transactions. Part of the revenue raised from this levy will go towards the Horse and Greyhound Fund. We also favour the benchmarking of Horse Racing prize money to a level above that of our competitor nations in Europe. How a reconstituted fund will be raised and administered will be decided in consultation with all stakeholders.

A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

For Irish people, sport is a national passion. It is a cornerstone of our national identity, bringing together different communities, walks of life and nationalities through a wide range of activities and events. Acts of sporting greatness are a part of the fabric of our nation, which live on in memory long after the final whistle has blown.

The benefits of participation in sport are clear: a healthy lifestyle, social interaction, civic cohesion, promoting self-confidence, tackling obesity and mental health difficulties and promoting national identity. Over 1.3 million people in Ireland regularly participate in sport and physical exercise. 400,000 people volunteer every year to help in clubs. The ESRI estimated in 2005 that combining the cost of playing, club membership, attendance at events and volunteering, the economic value of sport was about €1.4 billion.

However, public investment in sport has not been consistently effective in widening participation. For instance, the Sports Capital Programme tends to favour team sports despite the fact that research has shown that 76% of all adult sporting activity is individual sport. In 2008, over €300 million of public money was invested in the sports capital programme, yet the participation rate decreased.

There is also a marked distinction between participation rates across different socio-economic groups with the poorest participating least. And despite the high profile success of some of our leading female athletes, such as Katie Taylor and Derval O'Rourke, there is a significant gender gap in participation in sport.

Labour's approach to sport is simple: we need to build participation from the bottom up, while also supporting our elite athletes from the top down. Sport should be something that happens in the community, not exclusively behind high walls or expensive membership fees.

Spending on sport needs to be smart, with priority given to providing opportunities for people to participate, using the existing facilities. This is why the Local Sports Partnerships are so important. Capital investment should be focussed on multi-use facilities, based on national or community needs. Accountability by the semi-state organisations has to be enhanced. The Minister must be held responsible for the major spending decisions and consequently for success or failure of such decisions.

The Labour Party is committed to ensuring universal access and opportunity for participation; to addressing social and gender inequality; to encouraging less active groups to participate; to developing a range of community facilities which will serve as a hub of social and recreational activity throughout our country; and to further developing our sporting facilities to ensure that our elite athletes can compete with the best in the world.

LABOUR'S PLAN FOR SPORTING COMMUNITIES

MAKING SPORT ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

- **Successful local schemes which increase sport participation will be mainstreamed, and support will be maintained for the Community Games.** Local Sports Partnerships, numbering 33 in 2008, have the potential to build participation from the bottom up. In 2009 a total of 744 programmes took place for over 112,000 people, run in conjunction with Local Sports Partnerships. This number was up from 433 programmes running in 2008 with 69,843 people participating. Labour believes that everyone, regardless of gender, age or background, should have the opportunity to participate in sport. Labour will mainstream successful sports partnership projects that have proven their effectiveness in broadening participation, using funding from a reconfigured betting levy. The Community Games will continue to be supported since they help to widen participation while providing elite athletes with a vital first step on the road to elite success.

ESTABLISHING A ONE STOP SHOP WEBSITE TO PROMOTE SPORT AND RECREATION

- **A one stop shop website will be established to promote sport and recreation.** All individual Local Sport Partnership websites would be accessible via a one stop shop website which would provide individuals and clubs with information, hosting forums and advertising of upcoming events. Social networking tools like Facebook and Twitter should also be utilised to reach the greatest numbers possible.

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO PROVIDING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- **Funding will be provided from a Community Development Fund for core community amenities, such as Youth Cafes, Arts Centres, Indoor Recreational Space, facilities for older people and other amenities which have the capacity to generate income streams identified by local communities.** These income generating amenities would sustain the operation of the core amenities. One amenity, which meets this criterion and is valuable in its own right, is the provision of synthetic grass pitches which can be hired to users on a commercial basis and could generate an operational surplus in excess of €60,000 per annum.
- **Core amenities would be fully integrated, multifunctional facilities** offering a full range of activities and programmes to all sectors of society. Youth Cafes, for instance, would help to address the current deficit in facilities for young people, especially since the majority of young people surveyed for Teenspace, believed there was very little provision for teenagers in their locality. These cafes could be used as spaces during the day for senior groups to facilitate social contact and learning.

- **The Community Development Fund will receive funding from the reconstituted Beneficiary Fund of the National Lottery.** Efficiency savings of €15.6m from a reconstituted Beneficiary Fund of the National Lottery will be used to fund up to 12 pilot projects in the first year of operation. Staff payroll costs will constitute the main element of expenditure. Managerial staff will be seconded from reconstituted public agencies. Care taking staff will be provided by Community Employment Schemes and passive supervision will be provided by user groups – voluntary and professional.
- **The application process will be reformed** so that the first application is made to the local authority since this facilitates dialogue between applicant and authority, which is not easy under the current system. Once the applicant has been deemed 'eligible to compete', a full application will be made to the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism.
- **Ownership of the multi-functional facilities will be vested in the recognised community group.** This will be the Community Group registered with the Voluntary and Community Directorate of the relevant Local authority. Failure to maintain the amenity will result in ownership reverting to the control of the Local Authority. If a synthetic grass pitch is built in partnership with a local school, ownership of that pitch will be vested in the local school on which the facility is constructed.

A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN SPORTS FACILITIES

“Detailed econometric work looking at a range of capital spending projects by constituency rather than county reveals that powerful Irish ministers skew large amounts of funding to their home constituencies.

In sports funding, the powerful are the minister for sport and the minister for finance. Clubs in their constituencies receive more money in total, receive a greater amount per application, are more likely to make successful applications, and more likely to have more successful applications than others.”

‘Political Patronage Still Controls the Purse Strings’, *The Irish Times*, 4 May 2010

Labour in government will put an end to this kind of unfair patronage that sees money follow the Minister, rather than flow, fairly and transparently, to where it can have the most impact.

- **Under Labour, the National Sports Facilities Strategy will be the blueprint for developing facilities.** Capital investment in multi-use sporting facilities will be prioritised. Labour believes that funding of Irish sport should be reallocated away from capital projects, and moved towards employment and promotion of sport on a local and national level, which has been proven to be more effective at increasing participation in sport. For example, in 2009,

the ESRI wrote “There is a strong case for moving away from the provision of physical capital to funding the human and social capital associated with sport. International evidence suggests that communication with non-participants (through for example the organisation and marketing of events, targeted programmes and new opportunities) is more likely to raise levels of participation.”

- **Any future grants will reflect the National Audit of Sports Facilities.** Grants allocated under the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme will be cognizant of the National Audit of Sports Facilities and the amount of private facilities in the area. It will place most emphasis on the refurbishment of derelict pools; on ensuring provision in areas which have experienced rapid population growth; and areas that demonstrate a clear need.

SUPPORTING OUR ELITE ATHLETES

- **The International Carding Scheme will continue to support our elite athletes subject to review after London 2012.** Despite the success of our elite athletes, it is clear that all is not well. With the notable exception of our boxers, Ireland’s performance at the Olympic Games in 2008 could have been better, especially when compared to countries of a similar population such as New Zealand. The success of boxing in 2008 and 2010 shows what dedicated long term funding can achieve for an entire discipline in terms of “consistent and repeatable medal success.” (Irish Sports Council 2009, *Quadrennial High Performance Review*).

The Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport must bring together all of the interested parties such as the Irish Sports Council, the Olympic Council of Ireland, the Irish Institute of Sport and the Federation of Irish Sports to ensure that there is close cooperation in the planning phase for and during London 2012. Major reform of how we run sport and support our elite athletes is also required. Through the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Labour will review the current structures and strategic plans of sporting bodies, examining the implementation of High Performance Plans and long-term coaching plans within the bodies.

GETTING BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY

- **Policy making will be responsibility of the Department.** Agencies will implement and assess outcomes. It is in the interests of all stakeholders that national policy for sport should be effective and funding transparent and strategic. To date the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport has farmed out much responsibility for policy development to external consultants and semi-state bodies. Between 2005 and November 2009, the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism spent over €500,000 on external consultant reports.

In the interests of value for money, achieving greater efficiencies and more coherent policy, there will be a 'recentralisation' of policy formulation to the Department with the semi state bodies responsible for implementation of this strategy.

- **Funding for state agencies and governing bodies will be made more transparent** and structured, with the Minister holding ultimate responsibility for funding decisions. However, in future, funding will be conditional on beneficiaries signing up to dispute resolution services, such as the Just Sport Ireland initiative, and adhering to mandatory codes of conduct regarding child protection in sport. Costly legal disputes that waste hundreds to thousands of euro in the Four Courts are no longer acceptable. This money must be spent on athlete development and support instead of being wasted on legal disputes.
- **The Irish Sports Council will be renamed Sport and Recreation Ireland, with an expanded remit.** Sport and Recreation Ireland will partner local authorities, OPW, Waterways Ireland and Coillte to identify appropriate outdoor facilities such as treks, walks and cycle ways, camping and water sports. It will also work with the local authorities to improve recreation facilities. A number of positions on the Sports Council's Governing Board will be made directly electable.
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