A Level Playing Field

Sport is there to be enjoyed by everyone, whatever level they play at. The Irish love their sport whether as players or observers. The benefits of participation are clear; social interaction, civic cohesion, a healthy lifestyle, promoting self-confidence, national identity. Over 1.3 million regularly participate in sport and physical exercise. 400,000 people volunteer every year to help in clubs. We believe that any Government approach to sport should be based on the principle of promoting access for all, at whatever level they feel comfortable while at the same time providing world class support to our elite athletes to allow them the opportunity to represent their country at the highest level.

Throwing money at sport is not always the answer to greater participation. It is about spending smarter. Spending on sport is not just about bricks and mortar. Priority should be given to providing opportunities for people to participate, using the existing facilities. This is why the Local Sports Partnerships are so important and this is why spending in these partnerships should be doubled.

Where capital investment is called for it should be focussed on multi-use facilities, based on national or community needs. Swimming is the most popular sport and so the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme should be reopened where a recognised infrastructural deficit exists. 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. It is no longer acceptable that the Minister is able to “pass the buck” to the semi state organisations when things go wrong.

The awareness of the importance of sport and physical activity to the health of the nation will be reinforced. The deficit of sport in schools will be addressed by making PE an examinable subject. Every resource that is available to the taxpayer must be made best use of and we will therefore ensure that the issue of insurance for school gyms and playing fields will be resolved.

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 further developing our sporting facilities to ensure that our elite athletes can compete with the best in the world.

Sport has given the Irish people many reasons to be proud and to celebrate. The Labour Party will provide a framework to ensure that both participants and spectators will get the best return on their investment whether at grassroots or Olympic level.
The main policy features set out in this document are:

1. Labour will address social and gender inequalities to ensure universal access and participation in sporting activities. Exchequer funding will be primarily aimed at ensuring every citizen of the state, regardless of socio economic status, gender or age will have an opportunity to participate in sport to a level of their choosing.

2. Labour believes that funding of Irish sport should be refocused away from capital projects and moved towards employment and the promotion of sport on a local and national level, where research has shown it is more effective at increasing participation and interest in sport.

3. Labour in Government will make a commitment to at least double the funding to Local Sports Partnerships (LSP) and roll out Sports Inclusion Disability Officers to each LSP. This funding will be provided from a reconstituted betting levy as discussed in the policy document “Raising the Stakes”.

4. Pilot projects from individual LSPs which have demonstrated their effectiveness at increasing participation and interest in sport and exercise will be mainstreamed and rolled out across the network, where applicable.

5. We will continue to support our elite athletes through the International Carding scheme and through funding to National Governing Bodies. Post London 2012 we will systematically review these structures.

6. 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.

7. The National Sports Facilities Strategy will become the blueprint for the future development of all sports facilities in the country.

8. The current Sports Capital Programme, which has been closed since 2008, must be overhauled before it reopens. Future funding from the National Lottery and other sources of funding should be spent primarily on multi use or national facilities as well as supporting increased participation in existing facilities.

9. Phase One of the National Sports Campus at Abbotstown will be delivered as soon as financially feasible.

10. The Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme should be reopened as soon as possible to begin planning the future development of infrastructure in a sport which is now the number one sporting activity. Any future grants will be cognisant of the National Audit of Sports Facilities and the quantum of private facilities in the area. It will place most emphasis on the refurbishment of derelict pools and on ensuring provision in areas which have experienced rapid population growth and areas that demonstrate a need.

11. The Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport has farmed out much responsibility for policy development to external consultants and semi state bodies. 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.

12. The Irish Sports Council, to be renamed the Irish Sports and Physical Activity Council, which would see the body focus on policy implementation across all forms of sports and physical activity. The Irish Sports and Physical Activity Council will partner local authorities, OPW, Waterways Ireland and Coillte to identify and strengthen Ireland’s outdoor recreation facilities such as treks, walks and cycle ways, camping and water sports. It will also work with the local authorities to provide improved lighting of walking and jogging areas, municipal areas with the development of basketball courts, astro pitches and green gyms.


14. The procedures for funding and support will be reviewed between the Irish Sports and Physical Activity Council and the various national governing bodies, Labour will enact a more structured and transparent funding process. New systems must be put in place to ensure only the Minister has the authority to withhold state funding.
15. A number of the positions on the board of the Irish Sports and Physical Activity Council will be directly electable by people involved in sport.
16. As a condition of state funding all governing bodies will be required to sign up to a dispute resolution service such as the Just Sport Ireland initiative over a 3 year period
17. The development, role and standing of Physical Education (PE) in schools and in the curriculum will be prioritised. It is a clear objective of the party to introduce points status for PE at Leaving Certificate in association with the Department of Education and Skills.
18. Working with the Department of Education and Skills and Boards of Management, we will resolve the long standing insurance issue in order to open up school facilities such as school halls and pitches for community use.
19. Labour in government will initiate a multi-departmental marketing campaign in conjunction with the Department of Health and Children and the Department of Education and Skills to promote the benefits of active participation in sport and recreation.
20. Labour in Government will make a commitment to phase out, or substantially reduce, alcohol sponsorship of sporting events on an agreed EU wide basis.
21. Labour will examine ways to ensure that anti-social behaviour can be mitigated as much as possible through the development of sporting programmes aimed at people throughout the country who are at risk.
22. New mandatory codes of conduct will be implemented with regard to child protection in sport.
Chapter One: The Case for State Support of Sport and Physical Exercise

Sport has been a cornerstone of this state since long before independence; it has acted as a unifying force, 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, acting as the glue in the social capital which binds us together. Events such as Ireland’s participation in Italia 90, the Rugby Grand Slam or the continued success of Irish Boxers have an impact on the entire nation that cannot be measured.

Sport and exercise have significant personal and societal benefits. According to the World Health Organisation “Appropriate regular physical activity is a major component in preventing the growing global burden of chronic disease.” Sport and physical exercise can have significant mental health benefits. “We now have evidence to support the claim that exercise is related to positive mental health as indicated by relief in symptoms of depression and anxiety.” Research from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) has shown that regular participation in sport is equivalent, in health terms, to being 14 years younger. Additionally having played sport in the past is equivalent to being three years younger than a non participant. “Not only is more sports participation associated with better health, but it is clear that even low intensity sport can have a large positive effect on health. Moreover, our results would also suggest that taking up a sport will have a significant effect irrespective of past sports participation.”

Sport helps to build social capital; it brings communities together. In this way it contributes to many other areas of public policy. As was stated in our previous party policy on Sport, “Championing Our People”;

“Sport helps to build strong communities by encouraging volunteerism, involving parents and kids in local activities and integrating newly arrived families in growing new communities, not simply from overseas but other parts of Ireland, into activities that they are already familiar with. Along with the local schools, sport is the ‘glue’ that helps bring local communities together and makes them better places to live in.”

The unifying power of sport for local and national communities should not be underestimated. “Sport appeals across social boundaries, political fault lines and geographical boundaries.” The effects of success in sport can have a massive boost for a village, a county or even a country. The success of St. Patrick’s Athletic Football club is a source of immense pride for the people of Inchicore in Dublin. Clare’s success in All Ireland Hurling during the mid 1990s had a huge effect on the self confidence of the county. Rugby

1 The definition of Sport in this document is taken from the Irish Sports Council Act, 1999, Part 1, Sect. 2 and encompasses Competitive sport and Recreational sport.
2 “competitive sport” means all forms of physical activity which, through organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and at obtaining improved results in competition at all levels;
3 “recreational sport” means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or regular participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being and at forming social relationships;
4 www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/facts/pa/en/
5 Landers, Daniel M The Influence of Exercise on Mental Health available at www.fitness.gov/mentalhealth.htm
7 Ibid pg 67
8 Ibid pg 67
9 Labour Party 2006; “Championing Our People- Labour’s agenda for investment in sport and recreation” pg 8
10 Lunn, Pete 2007 “Fair Play? Sport and Sport and Social Disadvantage” pg 1
in Ireland operates on a successful all-island basis, with a new anthem which all players and supporters can unite around. On the international stage, the success of the German football team at the World Cup, with its distinctively ethnic identity, has had a significant impact on integration and race relations in the country.9

Sport also has a role to play in combating social exclusion and socio economic disadvantage and promoting the integration of new people to communities, as acknowledged by the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016.10 Participation in sport can also help reduce anti-social behaviour.

The Labour Party believes that the positive role of sport and physical exercise as described above makes a sufficient case for state support. Additionally as will be shown participation in sport is influenced by socio economic status therefore, as with Health or Education, it is the states duty to its citizens to provide the same level of opportunity for all.

Sport in Ireland Today

Sport is the most significant form of recreation in the state. It is active in every townland and city in Ireland. The myriad forms of sport from road bowling in Cork to cycling in Crumlin means that there is a sport for almost everybody's taste.

Over 1.3 million of the Irish population (30.8%) regularly participate in some form of sport or recreation. More than 265,000 people (7.8% of the adult population, aged 16 and over) volunteered their time, expertise, enthusiasm and passion for sport in the previous 7 days through the vast network of clubs and societies the length and breadth of the country. Over 1.3 million of the total population (32.4%) are members of a sports club. 510,000 people (15% of the adult population, aged 16 and over) attended a sporting event in the previous 7 days.11

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.12 The direct financial benefits derived from sports tourism was estimated at 350 million.13 Similar to investment in the Arts, direct investment in sport produces direct financial benefits. State investment in Croke Park for example is repaid by the money spent in the area every weekend during the summer, conservatively estimated at 46 million to Dublin City and 33 million to the state annually, not including ticket sales.14 Investment in sport also has other, no less important benefits to the state in terms of reduced health costs, reduced policing costs and a thriving community-based society.

The state has recognised the importance of sport by appointing a Minister and a Department to oversee responsibility for the area in 1997. The Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport identifies its goal as:

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9 Irish Times June 30th “Football brings to surface complex changes in German identity”
14 DKM Economic Consultants et al 2008 “Croke Park Social, Economic, Business and Environmental Influences” Pg239
"To increase participation and interest in sport, to improve standards of performance and to develop sports facilities at national, regional and local level, thereby contributing to healthier lifestyles and an improved overall quality of life, through a Departmental policy and resource framework in partnership with its Agencies, other Government Departments and the National Governing Bodies of Sport."15

State support for sport as announced in Budget 2010 was 115 million. State support for Sport has fallen significantly over the last number of years as can be seen in Figure 1, a trend which began in 2008. State support is divided into both capital and current spending and particular funding streams are supported by the National Lottery or the Dormant Accounts Fund.

![Figure 1](source)

| Source- Budget 2010 - Supporting Documentation including 2010 estimates for Public Services |

Labour believes that sport has significant benefits for both the individual and society. The primary focus of state funding should be to increase participation, whilst supporting our elite athletes. Exchequer funding will be primarily aimed at ensuring every citizen of the state, regardless of socio economic status, gender or age will have an opportunity to participate in sport to a level of their choosing. We will utilise international best practice and successful local schemes to develop programmes, facilities and activities which will increase participation for all.

The Challenges Facing Sport in Ireland

Despite the unprecedented success of Irish sport in recent years, most notably in Boxing, Golf and Rugby, not all is well at grass roots level. Since 1998 over 725 million, much of this National Lottery money, has been invested in sports facilities through the Sports Capital Programme.16 Yet this money has been spent at best haphazardly, and if the express motive of state support for sport is to increase participation, then the success of this investment is now questioned by all the research in the area.

"Policy relies very heavily on the provision of facilities to increase participation in sport, yet an accumulation of evidence now suggests that reliance on facilities is unlikely to yield the

15 www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie/
16 Upton TD, Mary Parliamentary Question 32336/09
best returns... providing more facilities is unlikely to be the best way to increase participation in sport."\(^{17}\)

Moreover the Sports Capital Programme, by virtue of its cumbersome and complex application system, favours team sports and particular team sports at this.\(^{18}\) This is at odds with current participation rates in sport. Only 3.5% of adults aged 36-45 in the Dublin City Council area play team sports as opposed to 31.0% for individual sports.\(^{19}\) This trend is mirrored across the country with 69% of all sport individual sport, rising to 76% of all adult sport (Fig. 2).\(^{20}\)

Simply providing more facilities is unlikely to be the best way to increase participation in sport. Despite the fact that over 700 million has been spent on the sports capital programme, in 2008, the last year for which data is currently available, the participation rate decreased. "In 2008, the proportion of Irish adults who participated in sport (excluding walking) for at least 20 minutes during the previous 7 days was as follows Players: 30.8% (32.9%) The figure in brackets is for 2007. This drop in activity is statistically significant."\(^{21}\) This equates to one in every 16 participants giving up sport, at a time when the explicit aim of policy is to increase participation. Furthermore that this drop was identified in just one year, at a time of falling employment and investment in sport and an increase in obesity is of concern. Participation rates in sports tend to change slowly over time. Therefore a one percentage point per year change in adult participation is considered relatively rapid.\(^{22}\) Anecdotal evidence suggests that this drop in participation has been arrested, perhaps as a result of more free time for those who are now unemployed. No concrete data will, however, be available until the publication of the 2009 Irish Sports Monitor.

Figure 2 Participation in team and individual sports by age.

![Figure 2](image)

Source-Sporting Lives: An Analysis of a Lifetime of Irish Sport ESRI 2008

18 Ibid pgs72-73
19 Lunn, Pete 2010 "Sport and the City: An Analysis of Participation in Sport and Physical Activity in Dublin" pg15
Despite the accumulation of evidence on the diminishing effect of constructing facilities in terms of increasing participation, much of it commissioned by the state, the Government appears wedded to building facilities. The recently published Infrastructure Investment Priorities 2010-2016 states that “There is a continuing need to target investment in key sports projects that support health objectives and community development. Capital grants will therefore be provided to sporting and other organisations for the provision of sports and recreational facilities. The level of investment for the Sports sector is set at 370 million over the period 2010-2016.”

Participation is heavily influenced by socio-economic status. The data from the First Report of the Irish Sports Monitor 2007 clearly showed that; “compared to non-participants, active participants are, on average, better educated, more likely to be male, younger and richer. Combining the effects of educational attainment, income and social class, there is a very strong socio economic bias in sporting activity.” As individuals become richer their opportunities to engage in sport expand accordingly. Higher income makes it easier to afford subscriptions to sports clubs, pay per use fees, clothing, equipment and transport.

The fact that participation is heavily linked to socio economic status has such an effect that “it is almost certain that the substantive public money spent on sport in Ireland is regressive- it is a transfer of resources from the less well off to the better off.” In addition to participation in sport, volunteering and attendances at sporting events have all reduced in 2008 over 2007, as a result of the recession.

Despite having contributed over 700 million in funding to Sports facilities through the Sports Capital Programme, the state has in many ways allowed the effective privatisation of sport, particularly exercise. Research has shown that 76% of all adult sporting activity is individual sport, rather than team sport. Yet the state did not provide sufficient facilities to cater for this marked increase in individual sport. The insufficient provision of municipal gymnasiums and swimming pools led to private operators filling the gap in the market. The private sector essentially took over the exercise sector, making it cost prohibitive for many to join a gym.

Despite the successes of our elite athletes, it is clear in some areas things are not at all well. With the notable exception of our Boxers, Ireland had a poor Olympic Games in 2008, especially when compared to countries of a similar population such as New Zealand. Needless spats between organisations have cost money and embarrassed sport whilst achieving little. It is clear that major reform of how we run sport and support our elite athletes is also required.

The challenge for Labour in Government is therefore:

*To ensure universal access and participation in sport and physical exercise; to address social and gender inequalities; to encourage less active groups in society to participate in sport and exercise; to further develop, where necessary, our sporting facilities and to support our elite athletes to ensure they can compete with the best in the world.*

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23 Department of Finance 2010 “Infrastructure Investment Priorities 2010-2016” pg91
26 Lunn, Pete 2008 “Fair Play? Sport and Sport and Social Disadvantage” pg 76
Chapter 2: Sport for all

Labour believes that everyone must have equal opportunities to enhance their well-being through sports and physical activity regardless of age, ability, gender or socio economic status. State investment in sport and physical activity should be geared towards influencing the underlying reasons for physical inactivity, supporting citizens’ choices in physical activity and promoting equality.

In Government, Labour will face the challenge of increasing participation at a time of straitened public finances. Existing government policy has been geared primarily at building facilities, with the Sports Capital Programme the vehicle for distributing the National Lottery and exchequer funding.

The ESRI states "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, targetted programmes and new opportunities) is more likely to raise levels of participation."\(^\text{29}\)

Simply constructing facilities has been shown not to increase participation in sport and physical exercise; rather it just provides better facilities for those already active in sport. According to the ESRI “Educational attainment, gender, age, income and coming from a sporting family, stand out as key determinants of playing sport.”\(^\text{30}\) Merely providing facilities does not tackle the causes of non participation which are frequently not area specific but household or person specific. Therefore another method is required.

Local Sports Partnerships

In countries such as Canada and Finland, which have successfully raised the level of participation through policy interventions over a sustained period, the evidence suggests that the most successful way of increasing participation is by constant monitoring of participation levels combined with a focus on marketing the benefits of physical activity and sport via public information.\(^\text{31}\) In England a national network of County Sport Partnerships has been created to increase participation in sport and physical activity.\(^\text{32}\) In New Zealand a network of independent not-for-profit organisations called Regional Sports Trusts operate to increase regional levels of physical activity and to strengthen regional sport and physical recreation infrastructures.\(^\text{33}\)

We are lucky in that this model already exists in every local authority in Ireland: The Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs). The first LSPs were established in 2001 and there are now 33 LSPs with national coverage since 2008.

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29 Callan, Tim et al 2008 “Budget Perspectives 2009” pg72
31 Callan, Tim et al. 2008 “Budget Perspectives 2009” pg64
32 www.sportengland.org/support_advice/county_sports_partnerships.aspx
The Irish Sports Council describes their rationale as:

- The creation and implementation of plans for long term local sports development
- The establishment of a sustainable structure to assist all those involved in local sports development to face the associated challenges - e.g. recruiting and managing volunteers, quality training, etc
- Delivery of projects and programmes particularly for target groups - Establishing networks at local level and liaising with existing initiatives.

The Local Sports Partnership model promotes participation in sport and physical activity through community campaigns, local events and individual activity programmes that link local facilities to outreach work. Local Sports Partnerships support existing sports structures while targeting specific groups that have low participation rates.

In 2010 the LSPs will receive almost 6.3 million in funding from the Irish Sports Council and this will be matched by revenue from other sources such as Local Authorities and the Health Service Executive, bringing the total estimated investment in local participation initiatives through the Partnerships to more than 12.5 million in 2010. In 2009 a total of 744 programmes took place for over 112,000 people, being run in conjunction with Local Sports Partnerships. This number was up from 433 programmes running in 2008 with 69,843 people participating.

The financial and support inputs needed from LSPs varies greatly according to the characteristics of the individual programmes. In some cases such as the foundation and facilitation of walking clubs the initial input from the LSP is minimal as there are no facilities required, and the role of the LSP is more to facilitate and promote the original setting up of the group. In other instances where specialist training or skills are required the group or organisation may need the support of the LSP for the initial training of volunteers and support until such time as the programme becomes self sustaining.

As well as acting as a reference for information on sporting resources and providing education and training to individuals and clubs, Local Sports Partnerships also develop strategic plans for sport through identifying needs and resources, securing related support services and administering the implementation of national programmes. An example of this is the LSP involvement with the Buntús programme which is designed to support teachers and other adults in introducing young people to sport in schools.

Increasing Participation and Social Inclusion

European studies of participation in sport and physical activity show that the amount of sport that people play steadily decreases with age. There is a distinctive pattern of participation by age, gender and socio-economic status. It is also noted that there is a significant gender gap in participation in sport as young men play more sport than young women. These changes in the life course of participation typically involve changes in the types of activities that people undertake as they get older. Participation in team sports declines with age whilst participation in individual activities such as swimming and personal

34 www.irishsportscouncil.ie/Participation/Local_Sports_Partnerships/The_Partnerships_Explained
35 www.offalysports.ie/News?Id=300
36 ibid
37 European Commission 2010 Special Eurobarometer: Sport and Physical Activity pg12
38 ibid
Further investment in Local Sports Partnerships can be used to open up sporting and physical activity to larger numbers of children and young adults in the years when participation by these groups traditionally declines. Furthermore they can offer opportunities to those who no longer participate in sport or physical activity to reconnect through tailored programmes and targeted marketing activity. Research into the barriers to participation in sport in Ireland shows that lack of access to facilities rarely acts as a deterrent to participation. LSP programmes can address the barriers that exist to those who would like to become more active.

The LSPs also act to increase social inclusion by creating an awareness of and promoting inclusive participation in sport and physical activity. *Labour in Government will make a commitment to at least double the funding to Local Sports Partnerships and roll out Sports Inclusion Disability Officers to each LSP.* Sports Inclusion Disability Officers run disability awareness programmes with education providers to create a more inclusive and disability friendly environment in the area of sports development. In 2009 approximately one quarter of new LSP programmes were targeted at people with disability and approximately 2,500 people took part in disability awareness programmes.

Fitzpatrick Associates 2005 Review of the Local Sports Partnerships recommended a focus on key clearly defined groups which have traditionally had low participation in sports and physical activity. As can be seen from Figure 3 below, the target groups of new participation programmes in 2009 reflected this focus on low participation groups.

**Figure 3 Breakdown of primary target groups in LSP local programmes in 2009.**

![Bar chart showing the breakdown of primary target groups in LSP local programmes in 2009.](source)

**Source:** Irish Sports Council SPEAK Report 2009

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39 Lunn, Pete & Layte, Richard 2008 *Sporting Lives: An Analysis of a Lifetime of Irish Sport* pg 18
40 Lunn, Pete & Layte, Richard 2008 *Sporting Lives: An Analysis of a Lifetime of Irish Sport* pg ix
41 Callan, Tim *et al.* 2008 *Budget Perspectives 2009* p62
43 Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism 2005 *Review of the Local Sports Partnership Programme* pg62
Through local knowledge of the changing needs of target groups Local Sports Partnerships address issues as they arise. For example, the dramatic increase in unemployment throughout the country has been addressed by some LSPs by targeted programmes that aim to promote physical activity amongst the newly unemployed. An example of such a programme is the Link2BActive programme from the South Dublin County Sports Partnership which includes a reduction in the cost of access to Local Authority sports and leisure facilities for those on Social Welfare so as to maintain the access of the unemployed to such facilities. 44 Dublin City Council’s Passport for Leisure was introduced to grant persons aged fifty-five and older free access and use of Dublin City Council Sport, Leisure and Recreational facilities as well as discounts on other recreational pursuits. This flexible approach can be responsive to changes in issues such as social inclusion, health and education.

**Examples of Increased Participation**

The LSP model allows for the trial and development of programmes that can be area specific or universally applicable. Pilot projects from individual LSPs which have demonstrated their effectiveness at increasing participation and interest in sport and exercise can be mainstreamed and rolled out across the network, where applicable.

An example of an universally applicable scheme is the Girls Active programme which was developed in Counties Sligo and Donegal through their LSPs in association with the Health Service Executive, the VEC Sports Development Officers facilitated programme implementation. Girls Active is a physical activity programme targeting teenage girls in schools to increase the number of teenage girls involved in long-term regular physical activity by developing more supportive environments in schools and through offering non-traditional and non-competitive activities such as Pilates or dancing on an extra-curricular basis. 45 The evidence from reviews of the programme in Sligo and Donegal is that Girls Active has raised the total physical activity levels of participants, especially those who were initially least active, and has increased participation rates in school PE.46 This programme has been adapted for use in County Meath through its LSP.47

Some scope may exist for participating schools to mainstream a programme such as Girls Active by incorporating elements of them into a school’s general sports policies. Similar programmes could also be developed for teenage boys who are not interested in traditional field sports. 

Alongside increasing the funding of LSPs an intensive effort should be made to increase the awareness of LSPs. The individual LSP websites should be developed into one stop shop resources for individuals and clubs by hosting forums and advertising upcoming events in the area. Social networking tools like Facebook and Twitter should also be utilised to reach the greatest numbers possible.

The Labour Party supports the Community Games. The Community Games have been "providing opportunities for children and young people to experience sport and cultural activities in a fun and positive way for over the 30 years."48

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46 ibid
48 www.communitygames.ie/index.php/about-us
support for the Community Games comes through a number of semi state organisations, principally the HSE. The Labour Party is committed to maintaining the preeminent role of the Community Games in youth sport. The Community Games give an opportunity for everyone to compete whilst at the same time being the vital first step for our future elite athletes. We will continue to support the important work being done by the Community Games.

Chapter 3: Investment in Capital Infrastructure

Since 1998 over 725 million has been invested in sports facilities through the Sports Capital Programme. A large but undefined proportion of this funding has come from the National Lottery. The State has also provided significant funding for major stadia projects such as Croke Park and Lansdowne Road/Aviva Stadium. Chapter 2 presented our case for the majority of state investment in sport to be redirected from capital infrastructure projects towards increasing participation in existing facilities and clubs and targeting particular groups which are least likely to participate. This body of scientific research on sports participation is of the view that “Lack of sports facilities or other impediments arising on the supply side of the sports system hardly feature at all in people’s conscious reasons for not participating.”

The sports people participate in have changed. Adults are far more likely to be involved in individual sports rather than team sports. “Sports policy needs to recognise the trend towards individual sports such as swimming, fitness training and jogging and to devote a greater share of its efforts to promoting and supporting these increasingly popular activities.” Significant reform of what and how we fund in sport is required.

The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) has been the primary conduit of state funding for sporting infrastructure projects. The amount of money invested has allowed for transformational change throughout the country with clubs across the country receiving funding to improve their facilities. But this funding has been open to influence from the Government. Whilst this has long been suspected, recent research carried out by Dr Jane Suiter has shown how the constituencies of the Ministers for Sport and Finance benefit to a far greater extent in terms of success of application and amount granted per application. This even extends to different constituencies in the same county as shown in Figure 4. “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.” Addressing the infrastructural deficit in sports facilities should be done for the good of the entire nation. Instead of individual clubs applying and receiving funding on an individual basis what is needed is a coherent, strategic and national approach.

49 Upton TD, Mary Parliamentary Question 32336/09
50 This is due to the Departments of Finance and Tourism, Culture and Sport refusing to give a precise break down of the total contribution of National Lottery funding to sub heads part funded by the National Lottery.
51 Fahey, Tony et al 2004 “Sports Participation and Health Among Adults in Ireland” pg 53
52 Lunn, Pete & Layte, Richard 2008 “Sporting Lives: An Analysis of a Lifetime of Irish Sport” pg 73
53 Irish Time 4/5/10 “Political patronage still controls the purse strings”
Figure 4 Funding under the Sports Capital Programme in Kerry 2002-2007

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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>€1,672,200</td>
<td>€1,663,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source -Chieftains Delivering -political determinants of capital spending in Ireland 2001-07 2010

The National Sports Facilities Strategy

The best way to establish what facilities the state requires is to conduct an audit of the sporting facilities in the entire state. Such an audit was originally promised in 2002. This audit still has not been published 8 years later. The Government has stated that this audit has been completed and that the National Sports Facilities Strategy is being considered by cabinet. The aim of this strategy is “to provide high level policy direction for future investment and grant assistance at national, regional and local level and to ensure a coordinated approach across the various agencies and Government Departments involved in supporting the provision of sport and recreation facilities.” Considering that around 1 billion has been spent on sports facilities over the last 14 years, to devise a strategy for strategic sports investment now is akin to closing the stable door after the horse has bolted. Nonetheless, sustainable and strategic development is required, never more so than in a time of economic crisis.

The Labour Party will place the National Sports Facilities Strategy at the heart of our sports infrastructural programme. This Strategy will identify where there is a need for a particular facility based on the facilities currently available at a National, Regional and Local level. Where a need has been identified for a particular facility for a particular club or organisation we will endeavour to provide funding for this project. The funding formerly diverted to the Sports Capital Programme will be used primarily to fund projects to increase participation in existing facilities as well as providing funding for the development of multi use and national facilities. Funding will be linked up with existing goals in sports participation and elite sports. We support the recommendation of the Irish Sports Council’s Quadrennial Review, “when this (National Sports Facilities Strategy) is executed, the needs of the sports prioritised for performance investment by the Irish Sports Council must be represented prominently within it.” Investment will also be linked to sports and physical activities which have shown their effectiveness in increasing participation in non active groups, such as swimming, and in particular socio economic areas, such as Boxing.

Multi Use Facilities

54 The Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism during this period was John O’Donoghue (Kerry South)
55 “We will complete a national audit of local sports facilities and put in place a long-term strategic plan to ensure the development of such necessary facilities throughout the country.” 2002 An Agreed Programme for Government between Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats.
56 Upton TD, Mary PQ 27374/10
57 ibid
58 725 million sports capital, 191 million Lansdowne Road/Aviva Stadium 110 million Croke Park
59 Irish Sports Council 2009 “Quadrennial High Performance Review” pg 63
The Labour Party believes that multi sport facilities represent the best return on exchequer capital investment. By multi use facilities we mean a municipal facility run by, or on behalf of, local authorities that provide indoor and outdoor facilities that are open for use for a large number of clubs and organisations. These facilities will cover their own running costs once they have been constructed and will provide a real community gain on exchequer and National Lottery funding that is not used exclusively by a particular sport or club. Development of these facilities will be based on the needs identified in the National Sports Facilities Strategy and will provide as many sports as possible with equal use of facilities, depending on need— from hockey to judo, from hurling to dance. These facilities will complement the existing strong cooperation on a local level between sports and clubs.

Funding will be provided from the Reformed Sports Capital Programme in specific location identified by the National Sports Facilities Strategy. Funding may also be available from a reformed betting tax. It is envisaged that local authorities will provide the required land thus reducing costs. We will also develop template plans, as we have already done in our “School for the 21st Century” education document—in order to keep costs of development at a minimum. Where possible multi use facilities are to be co-located with other sports facilities such as Swimming Pools to create in effect a Sports Campus for a town.

As part of a commitment to improving sports facilities, we will work with local authorities to improve the lighting and paving in popular walking and jogging areas and develop municipal basketball courts and astro-turf pitches as part of a wider community facility. This will be part of a strategy to provide the facilities to support the most popular sporting activities and which are flexible, convertible and meet changing needs.

**National Sports Campus**

The National Sports Campus represents the most important outstanding piece of sporting infrastructure yet to be delivered in terms of elite sport. The cost of delivering Phase One of this project has been estimated at 104 million excluding VAT. The Labour Party is committed to delivering Phase One of the National Sports Campus at Abbotstown as soon as financially feasible and to undertake to progress the planning and to consider ways of securing funding for Phase Two. Funding will be provided from reallocating a portion of the Sports Capital/National Lottery funding and as part of providing the required National Facilities for elite sport in Ireland.

**The Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme**

Swimming is the most popular form of sporting activity in the state, with 6.1% of the population active in the previous 7 days. Swimming has been shown to increase participation in a number of key demographics including women and older persons. Unlike almost any other sport or physical activity you can be active in swimming from early childhood right up into your senior years. The state has funded the provision of Swimming pools for over 50 years through the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme (LASPP). The most recent round of this programme closed to new applicants over 10 years ago. A

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60 Labour Party 2010 “Raising the Stakes- Labour Proposals to Tax Remote Betting and Reform the Funding of the Horse and Greyhound Fund”
62 The Labour Party will be publishing proposals on developing Community use facilities with certain sports facilities in the near future
63 Upton TD, Mary Parliamentary Question 27251/10
review of the LASPP found that “there are significant recreational, sporting, health and social cohesion reasons for continuing the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme into the medium term.”\(^{65}\) The report found that there “is a significantly insufficient number of public pools throughout the country catering for both current and potential demand in comparison to Scotland and Northern Ireland.”\(^{66}\) As with other sectors of sport and physical activity, notably personal exercise, insufficient provision by the state was met by private operators providing facilities, frequently on a cost prohibitive basis.

The Labour Party is of the view that the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme must be reopened so that we can begin to plan the future development of swimming facilities. The Quarterly National Household Survey (2006) found that what demand there was for sporting facilities was concentrated on Swimming Pools, walkways and fitness centres.\(^{67}\) Swimming Pools are one of the few facilities that can help increase participation. When the LASPP reopens it must be cognisant on a number of factors:

- Need for a pool should be clearly identified within the National Sports Facilities Strategy, to ensure that finite resources are channelled into areas where they will receive the greatest return
- The quantum of public and private facilities in an area will be an important factor in the success of an application. Where there is a clear supply of private operators in a town it may not be the best utilisation of resources to build a local authority pool. Killarney, County Kerry is one such example. In these cases we will work to provide for access to private pools through the local authority
- The focus of the new programme should be on areas which have experienced rapid population growth over the last decade such as Ratoath, County Meath or areas which have existing pools which are significantly dilapidated such as Crumlin, Dublin 12
- Where possible sporting facilities in a town should be located adjacent to each other on a “sports campus”
- Proximity to primary and secondary schools in the locality
- If a number of grants were given simultaneously this would allow for the effective “bundling” of these projects, thus reducing the cost
- Funding will be allocated to this project from existing capital budgets.

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65 Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism 2009 “Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme- Value for Money and Policy Review Report” pg 115
66 Ibid 113
Chapter 4: Supporting Elite Sport

The pursuit by national sports councils of sporting excellence has been defined by the Canadians in their Sport Excellence Strategy (2005) as “world class athletic achievement as a product of quality high performance development systems and programmes.”\(^{68}\) Public funding of the high performance sector is justified for a number of reasons:

- Success at high performance sport spawns increased support and participation in sport and physical activity in the general population. The remarkable success of athletes such as Stephen Roche, Sonia O’Sullivan or Barry McGuigan had a huge knock-on effect in terms of increasing the popularity and participation in their respective sports.
- High performance sport improves the national image and reputation. It helps stimulate national unity, community spirit and social cohesion.

Elite Sport in Ireland is supported by state funding to elite athletes and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) distributed by the Irish Sports Council (ISC). The ISC’s policy in relation to high performance is defined as “(to) ensure Ireland’s performance in elite international sports improves and to create consistent success at elite level, defined as producing Irish athletes in the finals at European, World, Olympic and Paralympic level.”\(^{69}\) Funding to elite athletes is primarily distributed through the International Carding Scheme; “to provide a range of supports to assist Ireland’s most talented sportspersons realise their potential to perform successfully at the highest level.”\(^{70}\) In 2010, 2.65 million in funding was provided to elite athletes under the scheme.\(^{71}\) Separately, 5.7 million was granted to 16 sports on the basis of agreed Performance Plans.\(^ {72}\) Elite Sports Persons and their coaches are also supported by the Irish Institute of Sport whose role includes “Sports science coordination and delivery, Sports medicine coordination and delivery, Athlete career and performance lifestyle support, Elite coach development and education and Performance Systems development.”\(^ {73}\)

Success for Irish athletes and sports is defined by agreed targets which come into focus in an Olympic and Paralympic Year. Under these guidelines, the ISC was of the opinion that Team Ireland exceeded its targets at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Beijing in 2008.\(^ {74}\) Yet a comparison of the success of countries with a similar population, such as New Zealand or Denmark, shows that Ireland lags significantly behind in terms of total medals won in the last 6 Olympiads (Fig.5).\(^ {75}\) We would be of the opinion these targets were not ambitious enough, particularly as almost 32 million had been invested in our elite athletes and high performance programmes in the period 2005-2008 to prepare them for the games.\(^ {76}\)

\(^{68}\) Government of Canada 2005 “Sport Excellence Strategy- Achieving Podium Results at Olympic and Paralympic Games” pg 4
\(^{69}\) www.irishsportscouncil.ie/High_Performance
\(^{70}\) www.irishsportscouncil.ie/High_Performance/High_Performance_Unit/International_Carding_Scheme/
\(^{71}\) RTE 17/2/2010 "Irish Sports Council Reveals 8.35 million package"
\(^{72}\) ibid
\(^{73}\) www.instituteofsport.ie/Institute_Of_Sport/
\(^{74}\) Irish Sports Council 2009 “Quadrennial High Performance Review” pg 5
\(^{75}\) Genisis Consulting 2009 “Review of the Olympic Council of Ireland and the Irish team’s performance at the 2008 Olympic Games (Beijing)” pg 3
\(^{76}\) Irish Sports Council 2009 “Quadrennial High Performance Review” pg 5
Elite athletes are known to be unhappy, with a substantial negative opinion on the Carding System and the supports received from the ISC emerging in the ISC Quadrennial Review.  

The Irish Institute of Sport was not working effectively for athletes in 2008, but was rather "a range of talented people (that) are striving separately to do their best for Irish Sport." 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." We welcome the fact that a significant number of the issues identified in the reports on Beijing 2008 have been addressed such as the establishment of a High Performance Committee, a mid term review of the Carding Scheme, an operational agreement between the ISC and the Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI) and by the fact that the Irish Institute of Sport has had time to bed-in and is now in a position to provide sufficient supports for athletes and coaches.

As we are in the middle of an Olympic Cycle it would not be practical to overhaul the entire process. At the same time London 2012 represents the closest we are ever likely to get to a "home games". We must ensure that our athletes and elite sports that represent the most realistic medal prospects are given the supports they need. Issues highlighted by athletes with regard to the Carding Scheme must be addressed before the Games and we welcome the commitment to review the scheme for 2011. The Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport must also bring together all of the interested parties such as the ISC, the OCI, 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.

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77 Irish Sports Council 2009 “Quadrennial High Performance Review” pg 11
78 Business and Finance Magazine 2008 “The Olympics- Ireland’s Lap of Dishonour”
79 Irish Sports Council 2009 “Quadrennial High Performance Review” pg 62
Post Games, Labour will institute a wide ranging and systematic review of elite athlete funding and supports. The review will be carried out by the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport. This review will take on board the structures in similar sized countries and the merits of devoting greater resources to an even smaller number of disciplines in order to achieve consistent international success. In this context the results from London 2012 will be key. The focus should be on “few and strong, rather than many and weak.” An entire overhaul of the funding structures, to both NGBs and elite athletes, will be undertaken and the potential returns of devoting the majority of funding at developmental level will be considered. We will look to maximise efficiencies across disciplines by sharing best practices and staff particularly in the areas of sports science and medical support.

While funding for sport will be at a premium over the next number of years, the argument for multi-annual funding for a number of disciplines remains strong. Focus sports in particular should not have to dedicate time and resources towards bidding for funding and should be able to devise multi annual strategies on the basis that they are guaranteed at least a significant portion of their funding envelope on a multi annual basis. Funding to supply the equipment needs of elite sports must be considered a necessary part of the multi annual envelope. We will work with the ISC and NGB’s to identify and develop new funding streams and partners in the private sector. We will ensure that the Irish institute of Sport develops tailored programmes for athletes to prepare for the transition from elite sports to employment or further education. In order for us to provide the best for our elite athletes, it is vital we know their opinions. Therefore all athletes who receive state funding through the Carding Scheme will be required to respond to any reasonable request for their opinion on the state structures and major competitions.

The Labour Party will not tolerate drug cheats in sport. We fully support the work of the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) in its fight against drug cheats and the implementation of these WADA directives by the Irish Sports Council and NGB’s. It is a simple fact of life that doping only makes the news when someone is accused of cheating, but the work of ISC and the NGB’s on a day to day basis has been excellent and must continue to be supported.

**Coaching**

In order for the athletes to succeed it is imperative to have sufficient support structures for their coaches. Top quality coaches can help elite athletes attain fantastic results such as Gary Keegan in Boxing. Coaching Ireland is an all-island body with the remit to support and develop coaching in partnership with over 60 NGB’s. The Irish Institute of Sport provides supports for high performance coaches through its High Performance Coach Pursuit of Excellence Programme. Yet over 60% of our athletics team were based abroad part time or full time in the run up to the 2008 Olympic Games. While the weather and lack of sufficient quality facilities play a major part in this exodus, many athletes leave Ireland to train with International quality coaches. As sport becomes ever more scientific, the pace of change quickens and Ireland needs to ensure our athletes and coaches do not suffer from an informational deficit as well an infrastructural one.

To address this deficit, significant investment in Coaching is required. The percentage of funding solely dedicated to coaching in Ireland should be increased as this is a long term investment in the sport. Coaches with significant ability should be identified and supported to develop their talents. Labour would look to put a long-term development plan in place with the Irish Institute of Sport and Coaching Ireland for the development of coaching skills.

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80 Irish Sports Council 2009 “Quadrennial High Performance Review” pg 62
81 Ibid pg 32
the sharing of best practice particularly in the areas of health and nutrition, and ensuring that Irish coaches have access to the most up to date international research. Supports for coaching should primarily be invested in those disciplines which have been identified as the prime areas of sporting investment and attracting international coaches to Ireland should be looked upon as a long term investment in improving the knowledge base of Irish sport as well as a short term investment in a particular athlete or team.

Chapter 5: Reforming the Sporting Structures

The Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport

There are currently 156 staff members in the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport with 23 working in the Sports Section. Some of the principal areas which staff within the sports section work on are the Sports Capital Programme, closed since 2008, the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme, closed since 2000, support the Horse and Greyhound Sector, transferred to the Department of Agriculture in 2010, and facilitate the development of major sports projects, all now completed or stalled. With the closure or reallocation of many schemes administered by the Sport section, there is a significant amount of spare capacity within the Department. The Labour Party will implement the “recentralisation” of policy and policy development to the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport. This will allow the Department to develop, in conjunction with the Sports Council and the NGB’s, overarching national polices to increase participation, support elite sports and athletes and to further develop outdoor recreation. It will make the Minister accountable for Sport in Ireland. This will strengthen the democratic accountability of sports policy and sports funding as the Minister and the Department are responsible to Dáil Éireann and the citizens of the state in a way that semi state organisations are not. Currently, the Minister and the Department refuse to answer parliamentary questions on policy issues, with the Ceann Comhairle’s stating “The Minister has no official responsibility to Dáil Éireann for this matter, which is one for the Sports Council.” This issue is not confined to this Department, but this dodging of responsibility is no longer acceptable.

In an era of significant budgetary controls, creating efficiencies should be the Number 1 priority for all Departments. Between 2005 and November 2009, the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism spent over 500,000 on external consultant reports. Such spending included 114,000 for a consultants report on “The potential economic benefits to Ireland from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games”, on which we have had absolutely no progress. In view of the expertise within the Department, and our belief that the Department should take a greater role in policy formulation, we will undertake to minimise all spending on external consulting.

In areas of cross departmental activity there must be greater cooperation. This is an issue for a wider public sector reform strategy but there should be a lead Department which coordinates and receives assistance from other Departments, local authorities and semi state organisations. For example sport comes under the jurisdiction of the Departments of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Education and Skills, Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.

82 Email Correspondence with the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport August 23rd
83 www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie/sport/oragisation
84 This same recentralisation of policy formulation from semi state organisations will also occur in the Tourism and Culture sections
85 See for example Upton TD, Mary PQ 22713/09
86 Upton TD, Mary PQ 38215/09
87 ibid
as well as local authorities and several semi state organisations. There should be one lead department, which coordinates the work in this area, and is held responsible for the delivery of outcomes.

**Sports Council = The Irish Sports and Physical Activity Council**

The “recentralisation” of the policy making to the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport will allow the Irish Sports Council to focus its finite resources, particularly its staff resources, on increasing participation in conjunction with the LSPs and on assisting elite athletes. The Labour Party sees the Irish Sports Council primary role as policy implementation. In recent years the Sports Council has had sole discretion on how funding to the NGBs was distributed and to whom. The Irish Sports Council has played an important role since it was established in 1999, helping to upgrade Irish sport, particularly in smaller sports which may not have access to the funding or expertise of the GAA or the IRFU.

The Sports Council 2009-2011 strategy states as one of their core values; “Working in Partnership with other agencies is recognised as the best means of delivering desired outcomes. The Council value the strong relationships that have developed with the sports community on the island of Ireland.”\(^88\) Recent actions in the sporting community would suggest that this is not the case. There have been several high profile spats over the last number of years in Irish Sport, with one journalist commenting, “If finger pointing ever became an Olympic sport, Ireland would be gold medal contenders.”\(^89\) In one case funding was withheld from an organisation for a period of months causing chaos in the sport in question.

In order to ensure that no such issues ever arise again, the Sports Council will no longer have the power to withhold funding from a NGB, except on the express approval of the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. While the Sports Council will be responsible for the distribution of exchequer funding to sport, ultimate discretion on this matter will rest with the Minister. Additionally the agreed appointments procedures in any NGB must not be interfered with by anyone in the employ of the state whether its in the Department or in a semi state. The Sports Councils retains it role as the link for the NGBs to the state and will work with these on a day to day basis implementing agreed Government policy on sport. The ISC will remain in a position to take sanctions against NGBs, but such actions will now be subject to the approval of the Minister. To further democratise Irish Sport we will make a number of position on the board of the Irish Sports Council electable from constituent groups such as NGBs or LSPs.

In order to develop the sporting infrastructure within this country to appropriate levels and with straitened economic circumstances, it is imperative that greater integration, cooperation and communication take place between our national bodies. We must move away from a disjointed system where various bodies covet their facilities and are constantly fighting for their slice of the pie, towards a situation where there is a lead Department or organisation driving progress and change. We need a situation where social inclusion and participation is allowed to develop.

With a large percentage of staff time being freed up by the recentralisation of policy formulation to the Department, the Irish Sports Council, working under the direction of the

\(^{88}\) Irish Sport Council 2009 “Building Sport for Life- the Next Phase 2009-2011” pg9

\(^{89}\) Irish Times 28/2/09 “Olympic Blames Games”
Department of Sport, is the perfect body to drive the implementation of a cross-Governmental strategy on sport. The Sports Council should be renamed the **Irish Sports and Physical Activity Council** in order to reflect the shift towards all forms of physical activity. Labour’s vision for the Irish Sports and Physical Activity Council involves establishing strategic partnerships with local authorities, greater cooperation with the various national sports and recreational bodies to enhance the local, regional and national delivery of recreation and sport services. The Irish Sports and Physical Activity Council will work with local authorities in improving and providing better facilities for jogging, cycling, skateboarding etc. It will develop a template blueprint for such facilities that can be rolled out by each local authority, thus reducing costs. It will develop and roll out educational programmes in areas such as pitch maintenance, stewarding and sport promotion.

Frequently people do not attend sporting fixtures or participate in sporting activities because they are simply not aware of what is going on in their locality. The internet presents the perfect platform to address this informational deficit. The **Irish Sports and Physical Activity Council** should also develop, in conjunction with the LSPs and the NGBs a one stop shop website, www.sportsireland.ie, and social media presence for all upcoming fixtures and information.

We will continue to support academic research into sport in Ireland. Research into Sport in Ireland allows us to assess how successful sporting strategies are and to identify where gaps in supports lie. Multi annual research projects, such as the Irish Sports Monitor, assist in identifying participation rates and trends over an number of years, providing effective data to help assess the strengths and weakness of Government sports policy. The Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport and Sport and Recreation Ireland will continue to promote sporting research. Best international practice can only be accessed through continuous involvement with the world leaders. Initiating research programmes and adapting relevant international research to Ireland will continue to be supported.

**Outdoor Recreation**

Outdoor recreation is defined by Sport and Recreation New Zealand as “includes a range of leisure, recreation, cultural or sporting activities, undertaken in natural, heritage, rural and urban open space.” Despite our outstanding natural beauty, outdoor recreational facilities have frequently been underdeveloped. For example, recreational walking is one of the most popular forms of physical exercise in Ireland. This extends from walking in your local area or park to hiking along the national trails or in the countryside. Hiking is also very important in terms of Ireland’s tourism product. Hiking and hill walking were the most popular activities for overseas visitors in 2007, according to the Central Statistics Office, with over 500,000 visitors taking part. Moreover trails encourage tourists into rural communities, thus offering economic stimulus to areas which may not otherwise attract significant tourism. Our national trails are overseen by the National Trails Office, which is part of the Irish Sports Council.

Trails are an important part of both our tourism and recreational activity infrastructure. Despite its popularity to Irish citizens and tourists there has been significant underinvestment in this area. *The Irish Sports and Physical Activity Council will partner Fáilte Ireland, local authorities, OPW, Waterways Ireland and Coillte to identify appropriate outdoor facilities such as treks, walks and cycle ways, camping and water sports.* Key trails should be identified, for example the Dingle Way or along the Royal and Grand Canals, and sufficient investment provided so as to bring them up to the requisite standard. Funding for
this can be found within the reformed Sports Capital Programme as investment in this area is investment in a growing pursuit whose facilities are frequently substandard. Funding will also be sourced from the Tourism Capital Investment Programme in view of the importance of Hill walking and hiking to Tourism. A national system of cycle ways based on our forests and water ways, will be developed as both a tourism and recreational resource. After identifying key locations for such trails we will ensure that very specific and time limited tax incentives are provided to allow for the development of such facilities.

Addressing the trails issue is just the first step of developing a comprehensive outdoor recreation strategy which encompasses all forms of outdoor recreation not limited exclusively to competitive sport. This strategy will be developed by the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport, in conjunction with the relevant Government Departments and semi state organisations. Implementation of this strategy will be undertaken by The Irish Sports and Physical Activity Council.

**Dispute Resolution Process**

Every euro devoted to sport should be spent on sport. Costly legal disputes that waste hundreds to thousands of euros 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. In order to combat this Labour will be make it a condition that any organisation which wishes to be eligible for state funding signs up to a dispute resolution process within a three year period. The Just Sport Ireland (JSI) initiative has been adopted by an increasing number of sports as it provides an independent and impartial mediation and arbitration facility.\(^91\) In addition to this a number of sports, such as the GAA, already have an acceptable mechanism in place.

**National Governing Bodies**

The Labour Party recognises the countless hours given by volunteers across sport in Ireland. The work that members give to train athletes or administer their sports should not be underestimated. Nevertheless there is an onus on the state to achieve best practice for organisations that are receiving exchequer funding. Therefore the ISC’s NGB support programme should be extended to ensure that all Boards of Management and clubs have the highest level of efficiency. We will also work with NGB to help them develop alternative forms of funding in addition to the states funding in order to make these organisations financially sustainable in the long term.

**Child Protection**

The Labour Party is committed to the highest levels of child protection. Sport has unfortunately been an arena where serious child abuse has occurred. We recognise that all sports governing bodies and the Irish Sports Council have made tremendous efforts to establish acceptable child protection codes. By the end of 2006 there were 61 National Children’s Officers in place in National Governing Bodies in Ireland and thousands of copies of the All Ireland code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport distributed.\(^92\) The Labour Party will however establish a mandatory code of conduct regarding child protection in sport that will be implemented by National Governing Bodies.

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\(^{91}\) See [www.justsport.ie](http://www.justsport.ie)

\(^{92}\) Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism 2008 "Value for Money and Policy Review of the Irish Sports Council 2000-2006" pg 71
Chapter 6: Sport in Society

Sport and Health

Sport has a vital role to play in combating health problems. Being psychically active has been estimated as giving the health benefits of being 14 years younger. "Physical activity reduces the risk of various cancers, coronary heart disease, stroke and diabetes and improves skeletal health." Internationally, countries are focusing on supporting increased physical activity as a means to improve general health. "In developed countries, the greater threat to human health now comes from degenerative rather than infectious diseases, giving greater prominence to the impact of lifestyle on future health risks."

Sport and physical activity have an important part to play in promoting long term physical and mental health and in tackling the obesity epidemic. The major improvement in Irish living standards over the past two decades has led to a major increase in the incidence of overweight or obesity amongst the general populace. By 2007, 50% of the Irish population reported being either overweight or obese. This is a jump of 8% in just 10 years and above average for the European Union (Fig.6). Obesity is inevitably linked to other serious degenerative illnesses such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Promoting Healthy Living and tackling Obesity are a cross departmental issue that takes in many Government Departments, Semi State agencies and other bodies. The Government established an Inter-sectoral task Force on Obesity in 2009 to implement the recommendations of the National Task Forces on Obesity’s (2004) recommendations. Sport and Physical activity are highlighted numerous times as part of a multi sectoral approach to tackling this problem. Despite this we have had very little success in tackling the obesity problem. As with sporting activity or educational attainment, it is the lowest socio economic groups which are the most affected by poor health outcomes and obesity.

Figure 6 Adult rates of self-reported Overweight and Obesity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Overweight</th>
<th>Obese</th>
<th>Overweight &amp; Obese</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source- The Survey of Lifestyle, Attitudes and Nutrition in Ireland 2007

93 Lunn, Pete 2010 "Get Back In The Game: Sport the Recession and Keeping People Active" pg1
94 Lunn, Pete 2008 "Fair Play? Sport and Social Disadvantage in Ireland" pg12
95 Department of Health and Children 2009 “Report of the Inter-sectoral Group on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the National Task Force on Obesity” pg4
96 Health Service Executive 2008 “Health Status of the population of Ireland” pgs 48-49
Despite their important role in improving the nation’s health, sport and physical activity must not be seen as a panacea to solving the sedentarism and obesity epidemic in Ireland. For example “Compared with older generations, current young adults played more sports as children and are continuing to play more as adults... roughly speaking, when they were children, the current generation of young adults (those under thirty years) played two thirds as much sport again as their parents generation.”

Despite being considerably more active than their parent’s generation, obesity rates are soaring. What has occurred is a rise in sedentarism where people are no longer physically active in any spectrum of their life. “There is a general move away from physically demanding work. This, together with the increasing use of automated transport, technology in the home, and more passive leisure time (plus diets that are extremely high in saturated fats) all contribute to lower levels of physical activity.”

Sport and physical exercise should be looked upon therefore as merely one, albeit vital, strand in the fight against obesity and other health problems.

Health Promotion is the responsibility of the HSE and the Department of Health and Children but the statistics have shown that they are not successful in particular socio economic groups. What is needed therefore is better promotion of the services available in an area. Sports, Government Departments and Semi state agencies must all work together and pool resources in this area to get the best possible outcomes in terms of participation. As health promotion is a health issue and a lack of physical activity is not the single motivator for obesity, the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport and Sport and Recreation Ireland should work with the Department of Health and the HSE on the areas that are constituent to the promoting healthy living. From the perspective of Sport and Physical Activity, what is needed is a more focused and sustained campaign to inform people, particularly those in certain age, educational and socio-economic groups of the benefits of physical activity for their own well being. The Local Sports Partnerships are already providing services to such groups and we intend to double their funding to allow them to extend their reach. What is needed is greater cooperation- there are numerous clubs, organisation, semi states and Departments involved in promoting sport and physical activity as an important factor in improving physical and mental health, but they are frequently working in different directions. Any body or organisation which receives state funding should agree to work in a coordinated fashion to help achieve the best possible outcomes in terms of increased participation from the funding invested.

Working through Sport and Recreation Ireland and the NGB’s we will develop and implement a questionnaire that all sports persons over 14 will fill out in relation to Sudden Adult Death Syndrome and will ensure that the correct procedures are in place regarding medical advice where risks are identified. We will work with the Department’s of Education and Skills and Health and Children to ban the use of particular diet supplements such as cretaine by school children involved in sporting activity.

**Sport and Alcohol**

Labour believes that the issue of alcohol sponsorship of sporting organisations and events must also be reviewed with a view towards an eventual phasing out of alcohol sponsorship. Sports are enjoyed by all age groups and alcohol sponsorship of sport increases brand awareness amongst young sports fans. Alcohol sponsorship of sport also creates an association between the healthy sporting activity and the alcoholic product. The National Youth Council’s report Get ‘em Young (2009) which examined young people’s exposure to

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98 National Taskforce on Obesity 2005 “Obesity: The Policy Challenges” Pg43
alcohol marketing in Ireland noted that “Alcohol sports sponsorship links masculinity, alcohol and sport and embeds alcoholic products into the every day life of the consumer”. 99 The Labour Party would favour seeking alternative sources of sponsorship as a means to maintain funding levels while removing the association of alcohol and sports. Any moves to end alcohol sponsorship of sporting events must recognise that sport is international in nature with much of the sport viewed in Ireland not based in Ireland. Therefore any moves to end alcohol sponsorship must be part of a wider European Union initiative.

Sport and Education

Offering children constant access to sport and physical activity from a young age helps to establish a pattern which may be kept up in adult life. Research surrounding sport within primary and secondary schools within this country has highlighted numerous shortcomings and inadequacies within the current system. Amongst the findings it is shown that:

• Students in second level schools received less Physical Education (PE) per week than is recommended in the PE syllabus
• Almost a quarter of second-level schools lack a qualified PE teacher.
• A number of core activities recommended in the PE syllabus (e.g. dance and swimming) are not available on the PE timetable in many schools.
• Some schools have problems with teacher availability for sport
• The majority of head teachers are of the view that PE and sports facilities are deficient in their schools.100

Such findings highlight the need for an overhaul of the physical education structures within our schools. It is not all negative however; more recent generations are likely to play sport and more likely to play more sports than their parent’s generation.101 The issue is that the sport offered to children in school is frequently not of a sufficient quality, quantity or choice. The concentration on team sports hampers girls in particular and may marginalise some who do not feel comfortable in this environment. Anecdotal evidence also points to PE being considered “expendable” in terms of teaching hours and support, particularly during examination years. This is not a positive development as the habits learned in early years are carried forward into adulthood where they are more difficult to change.

The Labour Party is committed to improving the quantity, quality and range of school sports on offer in our schools system. To address the issues facing sport in school, a multi faceted approach is needed. Firstly we must ensure that the 2 hours of PE as mandated under the syllabuses is the very minimum provided at each school. PE must no longer be considered “expendable” in the curriculum. This will require cooperation from the Department of Education and Skills in ensuring each principal and Board of Management is aware of their obligations towards PE provision. Each school should have a qualified PE teacher. A better range of sports that appeal to a wider cohort of school children will be provided. Where a school is deficient in the necessary facilities, particularly indoor facilities, we will look to clubs and organisations that have received Sports Capital funding in the past to provide facilities. In areas where this is not practicable, we will look to prioritise the development of such facilities as part of either the Department of Education’s budget or that of the reformed Sports Capital Programme.

99 The National Youth Council 2009 “Get ‘em Young: Mapping young people’s exposure to alcohol marketing in Ireland”pg6

100 Fahey, Tony et al 2005 “School Children and Sport in Ireland” pgs ii-v

The Local Sports Partnerships have a vital role to play in developing the links between local sporting bodies and the national and secondary schools, with a view to increasing participation and involvement in sport. We support the work of the Sports Council in initiatives such as Buntús and the Get People Active campaign which have been successfully in operation in numerous schools throughout the country. Such programmes allow for a greater integration between schools and the other local sporting bodies which if managed correctly would increase participation while within school and also encourage participation throughout the life of the pupil. We have already committed to at least doubling the funding for LSP’s and we expect that one of the key areas they will target is children and young adults.

To further incentivise PE, the subject will be made examinable at Leaving Certificate. While the details of such a programme would be a matter for the Department of Education and Skills, we would envisage such a subject encompassing sports fitness, nutrition and physiology as well as practical sections such as junior coaching and practicing of a chosen sport. This will have a dual benefit. Firstly it will ensure that all schools provide an adequate curriculum for PE. We would suggest that it will also serve to entice a particular cohort of pupils to remain within the school system as they would have an obvious talent in one subject which could be transferred into other area, such as Biology.

We will endeavour to ensure a greater sharing of local facilities, such as school halls, pitches and other facilities. Many of these facilities lie idle at night time and during the summer. The frequent response from schools is that there are insurance issues. That publicly paid for facilities cannot be put to community use when not needed by the school is no longer acceptable. Labour believes that through innovative management such facilities could be run in such a manner as to provide extra resources and facilities to local communities and sporting teams. We will resolve the insurance issue to ensure that such facilities, which have been built at the taxpayers’ expense, can be used as a non profit community and sporting facility. We will introduce an awards scheme “Sport in School”, overseen by the LSPs, to acknowledge the work done on promoting PE and extra curricular sporting activity.

Women and Sport

Sport policy has frequently been targeted at particular sports, principally team sport. This creates serious problems in terms of women’s participation in sport. The problems in female sports participation stem from an early age, where a gender gap opens up. “By age 20 years, 66 per cent of male respondents were playing sport compared with just 36 per cent of females...the data suggests that the different treatment of young girls opens up a sporting gender gap that never closes”102 The research clearly indicates that the sports provided are largely unappealing to them.103 The ESRI states, that by prioritising sport for boys, schools and parents allow girls to lag behind and this gender gap is never made up, limiting the future health that sport can bring. This gap remains constant in life and over the age of 20, relative male and female participation is broadly similar.

To address the issue of female participation in sport and physical activity we must firstly address the issue of sport in schools. We have addressed this in the previous section: Sporting activity offered in schools must be tailored to suit what girls want to be active in. The Local Sports Partnerships must also work to ensure this cohort is aware of the range of

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102 Lunn, Pete & Layte, Richard 2008 “Sporting Lives: An Analysis of a Lifetime of Irish Sport” pg ix-x
103 Ibid pg74
opportunities in their locality. The LSP are responding to this and in 2009 145 Women in Sport programmes were run with over 10,000 people participating. Sports spending, both capital and current must be cognisant of the take up of sports. Since women in particular are more likely to be involved in individual sports we must ensure that these get their fair share of sports funding.

**Sport and Youth Diversion**

Sport plays a part in offering youths an social outlet that is not disruptive to wider society. While the majority of youths in Ireland do not engage in anti social behaviour, simply “hanging around” is often viewed with apprehensions by other members of society. Sport and physical exercise offer an outlet for youth that is integrated with society. Firstly as it takes up a portion of their spare time, there is less time for behaviour that might be considered anti social. Secondly playing for the parish GAA club or the local athletics team creates a sense of ownership of the community, reducing the alienation from society that youth frequently cite. Finally, the discipline required by sport, for example boxing, can have an important impact on youth who may otherwise have no effective discipline in the lives. Drimnagh Boxing Club, in Drimnagh, Dublin 12 operates in a socio economically disadvantaged catchment area. This club has been offering the youths and adults in the surrounding community training, focus and an outlet. Despite the outwardly violent nature of the sport, to be successful in boxing requires discipline and patience.

The effect of sport as “youth diversion” is acknowledged by the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. The Gardai, as part of their youth diversion projects, support sporting events. For example the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and the Gardai run successful late night soccer leagues, such as one in Balbriggan County Dublin, which runs until 11pm thus offering something for youth to do at night time.

The Labour Party recognises that it sport can play a part within a multi faceted environment offering youth diversion and integration into society for youths. Sport forms a single strand of this project as not all children and youths are interested in sport. But offering sport as part of a programme with arts, music and spaces to “chill out” in a drug and alcohol free environment represents a holistic approach to integrating young people into society and offering them the facilities and services they want. Labour is currently developing proposals for community facilities which would act as a “one stop shop” for young people.

In cases where young people have already fallen foul of the law, we see sport playing an important role in offering a different path to a life of criminality. In government Labour will mandate Sport and Recreation Ireland in partnership with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Garda and the Probation Services to develop physical activity programmes, including adventure/outward bound type programmes to fit into youth diversion strategies. These programmes should be based on international good practice principles. Since its cost upwards of 100,000 a year to keep a prisoner in jail a modest investment in these programmes should be looked upon as a long term money saving exercise.

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106 FAI 2010 “Balbriggan Late Night Soccer League Returns”
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Abbreviations

ESRI- Economic and Social Research Institute

ISC – Irish Sports Council

JSI – Just Sport Ireland

LASPP- Local authority Swimming Pool Programme

LSP- Local Sports Partnership

NGB- National Governing Body

OCI- Olympic Council of Ireland

PE- Physical Education

SCP- Sports Capital Programme