

Sport at a Glance

Key priorities

- 1. Getting Ireland back to participation in sport, in line with the Roadmap for the Reopening for the Reopening of Society and Business.**
 - 2. Providing financial support to National Governing Bodies of Sport and clubs through new grant schemes to be developed following the recent approval of a €70m funding package for sport.**
 - 3. In line with commitments in the new Programme for Government, the continued operation of the Sports Capital Grant Scheme which will *“prioritise sports capital investment in areas of historic low levels of participation and deprivation”*.**
- The National Sports Policy 2018 - 2027 targets include:
 - overall participation in sport to rise from 43% to 50% of the population by 2027
 - more targeted high performance funding to deliver more Olympic/Paralympic medals
 - all funded sports bodies adopting the Governance Code for the Community, Voluntary and Charity (CVC) Sector
 - The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) is the primary vehicle for Government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities throughout the country. It is part funded from the proceeds of the National Lottery.
 - The new Programme for Government commits to continuing the SCP and states that *“we will prioritise sports capital investment in areas of historic low levels of participation and deprivation”*.
 - All Sporting activity, at all levels, was suspended on 24 March 2020. Arising from the accelerated roadmap announced on 19 June, all sporting activity may resume from phase 3 (decision to resume is for the sporting bodies themselves, some will defer). All sports facilities, including gyms and swimming pools, may also reopen from 29 June. Resumption of sport remains subject to the Phases 3 and 4 restrictions on numbers for public gatherings and other important public health advice. Mass gatherings at sports events remains a significant issue to be addressed.
 - The new Programme for Government requires the development of a policy and a strategy for bidding and hosting Major Events and an assessment model for State financial support.
 - Prepare for postponed staging of EURO 2020.

Sport

The high level goals for sport, as set out in the National Sports Policy 2018-2027 are:

- To increase participation in sport and physical activity from 43% in 2017 to 50% by 2027 (shorter term target for 2022 is 47%) so that a significantly higher proportion of Irish children and adults from all sectors of society are regularly involved in all forms of active and social participation in sport.
- The most recent survey from the Irish Sports Monitor Report (mid-year 2019) indicated that 46% of the Irish population (approximately 1.78 million people) participated in sport at least once a week in 2019 compared to 43% in 2017. This participation level was initially positively influenced by the pandemic and is likely to decrease in line with the easing of restrictions and people returning to their workplaces.
- To have more Irish teams and athletes systematically and fairly achieving world-class results at the highest levels of international competition. The target is to increase the number of medals at successive Olympic and Paralympic Games to 20 medals by 2028, compared to 13 in 2016. The target for Tokyo 2020 is 3-4 Olympic medals and 10-12 Paralympic medals.
- To improve capacity so that we will have “fit for purpose” Irish sporting bodies with strong leadership, ethics, and governance at all levels.

The National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP), launched in early 2016 as part of the Healthy Ireland framework, is co-sponsored by the Department of Sport and the Department of Health. It has similar participation objectives but expires at end 2020. A review is to be held later this year and is likely to propose the development of a new replacement plan, probably covering the period 2021-2025.

Prior to the suspension of sporting activities due to Covid-19, the following had been flagged as key outputs for 2020 to achieve the above goals:

- Publish a Sports Action Plan 2020-2022 setting out priority actions for the next three years (in final draft form but to be reviewed in light of new Programme for Government)
- Hold a Stakeholder Forum to address issue of Children’s Sport Participation
- Develop a National Swimming Strategy
- Complete a joint review of the National Physical Activity Plan 2016-2020 with D/Health
- Launch the High Performance Strategy 2020 – 2029 (to be reviewed in the light of the Programme for Government)
- Continue to progress the development of the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus in Abbotstown
- Approve projects for Dormant Accounts Programme 2020 (€8m.) aimed at increased participation rates amongst disadvantaged communities and people with disabilities.

Approx. 20% of all expenditure from Dormant Accounts is allocated to dedicated sports participation projects for the disadvantaged.

- Progress grants already approved under the Sports Capital Programme and open a new round of the Programme later in 2020.
- Advance the first projects awarded grants under the new Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (as announced in January 2020).

Covid-19 Impacts

Due to Covid-19 all sporting activity, at all levels, stopped in March 2020.

The publication on 1 May 2020 of the Roadmap for the Reopening of Society and Business was widely welcomed by the sports community.

Subsequent to the Roadmap's publication, the Expert Group on the Return to Sport was established by the Department and Sport Ireland. The Group, chaired by the Department, is tasked with providing guidance to Ireland's sporting bodies to prepare for the phased return to sporting activity in line with the Government Roadmap for Reopening Business and Society. The National Governing Bodies of sport have been working over recent weeks to develop protocols for returning to training and competition in their respective sports. The Expert Group will assess the consistency of the various protocols being prepared by the National Governing Bodies of Sport in Ireland with the Roadmap.

Of the total number of sports – circa 70 – approximately 25 different sports (all outdoor and all non-competitive) resumed during phases 1 and 2, e.g. those like golf and tennis that could be played in accordance with the prevailing social distancing and other public health requirements. Individual sports were the focus in phase 1, small team sports of up to 15 people in a group were the focus of phase 2.

Arising from the accelerated roadmap announced on 19 June, all sporting activity may resume from phase 3 (but the decision to actually do so is for the sporting bodies themselves to decide). Some sporting bodies will defer a restart until later in the summer and perhaps even into the autumn. All sports facilities, including gyms and swimming pools, may also reopen from 29 June.

The resumption of sport remains subject to the Phases 3 and 4 restrictions on numbers for public gatherings and other important public health advice. Sport cannot be economically run on the basis of the indoors and outdoors limits on mass gatherings set down for both phases 3 (50 indoor/100 outdoor) and 4 (200 indoor/500 outdoor). **Mass gatherings at sports events (e.g. spectators in stadia) remains a significant issue to be addressed for sport to recover commercially.**

Sports Capital Programme

The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) is the primary vehicle for Government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment throughout the country. It is part funded from the proceeds of the National Lottery.

The new Programme for Government commits to continuing the SCP and states that “*we will prioritise sports capital investment in areas of historic low levels of participation and deprivation*”.

The SCP itself aims to foster an integrated and planned approach to developing sports and physical recreation facilities throughout the country. In particular, its stated objectives are to:

- Assist voluntary and community organisations, national governing bodies (NGBs) of sport, local authorities and ETBs and schools to develop high quality, safe, well-designed, sustainable facilities in appropriate locations and to provide appropriate equipment to help maximise participation in sport and physical recreation.
- Prioritise the needs of disadvantaged areas in the provision of sports facilities.
- Encourage the sharing of local, regional and national sports facilities by clubs, community organisations and national governing bodies of sport.

Over 12,000 projects have now benefited from sports capital funding since 1998, bringing the total allocations in that time to close to €1 billion. The programme has transformed the sporting landscape of Ireland with improvements in the quality and quantity of sporting facilities in virtually every village, town and city in the country.

Significant changes have been made under the most recent rounds of the programme to make the process as user-friendly, fair and transparent as possible. The most significant changes have included:

- Various measures to reduce the number of applications deemed invalid during the assessment process (this rate exceeded 40% for one of the rounds). Measures in this regard have included a simplified application form and the opportunity for applicants to correct the application during the assessment stage. The measures succeeded in reducing the rate to just 5% under the most recent (2018) round.
- A transparent scoring system for applications which was published in advance of assessment work commencing.
- In relation to actual allocations awarded, a direct correlation between the score obtained following assessment and the level of grant awarded.

The most recent round of the programme closed for applications towards the end of 2018. A record number of applications were received (2,337 seeking a total of €162m). Following detailed assessment of all applications, 1,650 individual allocations (with a value of €57m) were made last year.

After each round of the Programme, the Division undertakes a detailed Review of it to identify the elements that worked well and also to recommend possible changes for the next round. The review of the 2018 round has now been completed and once it is signed-off (by Minister) it should form the basis for any changes to the terms and conditions of the next round of the SCP. It should be noted that the existing Capital envelopes should allow a new round of the Programme to open in the coming months with approx. €40m available to allocate.

In relation to the short to medium terms, the main work of the Division continues to be the processing and paying out previously allocated grants. There are currently more than 3,300 active grants with a total value of €98m.

Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund

The National Sports Policy was published in 2018 and provided for a Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF). A capital allocation of at least €100m over the period 2018 to 2027 was provided in the National Development Plan for the fund. The new Programme for Government commits to continuing the LSSIF.

The aim of the fund is to provide Exchequer support for larger sports facility project where the Exchequer investment would be greater than the maximum amount available under the SCP. Previously, any large allocations for sports infrastructure (e.g. Croke Park, Aviva stadium, Thomond Park, Pairc Ui Chaoimh) tended to be made on an ad-hoc basis and there was no formal application process available.

The first call for applications under the LSSIF was confined to National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) and Local Authorities. New swimming pool projects were also considered. Provisional allocations totalling €77.4m for 25 projects under Stream 2 (construction) were announced on 10 January 2020. On 13 January 2020, further provisional allocations of €5m for a further 7 projects under Stream 1 (design) of the LSSIF were announced.

The evaluation procedures and guidelines for the LSSIF provide that once provisional allocations are announced, the successful projects would undergo a further process of due diligence. This process includes a further review of projects including economic appraisals and feasibility studies as appropriate to comply with the Public Spending Code. This process is ongoing. It is not planned to open a new round of the Fund in the short term and the priority is on advancing the projects allocated funding earlier this year. In this regard the financial implications of the Covid crisis on the NGBs may result in some delays to the original planned timelines for projects.

Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme (LASPP)

The LASPP provided grant aid to a maximum of €3.8m to local authorities towards the capital costs of new swimming pools or the refurbishment of existing pools. To date 52 pools have been completed and three swimming pool projects (Lucan, Buncrana and Edenderry) remain in the LASPP. Any future swimming pools will be advanced under the LSSIF and a number of swimming pool projects were successful under the first set of allocations.

The existing provisions for the SCP, LSSIF and LASPP are as follows

Programme	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
LSSIF	€18.3m	€18.5m	€20.470	€25.600m	€7.130m	22.5m
Pools	€4.7m	€4.1	€3.9m	0	0	0
Sports Capital	€32m	€24m	€20m	€30m	€30m	€30m

Development of National Sports Campus

The National Development Plan 2018-2027 included a commitment to develop a National Velodrome and Badminton Centre at the National Sports Campus in 2020 and 2021. The proposal at that time comprised a 250-metre cycling track, 12-16 Badminton Courts in the in-track area, spectator seating and ancillary facilities including office space. A review of the original design scheme for the project was undertaken by Sport Ireland in 2019 to assess the suitability and fitness of the design for present and future purposes. The review, which was completed in October 2019, proposed a number of design changes. A revised business case and financial appraisal for the project (€48m) is currently being examined in line with the Public Spending Code.

Major Sports Events

Major Events require Government support and input to win bids and to deliver and host the events. This can come in the form of financial support, legislation, commercial protections, ICT infrastructure, transport and security provisions as well as political support.

The Major Events Division was established in late 2019 and the role of the Department in relation to Major Events is to:

- Develop a policy and a strategy for bidding and hosting Major Events and an assessment model for State financial support.
- Manage and coordinate State support and input into Major Event bidding and hosting and to protect and promote the State's interests as part of this process, i.e.:
 - Assess – assess the economic, sporting and social case for supporting a bid to host a Major Event
 - Bid – support bids for Major Events by sporting organisations, in particular in relation to Government guarantees and the support of public services

- Deliver – assist hosting and delivery, where appropriate, in particular in relation to Government guarantees and the support of public services

Major Events Policy and Strategy

A key function of the Division will be to develop a policy and a strategy for bidding and hosting Major Events and an assessment model for State financial support. Major Events have the potential to deliver very considerable sporting and economic returns to a host country as well as boost its international profile. Although Ireland has hosted and bid for some very big events in the past, there is no central Government policy on Major Events. Accordingly, there is no policy at present on the type of events that are most suitable for Ireland and address our broader sporting, tourism, social and economic objectives.

EURO 2020

EURO 2020 was due to be held in June 2020 across 12 cities ranging from Dublin to Baku. Ireland was due to host four games, three first round group games and one second round game. Based on a pre-event economic study, up to 96,000 visitors were expected, delivering an economic impact of up to €126m including an estimated tax return to the Exchequer of €26m. The event has now been postponed until June 2021. How and in what form the EUROS are delivered in Ireland and across the continent is completely dependent on how the pandemic develops.

Ireland's bid to host was won in 2014 and the Division, which is leading the Government input into the hosting of the event, has been part of the Local Organising Structure with Dublin City Council and the FAI since early 2017. As well as monitoring the delivery of a number of Government Guarantees on matters such as commercial protections and tax treatment, the Department is supporting the promotion of the event and provision of transport through allocations to Fáilte Ireland and the National Transport Authority. The Department of Justice and Equality is supporting the provision of security through Garda resources.

Ryder Cup 2026

In October 2018, the Professional Golf Association (PGA) of the European Tour approached the Department with a view to opening discussions in regard to the hosting of the Ryder Cup in Adare Manor in 2026. After a number of months of consideration and negotiation, including an economic impact study, the Government approved a package of financial support for the hosting of the 2026 Ryder Cup in Adare in July 2019.

Thus far, work on this project has been primarily centred upon negotiating a contract with the European Tour and establishing stakeholder relationships. Contract negotiations may take some time as the feasibility/desirability of European Tour contract asks of Government are explored and we examine what benefits we might wish to obtain. The Chief State Solicitor's Office has drafted a payment agreement solely for 2020 which is being finalised with the European Tour. COVID-19 has led to the postponement of the Irish Open, in 2020 and the cancellation of the Staysure (Seniors) Golf Tournament. While Ryder Cup 2026 is six years away the COVID-19 crisis could still affect its timing. It now appears that the 2020 tournament, scheduled for September in the United States, is to be postponed until 2021 with the likely consequence that it would be proposed to hold the tournament in Adare Manor in 2027 rather than 2026.

A group comprising the Department, Sport Ireland, Limerick City and County Council, Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland has been formed as an initial structure and has been meeting monthly since January. In due course others such as the NTA, An Garda Síochána, IDA and Enterprise Ireland may be invited to join. Other relevant departments will also need to be included. An outline Project Management Plan and structure will be prepared in due course.

FIFA World Cup 2030

Since October 2018, UK Ireland and UK government authorities and football stakeholders have been engaged in a feasibility study to determine whether to progress a five nation bid for the 2030 FIFA World Cup. DTTAS officials along with representatives from UK Sport, UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport, devolved administration government authorities and football partners are collaborating and planning. FIFA has not confirmed the bid timeline but it could be as early as 2022 or as late as 2024. Progress has been slowed somewhat by the COVID-19 pandemic. A meeting of governmental authorities will be held in July. The Division is seeking to present a business case for Government decision in 2020. While we would not be committing to submitting a bid at that stage, we would be seeking a commitment to continuing in the current direction of travel, the aim of which is ultimately to submit a joint bid and for that bid to be successful.

Other Projects

As well as the bids/events being hosted outlined above, Major Events Division has made some initial examinations of other potential bids including RWC 2027 or 2031 (co-host with GB nations) and T20 Cricket World Cup (co-hosting with England).

Financial Allocation

The Division has been allocated €4.4 million for 2020. This is to be expended in fulfilling Ireland's obligations in relation to our hosting of the Ryder Cup covering the Ryder Cup Hosting Fee and grants to golf tournaments such as the Irish Open.