



building sport for life

The Irish Sports Council's Strategy 2006-2008

FOUNDED



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MISSION

The Irish Sports Council's mission, in partnership with our promoting Department, is:

To plan, lead and coordinate the sustainable development of competitive and recreational sport in Ireland

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section 1

chairman's statement

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

The Irish Sports Council believes passionately in the intrinsic value of sport. At the most basic level, sport is about enjoying physical activity and competition.

Our job is to ensure that every person has the opportunity to enjoy the simple pleasures of playing, participating and competing in the sport of their choice, and at a level appropriate to their ability.

However, we are increasingly aware of the additional benefits and contributions of sport. Individuals participating in sport will benefit through a healthy and balanced lifestyle, as well as potential access to an enhanced social and community life. As communities and as a nation, we can enjoy the economic, health and social benefits that an active, sporting population can bring.

We have a responsibility to ensure that the benefits of sport and physical activity are fully understood. We want to ensure that sport is given appropriate consideration and resources so that it can maximise its contribution to individuals and communities.

The Irish Sports Council was established in 1999 and immediately dedicated itself to developing sport in Ireland in a strategic and planned fashion. This document is our third strategic plan, building on the successful implementation of "A New Era for Sport" and "Sport for Life" which have brought about significant changes in sport in Ireland.

Our job is to ensure that every person has the opportunity to enjoy the simple pleasures of playing, participating and competing in the sport of their choice, and at a level appropriate to their ability.

We carry out many functions and fulfil different roles. However, all of our different activities serve two simple objectives; increasing participation in sport and improving the standards of elite sport.

During those six years we have enjoyed enormous support from within the sports community. We realise that we can achieve nothing without the cooperation of the many sports organisations with whom we work in partnership.

We carry out many functions and fulfil different roles. However, all of our different activities serve two simple objectives; increasing participation in sport and improving the standards of elite sport.

The sports community shares our view that we must provide quality participation opportunities to people throughout their lives. The lifelong involvement of individuals in sport and physical activity is a core objective. As well as working to provide the opportunities to engage in a sport of choice at an appropriate level, we realise that retaining people in sport is vital. It is important to devise different interventions for different points of the life cycle so that everyone can reasonably aspire to lifelong involvement in sport.

Sport at the top level is about our most talented sportspeople reaching their potential fairly and being competitive at the top of international sport. There is a shared aspiration that Ireland should be able to compete successfully and enjoy some measure of international success. As a small country we must have reasonable expectation of what can be achieved but it remains the essence of sport that we aspire to compete at the highest levels.

The Irish Sports Council has made enormous

progress over the past six years. I am delighted to take over as Chairman at another crucial moment in its history and expect that we will make an increasing impact in Ireland, as the resources within sport grow, the awareness of the benefits of sport increases and the opportunities for development present themselves.

This document is the final product of an intensive process of examination, evaluation, consultation and discussion on the role and future direction of the Council. It reflects the decisions taken by the Council on its direction over the next three years.

I would like to thank everybody who had an input into the strategy process. We listened to what everybody had to say and are content that this strategy is a fair reflection of the diversity of views and interests that had an impact on our deliberations.



Ossie Kilkenny

This document is the final product of an intensive process of examination, evaluation, consultation and discussion on the role and future direction of the Council.



section 2

developing the statement of strategy

DEVELOPING THE STATEMENT OF STRATEGY

Under Section 25 of the Irish Sports Council Act, 1999 the Council is required to prepare a three-year strategy statement for the period 2006- 2008 for presentation to the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism in December 2005.

This statement of strategy comprises the Council's key objectives, outputs and related strategies for the period. Essential to the process is a review of the programmes and activities over the past three years to understand how to move forward for the strategic development of the organisation and, more broadly, sport in Ireland.

As with all strategic planning processes, the published document is simply the final phase and it is the consultation, evaluation and debate carried out during the process which gives life and value to the strategy.

The Council made a number of crucial decisions at the outset of the process. Firstly, the foundations of the previous strategies remain relevant and will continue to underpin the actions of the organisation.

Secondly, the Council wanted the critical pieces of development work carried out during "Sport for Life" to be integrated into the new strategy.

This allows for the incorporation of strategic planning work such as the Athens Review, significant progress in certain work areas such as the World Anti-Doping Code and new information such as provided by the research programme.

Thirdly, the evaluation of our work over the three years of "Sport for Life" is an essential element of the strategy. The evaluation procedure allows the client organisations and the staff to have a real impact on the workings and direction of the Council. The review gives the Council the opportunity to build on successes and adjust direction if required.

Fourthly, the business planning process will be deepened in order to generate the maximum return from the available resources. The business-planning element of "Sport for Life" was a success and additional advances in this area would be of considerable benefit to the organisation.

The strategy document follows those decisions made by Council, with a section on the Foundations, on Key Developments and on the Evaluation. This document is supported by detailed business plans across each of the key strategic areas.

Essential to the process is a review of the programmes and activities over the past three years



section 3

foundations

FOUNDATIONS

The Irish Sports Council

The Irish Sports Council was established as a statutory agency on 1 July 1999. Under the Irish Sports Council Act the Council's is mandated to undertake the following:

- Encouraging the promotion, development and co-ordination of competitive sport
- Developing strategies for increasing participation in recreational sport and co-ordinating their implementation by all Irish bodies involved in promoting recreational sport and providing recreational sport facilities
- Facilitating good standards of conduct and fair play in both competitive and recreational sport
- Combating doping in sport
- Initiating and encouraging research concerning competitive and/or recreational sport
- Facilitating research and disseminating information concerning competitive or recreational sport.

The Council has a chairperson and ten ordinary members who are appointed by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism. In 2005 the staff establishment was 25 and the budget €34 million.

In accordance with Section 25 of the Irish

Sports Council Act 1999, the Council is required to prepare a third three year strategic plan for presentation to the Minister by December 21 2005.

The first strategy "A New Era for Sport", covering 2000 to 2002, was followed by "Sport for Life", to cover the period 2003 to 2005.

The foundations which underpinned the previous strategies were strongly reaffirmed. The Council believes that the vision, values, mission and role accurately encompass the organisation and the challenges it faces.

Vision

The Council's vision is one where sport contributes to enhancing the quality of Irish life and:

- Everyone is encouraged and valued in sport;
- Young people see sport participation as an integral and enjoyable part of their lives;
- Individuals can develop their sporting abilities and enhance their enjoyment, limited only by their talent and commitment; and
- Irish sportsmen and women achieve consistent world-class performance, fairly.

Values

The following values underpin the Council's actions.

- Sport has the potential to enrich the lives of all and the Council will promote inclusiveness and integration in sport.
- The Council is an open, honest and accountable organisation, which bases its decisions on objective evidence.
- The Council is committed to measuring and reviewing its programmes and initiatives.
- The Council is open to innovation in the planning and delivery of sustainable improvements to sport.
- 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.
- The key role of the volunteers in sport is recognised and valued. Volunteering in sport is a major contributor to social and community wellbeing in Ireland.

- Sport and physical activity makes a major contribution to the health of participating individuals and communities. The Council will continue to promote sport and physical activity on that basis.

- The commitment and dedication of the staff of the Irish Sports Council is a contributor to the development of sport in Ireland.

Mission

The Irish Sports Council's mission, in partnership with our promoting Department, is:

'To plan, lead and coordinate the sustainable development of competitive and recreational sport in Ireland'

Role

The Irish Sports Council is the statutory development agency for sport in Ireland.

The focus of our development efforts for the next three years will be on the achievement of our high level goals of increasing participation in sport and improving the levels of performance by our elite athletes in world-class competition.

We are ambitious for Irish sport and seek to raise standards and implement better ways of promoting, planning and delivering sport. In order to create a vibrant and effective sector that offers opportunities to participate in sport we will form partnerships with other organisations in the public and private sector to deliver on our broad remit.

Among the mechanisms for delivering on our role are:

- Developing policies within our statutory remit;
- Advocating on behalf of sport backed up by our research, information and communications activities;
- Facilitating the development of sporting bodies through capacity and capability building within those bodies;
- Targeted funding of organisations and individuals which places an emphasis on the achievement of value for money,

- Direct implementation where necessary as has been the case to date in relation to the Code of Ethics programme;

- Exercising a regulatory approach where such is required as in the case of anti-doping.

The Council will continue to look at these and other options in the next strategy in order to ensure that we deliver on the primary role as outlined above with our choices being determined by resource availability and by the aim of trying to add greatest value to Irish sport.

The focus of our development efforts for the next three years will be on the achievement of our high level goals of increasing participation in sport and improving the levels of performance by our elite athletes in world-class competition.



section 4

context for new strategy

CONTEXT FOR NEW STRATEGY

Ongoing Strategic Initiatives

The Irish Sports Council has developed significantly over the course of “Sport for Life”. Most of those changes were planned and anticipated.

The research programme in collaboration with the Economic and Social Research Institute has produced a series of three major reports, “Sports Participation and Health Amongst Adults in Ireland”, “The Social and Economic Value of Sport in Ireland” and “School Children and Sport in Ireland”. Together these reports provide a map of sport in Ireland and clear direction for policy formation.

The implementation of the recommendations of the Athens Review, published in 2005, builds on the developments within high performance sport since 1999. The Review provides a

statement of where Ireland stands in terms of world-class sport and gives clear directions on how to proceed from this point.

The new Irish Anti-Doping Rules were published in 2004. They are a significant advance on what existed previously as they provide a connection with the international system that aims for complete consistency across all countries and all sports.

The Council has a number of ongoing participation initiatives, which will continue to have a strong place in the strategy for 2006-2008.

The national rollout of the Local Sports Partnership initiative lies at the centre of the Council’s participation strategy. In 2005 the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism carried out a review of the sixteen existing partnerships. The positive outcome of the review allows for

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the continued rollout of the sports partnerships from 2006, completing an essential element of the sports infrastructure and ultimately resulting in an increase in participation.

Other participation programmes targeted at different groups will continue such as the Youth Field Sports Initiative involving the GAA, IRFU and FAI, the Women in Sport initiative commenced in 2004 and the Sport for Older People Initiative commenced in 2001.

There are two pieces of essential work ongoing in the participation area. The Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity model has been developed and will underpin all participation strategies. The Council's National Trails Strategy addresses the area of outdoor recreation and is particularly important given the importance of walking as a physical activity.

A combination of new public service practices and the evaluation process of "A New Era for Sport" directed the Council to invest significant efforts into a programme of developing the internal organisation. A number of initiatives, such as Risk Management and Performance Management, have been introduced. The successful implementation of the programme has strengthened the organisation.

Through the strategic process these developments were endorsed as being crucial to meeting the Council's objectives as set out in this document.

External Environment

Ireland continues to grow and change at a tremendous rate. For a development agency such as the Irish Sports Council this presents a challenge as we endeavour to deliver our new strategy in a dynamic political, economic and social environment.

This strategy process has the benefit of a research programme which has placed sport in a wider economic and social context.

Political

The political environment for sport is positive and supportive. The Government recognised the potential of sport in appointing a Minister for Sport at Cabinet level in 1997 and increasing the funding for sport from €17 million in 1997 to €154 million in 2006. This is a substantial investment in the sporting infrastructure of Ireland.

The next challenge is to ensure that sport maintains and develops its role and influence, which can best be done by delivering and being seen to deliver on that investment. In particular sport must be aware of its responsibilities to Government policies.

Economic

Ireland's economic development continues apace and the medium term outlook remains positive. The primary benefit is that the Government has funds to invest in programmes and projects that deliver clear benefits to the public.

In a buoyant economy there are opportunities for sports organisations to generate income from events, corporate sponsorship and increased membership. It is a highly competitive environment and all sports will not benefit equally.

Like any sector sport is vulnerable to the effects of an economic downturn. Organisations rely on streams of income to deliver a range of sports programmes and activities. These incomes cannot be guaranteed should there be a change in the economic fortunes.

Between participating, volunteering, club memberships and attendance at events sport generates €1.4 billion a year. This figure is an indication of the contribution of sport to the economy.

Social

With Ireland's economic performance being sustained over a long period much public debate has shifted to the nature of our society. Sport has become the focus of attention as it has the potential to contribute to the health, education and social advancement of communities.

Economic prosperity can put pressure on people's time. However the research programme shows that, 400,000 of the population volunteer in sport each year, an encouraging phenomenon.

Sport leads the way in terms of voluntary contribution in Ireland and is unique in the modern context in generating social capital and this role is equally as important as the benefits provided by physical activity.

It is well established that sport and physical activity are beneficial to health. Reasonable amounts of physical exertion can have a range of health enhancing benefits. The most pressing issue is obesity, which is causing widespread concern.

The research programme confirms the Council's view that physical activity has a major part to play in developing health and wellness. There are other factors, diet being a major one. The Council is ready to play its part in a coordinated effort to the promotion of good health through sport and physical activity.

Sport is recognised as having the capacity to be a driver for social change and by targeting specific groups can address issues of exclusion and inequality.

Challenges in Sport

Ireland's passion for sport is not on the wane. Sports events on national television in 2005, including the World Cup qualifier against Switzerland and the All-Ireland final between Tyrone and Kerry, generated a peak audience of one million viewers.

If sport is to retain its special place in Irish society then the challenges the sports community face can be defined as follows:

- Translating interest in sport into active participation.
- Protecting and promoting the diversity of sport.
- Creating the correct balance between the need to have good governance and recruit professional staff and maintain the volunteer base and ethos of sports.
- Addressing access issues in sport including those related to gender, age and disability.
- Devising appropriate interventions so that lifelong participation can be a reality for many.
- Positioning sport in the context of other public policy issues such as education health and social policy.

With these challenges in mind the Council believes that it is an appropriate time to revisit the national strategic framework for sport and the Council is prepared to contribute fully to a national debate on a new national strategy for sport.



section 5

Evaluation of Sport for Life

Evaluation of Sport for Life

The Irish Sports Council submitted its second strategy “Sport for Life” to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation in December 2002. The strategy, covering the three-year period 2003 – 2005, was developed through an extensive and detailed strategic process including extensive consultation with stakeholders.

As part of the process for devising the third strategy to cover 2006 to 2008, and following specific reference in Section 25 of the Act, an evaluation of “Sport for Life” was undertaken. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the progress of the Irish Sports Council in achieving its objectives as set out in ‘Sport for Life’.

APPROACH TO THE EVALUATION

Sport for Life defined the measures of success by which the strategy should be judged. A number of methods were used to assess the performance of the Council against the stated measures. These included Council board consideration of the organisation’s performance, comprehensive stakeholder surveys (internal and external), interviews with key clients designed to explore the Council’s performance qualitatively, individual interviews with staff members responsible for strategic actions and a discussion forum with stakeholders at the All Island Sports Development Conference.

The evaluation process was assisted by a review of Council documents including the annual reports, programme performance reports and financial data. The key stakeholder groupings were the National Governing Bodies of Sport, Local Sports Partnerships, the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the staff of the Council.

The Council understands the importance of an independent element within the evaluation process. To ensure a robust and objective process it was led by an external consultant.

SUMMARY EVALUATION

The Irish Sports Council enjoys a very strong level of support within the sports sector. It has established itself as a central player in Irish sport and has delivered on key objectives. The “Sport for Life” strategy is seen, in hindsight, as ambitious in the extent of the work scoped and the range of aspects tackled. The Council is judged to have performed very well in most areas.

An essential acknowledged contribution is increased awareness of the importance of physical activity and the increasing levels of participation amongst young people. The standing of the anti-doping programme, the initiation of the research programme and its first publications, the High Performance Strategy, developmental interventions with

Overall 85% of governing bodies and 100% of sports partnerships who responded to the survey were satisfied with the work of the Irish Sports Council.

governing bodies and the levering of additional funding for sport from Government are all acknowledged as important areas of success.

The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism operate the Sports Capital Programme. The Council had a consultative role on the capital investment decisions, specifically in prioritising of regional and national facilities and governing body priorities, and continues to seek to make an impact on those decisions.

While there were significant advances, there has been a lack of measurable outcomes from the development work with the governing bodies and sports partnerships.

The Council is required from time to time to attempt to resolve difficulties with partner agencies. This has been done consistent with the role of the Council and with the intention of protecting the integrity of the sports sector.

CRITICAL SUCCESS INDICATORS

The Critical Success Indicators were assessed as described above. The surveys results are quoted when they are consistent with outcome of each part of the evaluation process.

Overall 85% of governing bodies and 100% of sports partnerships who responded to the survey were satisfied with the work of the Irish Sports Council.

CSI#1: Number of People Participating in Sport with particular reference to young people

The Council is recognised, by its key stakeholders, to have increased the awareness,

access and numbers participating in sport. 79% of external stakeholders agreed that the Council had contributed to an increase in participation in sport. Specifically, it has had a positive influence on the participation rate of young people.

CSI#2: Achievement of Irish athletes at international level

There is recognition of the considerable work completed and progress achieved in putting in place a high performance system for Irish athletes. 71% of external stakeholders believed that the Council had a positive impact positive on performances of elite Irish athletes.

Expectations of Irish athletes at international level, and in particular at Olympic level, are very high. The sports system understands the complexity of the challenge, including the long timeframe, resources required and managing public expectation.

CSI#3: Progress of governing bodies and sports partnerships on an organisational developmental model

This has been a key strategy for the Council over the last 6 years. It is based on the view that the existing infrastructure is insufficient to support the objectives set. Additional funding, the Council's codes and strategic planning are among the initiatives that have made an evident impact. 77% of external stakeholders believe they developed over the course of the last strategy.

CSI#4: Influence the capital investments made by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism

The Department has invested considerable financial resources into the Sports Capital

Scheme over the course of the strategic period. The Council had a consultative role in the decision making process and, in cooperation with the Department, will seek to enhance its impact on capital investments.

CSI#5: Increased awareness of the benefits of sport by the public at large

The Council is judged to have made a successful contribution on the public awareness of the benefits of sport. 79% of governing bodies and 66% of sports partnerships surveyed endorsed the view that the Council had made a positive contribution to public awareness of the benefits of sport.

There are a number of factors in operation here and the Council cannot claim all of the credit for increasing public awareness but it is a key driver in raising awareness of the benefits of sport.

CSI#6: Benchmarking positive test results against international norms

The Anti Doping Programme has a strong reputation with broad recognition of its contribution to sport and its status as a world-class programme.

There is a near unanimous view (93% of governing bodies and 94% of sports partnerships) expressing the view that the test results were on a par with international norms.

CSI#7: Strengthening our key relationships

To achieve its objectives, the ISC recognises that it must work in partnership with other organisations – government departments, governing bodies and other sporting bodies and the media. These relationships are key to its strategy. A number of high profile issues during the strategic period had an impact on the sports sectors reputation for partnership.

79% of governing bodies and 64% of sports partnerships agreed with the proposition that the Council had strengthened key relationships in recent years, with 79% of governing bodies and 100% of sports partnerships enjoying a good relationship with the Council.

CSI#8: Achieving key developmental milestones as an organisation

There is external recognition of developments of the organisation's internal strengths, with 79% believing that it had developed over the course of **Sport for Life**. The Council's research is seen as a major advance in providing deeper understanding of Irish sport and as a basis for more authoritative decision making. The Council is recognised for a significant role in promoting the sports agenda with a consensus for more work in this area.

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section 6

strategy 2006-2008

STRATEGY 2006-2008

High Level Goals

The Irish Sports Council will pursue two high level goals over the next three years.

- The Council will focus its efforts on increasing the number of people participating in sport and physical activity.
- The Council will work to ensure Ireland's performances in elite international sport improve.

Objectives

The following are the stated objectives of the strategy which we will measure to determine the success of our work over the next three years.

1. Increase the number of people participating in sport in partnership with governing bodies, sports partnerships and other relevant agencies. The target is to increase adult participation rates by 1.5% over the life of the strategy. This increase will be sub-divided along the following lines. Firstly, a reduction of 1.5% in the number of totally inactive adults. Secondly, an increase of 1.5% in the number of adults meeting the recommended minimum level of health-enhancing physical activity.
2. Increase by 3% in the numbers of children taking part in some level of extra curricular sport and extra school sport combined.
3. The sports partnerships are charged with increasing participation and ensuring that the experiences in sport are positive. Essential to the achievement of objective one will be the complete national rollout of Local Sports Partnerships.
4. Measurably improve the performance of elite sports people in world-class sport through the implementation of the Athens Review and meeting the Athens Review targets of six finalists in the Olympic Games and twelve finalists at the Paralympic Games.
5. Improvements in elite sport will also be measured by performances at European and World championships as well as developmental and junior levels. Targets will be set in Performance Plans agreed with the sports bodies.
6. Continue to publish research on sport that contributes to the understanding of the sector and that will inform effective policy and decision-making. The target is to publish four pieces of research each year.
7. Build stronger understanding of the role of the Council, higher public profile and greater awareness of the outcomes delivered by the Irish Sports Council's work.
8. Further strengthen the internal organisation so that it can deliver on the strategy.
9. Protect the integrity of sport through a world-class anti-doping programme.
10. Strengthen key relationships so that they are delivering to the Council strategy and meeting the objectives of the partner organisations.



section 7

action areas

ACTION AREAS

The Council has decided that there will be four key areas. A new internal structure will follow from this strategic decision, with each new area driving a business plan based on the following objectives.

Participation

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

In order to increase participation in sport in Ireland in line with international comparators and to provide enhanced levels of coaching and support for those providing quality sports experiences to others the Council will create a new Participation Unit. This new entity will implement the Council's plans for participation in sport.

The highlights of that strategy include the implementation of the Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity model across all sports. This model for physical activity caters for recreational and lifelong participation that will be child centred, open to all sports and adaptable to individual needs. It must provide a quality introduction for young people and continue with different interventions throughout the life cycle. These principles will underpin all of our participation programmes.

The Council will ensure national rollout of the Local Sports Partnership network in order to deliver greater access to sport for all. The new Participation Unit will work with specific governing bodies to deliver large-scale participation programmes. The Unit will target sections of the community for intervention programmes such as the existing successful Women in Sport and Sport for Older People initiatives.

The Council's aim is to facilitate the creation of a sustainable structure to ensure the strategic development of sport by providing resources to National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships who are charged with providing evidence of increased levels of both participants and volunteers across a range of sports. The Council will continue to build its relationship with National Coaching and Training Centre in order to encourage governing bodies and sports partnerships to develop effective coaching infrastructures nationally and locally.

The Council recognises that not every sports organisation has the capacity to deliver on increased participation. The Council has a responsibility to continue to service the needs of these organisations.

Success will be based on long term planning

High Performance

The Strategy aims to create consistent success at elite level, defined as producing Irish athletes in the finals at European, World, Olympic and Paralympic level. This entails targeting sports that can produce that calibre of athlete on a consistent and repeatable basis. In practise this means investing in the current generation of world-class athletes and simultaneously developing junior talent through a structured competition pathway from schools to world level.

The High Performance Strategy, 2001, and the Athens Review, 2005, together provide the roadmap for delivering success. The first critical element is to continue with the Performance Planning system with focus sports. The second is the delivery of a world-class support structure to elite athletes by an Institute of Sport.

The Council aims to establish an Institute at the earliest possible opportunity so that it will be available to deliver and coordinate services for targeted sports, including the major field sports, that produce athletes of the highest calibre.

Success will be based on long term planning. While there is a need to support the Beijing Olympic cycle, the Council will continue on its path of long term programme delivery, thus ensuring maximum return from the opportunities provided by London 2012 and providing a legacy in high performance sport.

Communication

Effective communications will be a contributor to achieving increased participation and a greater appreciation of Ireland's sporting achievements. In the first instance the population need to be aware of the benefits of physical activity and the opportunities that exist. Information of itself will not change behaviour but is the first step in engaging the population in changing its approach to sport and physical activity.

Secondly, appreciation of Irish sporting achievement is often hindered by unrealistic expectations and views that no longer reflect the reality of the high performance system. The Council will work with sports organisations and athletes to ensure that achievement is celebrated and progress acknowledged.

There is a need to promote the broader sports agenda, highlight sport's contribution to our society and its potential to deliver further benefits. The role of the Council, the policies and programmes it promotes and the impact it has had on the sports community all need to be better understood.

Research

The Council recognises that research and programme evaluation are integral to improving understanding about what works and does not work in developing sport. The need for good research is further demanded because of the significant increase in funding for sport and understanding how this funding is impacting on sport is crucial in optimising the use of limited resources.

Furthermore, the success of the recent initiatives has demonstrated the value of good research in informing key policy makers and opinion formers about the contribution of sport to Irish society and specifically about the benefits of active participation in sport across key policy areas of health, education and social policy.

Evidence-based sports development requires collaboration between researchers, sports development officers, policy makers and funders, a process to which the Council can contribute and lead.

The research programme aims to develop a deeper understanding of the behaviour of Irish people in sport in terms of participation in sport as a physical activity and as a social activity, thus informing the policies, programmes and actions of the Council and its partners.

The programme will monitor and evaluate the impact of the Council's participation strategy and specific actions within that strategy in order to assess more clearly what is most effective.

There is a need to promote the broader sports agenda, highlight sport's contribution to our society and its potential to deliver further benefits.

Strategic Initiatives and Supports

Activities under the four identified action areas will be supported by a number of strategically significant initiatives.

Relationship development

The Council is ambitious for sport and seeks to be more influential than its resources would normally allow. In order to make the maximum impact the Council sets great store by working in partnership with other agencies.

One relationship in particular is vital for the Council to be successful. It must enjoy a strong relationship with the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. The Council values the support it receives from the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and from colleagues in the Department.

The Department is able to use its influence within Government to leverage increased funding and support for the Council's strategy. In return the Council will deliver on its key strategies.

The Council will also need to develop good working relationships with a number of other government departments including Health & Children, Education & Science, and Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

The majority of our daily work is carried out in collaboration with governing bodies and sports partnerships. This work is based on shared values and is conducted in partnerships that will be continued throughout the life of this strategy.

Other important relationships the Council value highly include the National Coaching and Training Centre, Campus and Stadium Ireland Development Ltd, the Olympic Council of Ireland, the Paralympic Council of Ireland and Sports Council Northern Ireland.

Anti-doping

One example of a programme that has enjoyed the consistent and strong support of the Department is the Irish Sport Anti-Doping Programme. As a signatory to the Anti-Doping Convention of the Council of Europe and the World Anti Doping Code the Irish Government has committed to tackling the issue of drugs in sport from a number of different angles, including through testing, education and research.

The Council will continue to protect the integrity of sport in Ireland and to protect athletes' health and reputations through deterrence and detection of abuse of drugs in sport.

The Irish Sport Anti-Doping Programme will continue to be at the vanguard of international developments, through, amongst other things, the revision of the Irish Anti-Doping Rules and the implementation of internationally recognised advancements in testing procedures.

The service of sample collection will be carried out to a high quality standard under a revised system implemented fully from within the Irish Sports Council, thereby protecting the integrity of the core business of the unit. This service is being brought in-house in 2006. This is paving the way for the Programme to ultimately move out of the Council into an independent agency, provisionally scheduled for 2009.

Internal Organisational Development

Finance

The Irish Sports Council is responsible for investing significant amounts of state funds. The Finance Unit is responsible for ensuring that all procedures and processes comply fully with appropriate best practice governance requirements.

Human Resources

It remains a core value of the Council that the contribution of its staff is valued

and appreciated. A human resource plan is in place to ensure that colleagues are recognised for their contributions, can avail of training and development supports and that the organisation is aware of their career development requirements.

The human resource plan will ensure that the Council staff is suitably trained and qualified to deal with the new challenges presented by the activities of the Council and the wider sports sector.

The Irish Sports Council will ensure that its relocation to Killarney is carried out successfully and in line with Government policy on decentralisation.

Governance

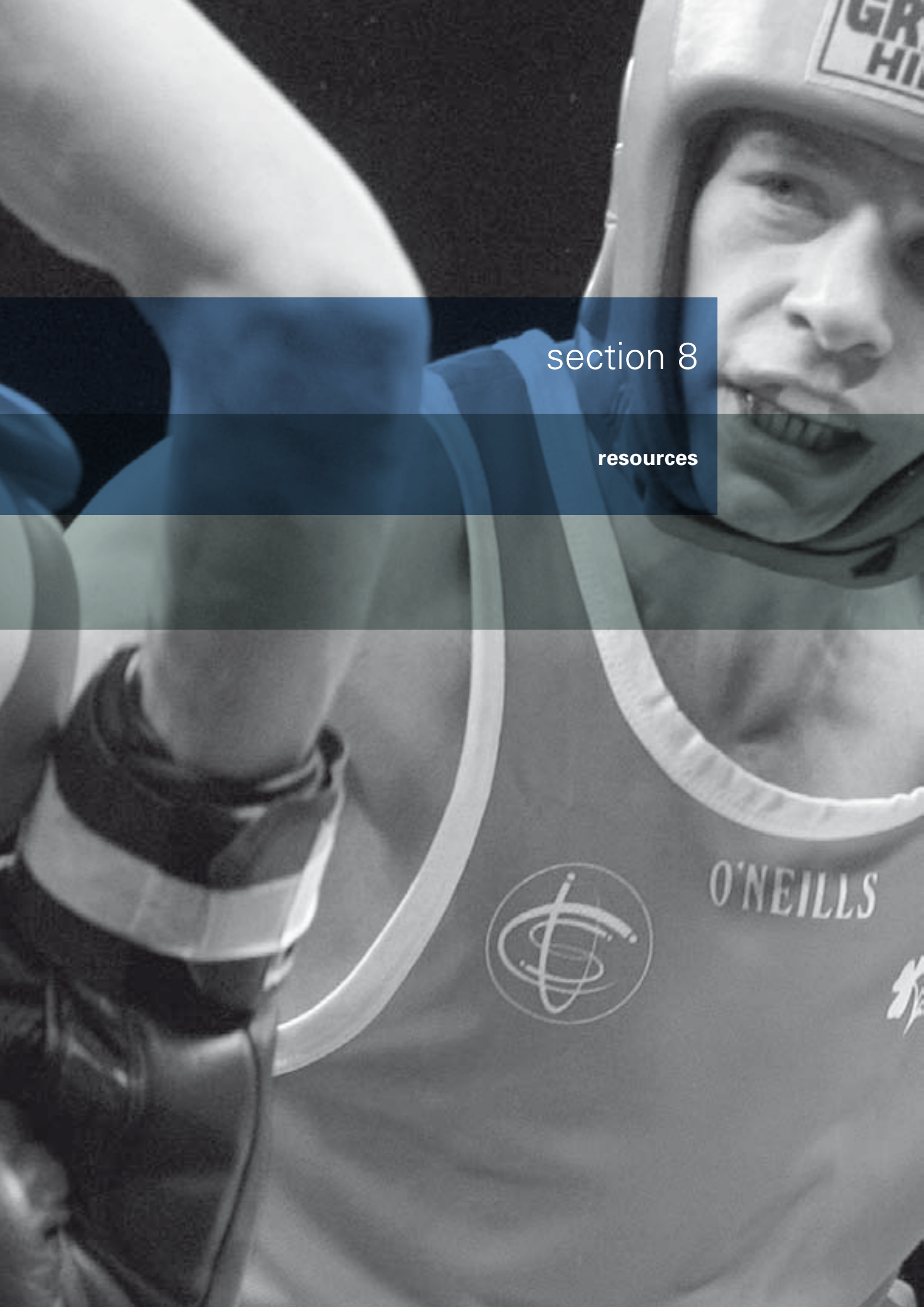
The Council will continue to maintain high standards in relation to its corporate governance framework. This will be achieved through strong oversight and review of the strategy implementation process, its reporting arrangements to the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, the development of a strong internal control environment, ongoing value for money assessments of its programmes, risk management, internal audit and other mechanisms.

Business Practice

The Council will review and refine all business processes within the strategy period. This will include the review of greater opportunities for the use of information technology in Council business. Arrangements with client organisations will be examined to ensure that there is high satisfaction with the level of service provided.

The Council will also review all grant administration processes and arrangements to ensure that they are in accordance with requirements of good governance and accountability.

It remains a core value of the Council that the contribution of its staff is valued and appreciated.



section 8

resources

■ RESOURCES

- In 2005 the Irish Sports Council had an establishment of 25 staff and a budget of €34 million.
- In order to meet the objectives of this strategy the Council will need an annual budget of €50 million and a staff establishment of 34.
- The announcement that the 2006 budget for the Council has been increased to €40 million is a significant step for Irish sport.



section 9

measurement and review



MEASUREMENT AND REVIEW

The Irish Sports Council is committed to the review and measurement of its activities. The objectives set out previously will be measured, with the final outcomes subject to certain factors.

- The external environment remains favourable to the growth and development of the Council.
 - The Council continues to develop as a strong organisation and builds productive partnerships throughout the sports sector.
 - As a state agency the Council carries out a number of compliance and other activities and will ensure that non-strategic issues do not absorb significant Council time and other resources.
4. Meeting the set target of four pieces of research each year
 5. Increase awareness of the Irish Sports Council, especially in association with programmes, events and organisations that the Council supports.
 6. Ensure positive anti-doping tests remain in line with international averages.
 7. Continue to build key relationships based on partnership and in line with the strategic direction of all involved and monitor using existing measures.
 8. Maintain the high level of compliance, which is expected of all state agencies regarding financial procedures, personnel and customer service.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Measured increases in participation based on research, governing body membership figures and returns from sports partnership areas.
2. The establishment of Local Sports Partnerships in each county.
3. Finalists in designated international events as agreed with governing bodies in their performance plans.

REVIEW

The strategy plan will be subject to a six monthly review process to be carried out by the board of the Irish Sports Council.



section 10

acknowledgements

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