



IRISH SPORTS COUNCIL: NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES

MAIN REPORT DEBRIEF FROM 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES

Integrity, Innovation, Inspiration

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of its 2012 High Performance Review process the Irish Sports Council (ISC) commissioned a series of post London Olympic Games debriefs for each of the 15 national governing bodies of sport¹ (NGBs) which are part of its High Performance Programme (HPP). In short², the purpose of the exercise was to review and report back on the:

- ◀ Performances and results of Irish athletes at the 2012 Olympic Games.
- ◀ Performance impact of strategy, annual performance plans and preparations.
- ◀ Interaction of the sport with the ISC, Sport Northern Ireland (SNI), the Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI), the Irish Institute of Sport (IIS) and the Sports Institute of Northern Ireland (SINI) over the four year cycle.
- ◀ Support provided by the NGB in preparation for the Games.

Following an open tendering process, Knight, Kavanagh and Page (KKP) was invited to deliver the contract between August and December 2012.

Overview

Overall, there is a consensus that the development and management of performance sport has moved forward substantially since 2008. The sophistication and quality of ISC funded performance programmes, the response to the higher demands being made by ISC of NGBs in this context, the quality of support being supplied by the IIS and relationships with the OCI have all improved markedly.

Ireland sent 66 athletes³ to the 2012 Olympic Games to compete in 52 events:

- ◀ They won five medals in total, four in boxing (one gold, one silver and two bronze) and one in equestrian sports (bronze).
- ◀ A further two fourth places and six other top ten finishes were secured in athletics, canoeing, equestrian sports, modern pentathlon and sailing, illustrating an increasing strength in depth.
- ◀ Team Ireland finished 41st of 204 competing countries at the Games, 85 of which won medals.
- ◀ This is a marked improvement from 61st at the 2008 Beijing Games, not featuring in the medals table in 2004 (Athens) and coming 64th at the 2000 Games in Sydney.

There has also been a major step forward in the pre-Games preparatory work undertaken by and the relationships between the ISC, SNI, the OCI and NGBs. This approach has provided a stronger foundation for athlete performances and is accompanied by a continued focus on an upwards trend in joint working. These improvements, in a coordinated approach and shared objectives, augur well for future major tournaments.

¹ 13 with qualifying athletes for the Games plus two, Hockey and Tennis, without qualifying athletes. Gymnastics which qualified an athlete but does not receive HPP funding is not covered by the review.

² For a more complete terms of reference see the main report

³ In some instances several athletes comprised a team and therefore only one potential to medal eg: 4 x 400m

The review has identified a sporting infrastructure that is undergoing substantial change. It is moving from an individual coach and athlete led process to one whereby high performance is system based and in which support and scrutiny processes are designed to optimise athlete performance. The key objective has been to ensure that all of the contributory factors are in place and are available at the requisite level of quality.

This approach is consistent with that adopted in the majority of successful sporting nations throughout the world and while moving forward across the board is still, inevitably, at a different stage of progress in each sport.

Some sports have clearly defined strategies, effective relationships, shared objectives and an understanding of how to achieve career peaks at major events. In others the foundations have been laid and it is now a case of seeing it through. In a third group, however, there is not yet a fully functioning system to produce a consistent flow of talented individuals. Consequently, for this third group, at least for now, the question is how best to manage and support the occasional talented performer coming through.

Strong systems have a shared view of aims, objectives and how to achieve them; they result in career peaks at major events and lead to sustained success. Irish sport now needs to build on its successes for Rio 2016; it needs concerted effort and belief rather than radical change.

The vast majority of those consulted considered the 2012 Games to be a much better experience than they could recall at any other major event. The training camp at Lensbury/St. Mary's University was seen as a particular success offering great facilities, an excellent location and being well organised; the more experienced athletes interviewed said it was the best holding camp they had been to.

In a similar, positive vein, more athletes were involved with IIS/SINI than ever before; the OCI organised what was largely considered to have been an excellent camp; people arrived in a positive frame of mind; and the concept of Team Ireland was successfully embedded. This all had a positive effect and communication and interaction was encouraged between sports in a manner not seen before.

Key requirements for success

Across the 15 sports and 122 people interviewed a number of recurrent themes emerged when they were asked to identify the key features of/requirements for success; these are briefly summarised below:

1. Ambition – the HPP must be a stretch but an achievable one to which everyone can sign up, that is transparent, in which they can trust and understand their role within it.
2. Personnel - the right people are essential for success, this includes high level skills, desire to win, a common purpose and an ability to work together via relationships....
 - between Board, CEO, PD, coaches, athletes and clubs within the sport.
 - for athlete with sports sciences/services personnel.
 - with ISC, SNI, IIS, SINI, OCI, organising committees etc.
3. Planned athlete development – a career perspective, mutually supported by PD, coach, and athlete - as opposed to peaking for every event.
4. Sports science and sports medicine – regular access to strength and conditioning, physiotherapy, sports psychology, medical support services, performance analysis etc. builds confidence and ensures that athletes arrive at key events ‘fit to compete’.
5. Logistics – the removal of all extraneous issues from the athlete – accommodation, ticket requests etc. only leave them with their own performance to worry about.
6. Learning – regular review of practices elsewhere, other sports etc.
7. Technology – use of video analysis, live feeds, new techniques etc.
8. Flexibility – planning your sport to meet individual requirements, different opportunities, rule changes etc. - keep things lively, avoid athlete boredom.
9. Finance - effective management and resources are essential for equipment and for attendance at international events.
10. Sponsorship – clothing deal, technical equipment etc. not only has financial benefits but builds confidence - someone else feels you are worth investing in.
11. Facilities – whether a national rowing centre or a surface for tennis it has to be of the highest standard if athletes are to train in it, at it or on it for an international event.
12. Refreshed – whether coach, athlete or horse it is essential that all parties feel fresh, up for it, are not over-trained and (if possible) are not walking wounded.
13. Responsiveness - key decisions often need to be made quickly to be effective.
14. Focus - small things that will make big differences.
15. Media – careful management and preparation for those working with the media.

Recommendations

A brief summary of the main findings is provided below alongside a detailed series of generic and sport specific recommendations.

Generic - high performance

1. Continue with performance plans and funding allocation, with the proviso that the:
 - i. planning cycle is brought forward to early November with a review in December, this will enable funds to be released earlier in the calendar year (ideally in January).
 - ii. full plans are developed for every four years with a change model, KPIs/performance review in the intervening years.
2. All NGBs should take account of the need for succession planning with regard to key high performance appointments to ensure continuity of HP programmes, practices and policies.
3. Encourage sports to identify younger athletes/players to gain experience and prepare them for future competitions.
4. Hold periodic third party and/or peer review of high performance to gain external perspective and provide a route for shared learning; possibly orchestrated by, or in conjunction with, IIS.
5. Adopt new learning as and when opportunities arise – cross nation, cross sport etc.
6. Actively look to create and develop a 'generic' PD role to support individual athletes across a number of sports where emergence of a high performer is a sporadic rather than a planned/regular occurrence.
7. Establish an ongoing presence for sports medicine as part of the standard package, similar to strength and conditioning etc., rather than as an add-on once problems arise.
8. (As a parallel) provide coach training development which highlights some limitations of coach knowledge about sports medicine and need for the above role.
9. NGBs should implement a clear selection rationale, this should be transparent, justifiable, openly communicated and thus reduce the need for appeals.
10. All NGBs should be required to work to the generic HPP format.
11. Policy – although most NGBs have an unwritten understanding and acceptance of HP this should (ideally) be addressed through formal HP statements (links also to governance).
12. Consider, in some NGBs with larger HPPs, running biennial training camps/workshops for coaches, athletes and board members to:
 - i. explain high performance plans and the roles of all involved.
 - ii. explain career as opposed to event peaks, the latter potentially leading to burn out in younger athletes.
 - iii. invite guest speakers to outline their own high performance experiences in other sports, overseas learning, new training, technology etc.
 - iv. outline what is expected of coaches and athletes who progress to compete at this level.
 - v. require coaches to sign up to key principles to secure/retain financial support.
13. Develop an awards system which recognises the contributions by youth / U21 etc coaches to final successes of elite players/athletes.
14. Ask PDs to prioritise requirements and thus realistic levels of support for key elements of the HPP – additional enhancements being seen as bonus and/or sponsorship items.
15. Establish a sub-committee of the Rio 2016 Technical Group to provide expert SS/SM input reporting in to OCI, ISC and through to NGBs on issues such as acclimatisation strategy, climate management, vaccination management etc..

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Generic – NGB governance

1. Promote a business planning approach by tasking a finance director, board or committee with the generation of additional funds/ resources/sponsorship to support the NGB, athletes/players and coaches.
2. Produce a clear diagrammatic representation for the NGB and performance, this should show how all of the different components link together; make use of this for educational, contract, media and communications purposes.
3. Within their governance structure, if an NGB high performance committee is in place; this should comprise members with particular HP expertise and not necessarily be subject to the internal democratic process via which other committees are appointed.
4. Allocate funding relative to:
 - i. Attainment with reference to the sport's high performance pathway.
 - ii. Performance at competition.
 - iii. Need for equipment, fixed -v- variable costs (recognising differences between sports).
 - iv. Individual athlete plans based on sport specific templates which outline spend required for events etc.

Generic – communications

1. The ISC, OCI and NGBs should consider whether and how the successes of London 2012 and of future HP programmes and events can be more coherently and systematically communicated.
2. The ISC, OCI and NGBs should jointly commission media training to prepare athletes, players, coaches and others to better handle difficult press situations through a process of film and review to improve.
3. Develop a clear communications strategy and plans for how to handle specific scenarios – the dangers of being caught on the back foot should be minimised.
4. Clarify responsibilities in relation to media contact, for example in some sports extend to a specific overarching PR function to 'firefight' and develop a more positive working relationship with the media. (The degree of involvement will vary sport by sport; what is consistent, however, is the need for a structured process to which all participants feel able to sign up).
5. Contracts to include clause(s) outlining what athletes and the NGB can/cannot discuss with the press and circumstances in which contact should not be initiated.
6. Produce a Sport Ireland plan which draws together executive summaries from each of the respective sports.
7. Stage a presentation / promote open discussion and learning from the Olympics for athletes/ players and coaches prior to attendance at the next large scale competition.

Generic – other

1. ISC, all NGBs and other key stakeholders to continually review the situation of HPP athletes who are highly reliant upon additional parental or other support above and beyond that made available via the HPP and the new Carding process.
2. Encourage all sports to participate in the Team Ireland ethos.
3. Ensure that key sponsors, supporters and benefactors are factored into Olympic Games 'guest plans' of the NGBs.

Sport by sport recommendations:

Athletics

It is recommended that Athletics Ireland:

1. Stays with the present HPP process and sees through the changes to a system grounded in performance, key milestones focusing more specifically on disciplines that, according to the metrics applied, are most likely to result in the ultimate winning of medals.
 2. Develops a clear communications strategy and in so doing requires HPP staff to:
 - i. Continue to 'up their game' on communication.
 - ii. Develop and implement plans to handle specific competition/ training/selection scenarios.
 - iii. Publish standards and targets (per event/competition), explain why they are above European levels (if they are) and use examples to explain how focused strategies to win in other countries have led to unprecedented success.
 - iv. Develop training to help prepare staff/athletes to handle all, and in particular, difficult media situations.
 - v. Institute a specific programme to improve the communication skills of senior HPP staff (see primary recommendations).
 - vi. Support the PD and senior managers to better manage their work/time in respect of improving communications in and across the rest of the sport, day to day liaison with coaches/athletes.
 - vii. (As part of this) run an annual series of workshops for coaches and athletes to explain (for example) the HPP process itself, the roles of management and various staff, performance funnels, the use of metrics, the backing of youth development etc.
 - viii. Devote (say) a minimum of one day per fortnight to getting out and about to meet coaches and athletes.
 - ix. Improve the reliability and tone of electronic communication utilised.
 3. Appoints an Assistant PD to act as an operations manager and be developed and trained to, potentially, take over the mantle thus building in continuity and safeguards for the future programme.
 4. To facilitate delivery of the communications based recommendations made above and other aspects of the role, AI should consider providing additional PA style support to the PD or allocate an existing member of staff to manage his diary.
 5. Substantially improves across the board coach knowledge/use of SS/SM.
 6. Develops satellite hubs/performance centres, possibly linked to colleges, to help tackle the Dublin-centric issue and make support more readily accessible.
 7. Redefines the role of the HPC to build capacity, funding and contacts that open doors and facilitate actions of/for the PD based on an agenda set by the PD/CEO and reduces the frequency with which the PD and/or HPP staff are required to report to it.
- OR**
8. Considers dismantling its HPC and have the PD simply report to the AI Board either directly or via the CEO.
 9. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations made in this report.

Badminton

1. The ISC should:
 - i. Continue to support Badminton Ireland's HPP process and planned restructuring.
 - ii. Increase sport science and sport medical support for athletes (and coaches).
2. Badminton Ireland should:
 - i. Continue to progress with its plans as present.
 - ii. Address issues associated with players based overseas who feel they are not fully supported by the HP system.
 - iii. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier in this report.

Boxing

It is recommended the ISC in agreeing the next round of HP funding with the IABA ensures that:

1. IABA sets up the HPP staff structure so that:
 - i. Within the HPP, the PD is supported by a strong Operations Manager; enabling him to spend an appropriate proportion of time 'ringside'.
 - ii. Staff appointed to the HPP are engaged by and accountable/report to the PD (and this process is not subject to interference or overrule by IABA members or committees).
 - iii. The number of coaches, specialist support staff and administrative, logistical and PR support personnel or contractually engaged staff is appropriate for a programme of this scale.
 - iv. The power of key IABA members or committees to either sanction or change HPP team decisions with regard to athletes selected entering (or not entering) domestic or international competitions is ceded in its entirety to the PD and HPP team.
2. The relevant committee structures, remits and, if appropriate, constitutional rights of IABA committees with regard to these requirements be amended to reflect this.
3. The HPP team is directly and fully responsible and accountable for all HPP funding going forward.
4. That consideration be given by the HPP team to increasing the extent to which individualised training, strength and conditioning, nutrition/dietary advice and generic SS/SM support is available for athletes.
5. IABA commits to actively and within a specified time, investigate the potential to extend (or replace) the present HP facility to add/ensure:
 - i. That elite athletes are able to train at the right times of the day/evening and do not have to fit in around other centre users.
 - ii. Appropriate space for strength and conditioning.
 - iii. Proper office accommodation.
 - iv. Good quality on-site personnel accommodation and amenities for HPP athletes.
6. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Canoeing

It is recommended that:

1. The ISC in association with the Irish Canoe Union:
 - i. Examine the option to establish a PD post or the alternate inclusion of CI within a series of 'bubble' sports to be covered by a cross-sport PD / facilitator.
 - ii. Support a shift to coaching of squads rather than individuals.
2. The Irish Canoe Union should:
 - i. Develop a training programme for coaches focusing on the development of career peaks for athletes, thereby aligning all coaches in the same direction.
 - ii. Invest directly in, and examine the potential to jointly develop and test IT products for, high tech video, live playback, analytical tools etc with Universities, IT companies etc.
 - iii. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

It is recommended that:

1. The ISC in association with the Irish Clay Pigeon Shooting Association:
 - i. Examine options for the inclusion of CPS within a series of 'bubble' sports to be covered by a cross-sport PD / facilitator.
 - ii. Examine the levels and sources of funding, specifically in relation to the high level of costs associated with specialist equipment and recurrent costs such as consumables.
 - iii. Support longer term initiatives, if developed by the NGB, to identify and nurture talent.
2. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Cycling

It is recommended that:

1. The ISC in association with Cycling Ireland:
 - i. Examine the extent to which CI is able to demonstrate its capacity to develop, manage and deliver a productive and accountable HPP for cycling geared to entering athletes into Olympic and related competitions albeit in the context of an understanding that some athletes may, in any event, progress to become professional team cyclists.

AND/OR
2. Develop a more selective HPP which is targeted at, for example:
 - i. Examining the potential to establish a performance programme geared predominantly to the production of women cyclists.
 - ii. In the absence of a velodrome in Ireland, consider approaching (say) Glasgow to investigate the potential to base squads at the Chris Hoy centre on a full time basis.
 - iii. Targeting specific Olympic cycling options such as MTB in the international competitor landscape specifically seeking out emergent talent and devoting resource to these areas.
3. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Hockey

It is recommended that:

1. The ISC in association with the Irish Hockey Association:
 - i. Increases the level of sports science (esp. sports psychology) and sport medicine input.
 - ii. Review investment in coach development – skills, awareness of career peaks etc.
2. The IHA should:
 - i. Continue with current plans for dispersed and centralised squad/player development recognising differences between the men's and women's games; while ensuring women's hockey does not 'lose out' as a consequence of the location of the new men's coach in Germany. The planned appointment of a new Head of Performance Development, in 2013, who is to be based in Ireland should avoid any such problems.
 - ii. Revise the structure of the sport, as outlined by CEO/PD, to create a provincial/ regional level between club and high performance.
 - iii. Investigate ways to sustain player interest and increase the competitive nature and standard of college / university level hockey.
 - iv. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Horse Sport

It is recommended that ISC requires HSI to ensure that its next performance plan incorporates:

1. Greater focus upon the analysis of individual shortcomings and specific targeting of resource at individual rider weaknesses.
2. More definite targeting of early qualification (in both main Olympic disciplines) so that the quality of build-up and run-in to the Games optimises rider readiness and horse conditioning.
3. Explore with the Army Equitation School, as appropriate, the potential for even greater access and use as a training venue to underpin Ireland's future success (as outlined in the SIA report).
4. Rigorous implementation of new processes designed to eradicate issues associated with horse doping and hyper-sensitivity to ensure that the sport continues to build upon its growing reputation for a 'clean' approach and its attempts to eradicate protracted disputes, court cases and other debates surrounding athlete selection.
5. Where appropriate, adoption of the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Judo

It is recommended that:

1. The ISC in association with the Irish Judo Association examine:
 - i. Options of a Performance Director post for IJA or the alternate inclusion of IJA within a series of 'bubble' sports to be covered by a cross-sport PD / facilitator.
 - ii. Resource requirements for coaches and athletes to support more than one player / gender – and ways of funding such a programme.
 - iii. Resource requirements and funding/sponsorship opportunities for the reinvigoration of a squad system to produce elite performers.
2. The Irish Judo Association should:
 - i. Focus on strategies to bring through and retain players to an elite level, in particular girls/ young women as it is believed there is a higher attrition rate by gender.
 - ii. Improve coach education and training.
 - iii. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Modern Pentathlon

It is recommended that:

1. The ISC should:
 - i. Consider making greater investment in MP. Securing the role of the PD with a workable budget and options to nominate key athletes for individual athlete support under the successor process to the Carding Scheme.
 - ii. Assess how resource requirements for MP can be provided either directly or as part of some form of collaborative process with other NGBs building upon the effective links created by the sport over the last two years.
 - iii. Review whether and how it may support individual athletes plus, pending key international decisions, Ireland's options with regard to team-based competition in the sport.
 - iv. Consider how the relationship with HSI is to work to an optimum level on programme governance, ring fenced funding and professional management support for the HPP.
 - v. Take account of the need for specialist equipment (e.g., laser guns) when setting budgets.
 - vi. Evaluate how best to corporately support MP, alongside other equestrian disciplines, to work more closely with and gain access to the resources of the Irish Army.
2. Modern Pentathlon should:
 - i. Consider how it will find resource to support a PD (in terms of other management infrastructure and her own personal development).
 - ii. Consider how it will go about building underpinning youth and development structures to feed its HP programme.
 - iii. Work closely with HSI to evaluate the optimum professional support format for the sport while managed via this route.
 - iv. Continue to optimise the use made of IIS sports science and sports medicine support with greater emphasis on holistic wrap-around medical input for athletes to accompany strength and conditioning and sports psychology inputs (a similar approach should be adopted in most other sports).
 - v. Working closely with HSI, embed links to the Pony Club and Tetrathlon.
 - vi. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Rowing

It is recommended that ISC and Rowing Ireland should work out a process whereby:

1. An HPP is submitted which reflects the sport's current situation and in which future levels of funding are reviewed by the ISC and contingent upon the capacity of RI to produce athletes of the requisite High Performance standard. This situation should be reviewed on an agreed basis to ensure that improvements implemented are recognised and so as not to unduly impair the progression of younger squad members who may progress to perform at an elite level.
2. Assurances are given with regard to the governance and stability of the sport; in particular the role and function of the PD.
3. The NGB rebuilds HP relationships with clubs, in particular those feeding national squads
4. RI focuses on pathways for younger rowers to ensure the current success at junior and under 23s levels feeds into senior/elite performers for Rio and beyond.
5. Competitive rowing is improved at University level, as are relationships with RI to facilitate transition of appropriately talented University rowers into the sport at an elite level.

Rowing (continued)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Investment is made in key equipment and technology such as telemetry (with ISC support) and/or an IT testing link is made to development companies/university research and technology/engineering departments etc. 7. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.
Sailing
<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ISC, OCI and Irish Sailing Association: take necessary steps to ensure that in future Games, although remotely located, athletes associated with sailing feel part of Team Ireland. 2. The Irish Sailing Association should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Carry the learning that it has applied in London 2012 in areas such as, familiarity breeding confidence, accommodation, sailing the courses/waters regularly before competition sponsorship, personal decision making etc. all (wherever realistic) be repeated for Rio. ii. Continue to build upon its underpinning elite academy programme. iii. Review sailing links with universities to improve competitive levels etc. iv. Consider setting up a PD/HPP peer review process with other sports (eg Triathlon/Swimming) v. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.
Swimming
<p>It is recommended that SI:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensures that, within its HPP, the PD proactively manages all aspects of work in, and people working on elite performance. 2. Puts in place plans to ensure that the HPP team continue to build upon its progressively greater authority & control over the programmes and regimes employed by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Swimmers – on the programme. ii. Coaches – working with swimmers on the programme. 3. Installs a level of HPP support staffing that enables the PD to have the flexibility to operate on pool-side when required while retaining full leadership and management control over the wider performance programme. 4. Improves its protocols with regard to holistic SS & SM input, paying particular regard to the need to ensure that sport medicine is a 'custom and practice' feature of athlete management rather than an 'emergency service' to be utilised when others have run out of ideas. 5. Implements an education programmes for HPP coaches with regard to their understanding, interpretation and use of SS/SM input – in particular preventative elements thereof. 6. Increases its focus on producing 'fit to compete' swimmers – swimmer supervision and coach understanding & use of SS/SM support is essential to this. 7. Considers how to ensure that the requisite, optimum quality, coaching/SS/SM and performance analysis can be most effectively offered to the sport's elite athletes. 8. Considers setting up a PD peer review process with other sports (e.g., Triathlon/Sailing). 9. Where appropriate, adopts the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Tennis

It is recommended that:

1. Consideration be given,
 - i. At present, to tennis becoming one of the sports where talented individual athletes are provided with generic support rather than via a sport-specific HPP.
 - ii. To an annual review of athlete/performance progress whereby future levels of funding are reviewed by the ISC and are contingent upon the capacity of Tennis Ireland to produce athletes of the requisite standard. The review process should ensure that improvements implemented are recognised and the situation does not unduly impair the progression of younger squad members who may progress to perform at an elite level.
2. The ISC in association with SINI and Tennis Ireland examine opportunities to develop additional facilities - indoor/outdoor, grass, clay, concrete – to slam standard.
3. Tennis Ireland should, if it continues to operate an ISC funded HPP:
 - i. Make greater use of IIS advice (if not its actual services).
 - ii. Consider making use of peer PD review to enhance the extent to which continuous improvements in its programmes can be achieved.
 - iii. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Triathlon

It is recommended that:

1. The ISC in association with Triathlon Ireland seek to attract international level events to Ireland.
2. Triathlon Ireland should:
 - i. Continue on its current development path – carefully managing the growth of the sport and ensuring there is not a breakdown in relationships between club and elite level competition.
 - ii. Ensure that, without damaging levels of support for the most elite, the level of provision for second tier 'development' athletes is more comprehensively considered.
 - iii. Consider setting up some form of PD peer review process with another sport (e.g., Sailing/Swimming).
 - iv. Ensure that athlete support includes full sports medicine input at all times not just when problems arise.
 - v. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the 2012 High Performance Review process the Irish Sports Council (ISC) commissioned a series of post London Olympic Games debriefs for each of the following National Governing Bodies of Sport⁴ (NGBs):

- Athletics Ireland
- Cycling Ireland
- Irish Amateur Boxing Association
- Irish Canoe Union
- Irish Hockey Association
- Irish Sailing Association
- Swim Ireland
- Triathlon Ireland
- Badminton Ireland
- Horse Sport Ireland
- Rowing Ireland
- Irish Clay Pigeon Shooting Association
- Irish Judo Association
- Modern Pentathlon
- Tennis Ireland

The terms of reference for the study were:

1. To review and assess the performances and results of Irish athletes at the London 2012 Olympic Games, identifying the particular factors which contributed to or impacted upon the performances at the Games.
2. To review and assess the performance impact of: strategy, annual performance plans and preparation programme of the sport over the four year Olympic cycle to include:
 - ◀ HP management structure; including roles, responsibilities and leadership
 - ◀ Delivery of the HP targets and goals set
 - ◀ Coaching
 - ◀ Performance services (science, medicine and lifestyle support)
 - ◀ HP investment and support provided by the ISC, SNI and NGB
 - ◀ Support provided by IIS and SINI
3. To review and assess the engagement and interaction of the sport with the ISC, Sport Northern Ireland (SNI), the Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI), the Irish Institute of Sport (IIS) and the Sports Institute of Northern Ireland (SINI) over the four year cycle.
4. To review and assess the level of support provided by the NGB for the performance plan and preparation for the 'Games', including the governance structure within the NGB.
5. To prepare a report on the outcomes of the debrief which will inform the future performance plans of the sport and will be submitted to the NGB, ISC, SNI, OCI and the London 2012 Technical Group for consideration.

Knight, Kavanagh and Page (KKP) was invited to deliver the contract following an open tendering process, with the work conducted between August and December 2012. Other elements of the wider High Performance review include:

- ◀ Review of the International Carding Scheme
- ◀ Internal Review of the High Performance Planning
- ◀ IIS Transition Programme for athletes attending the Games

⁴ 13 with qualifying athletes for the Games plus two, Hockey and Tennis, without qualifying athletes. Gymnastics which qualified an athlete but does not receive HPP funding is not covered by the review.

Methodology

The evaluation was founded on 122 interviews, many conducted face-to-face, with athletes, coaches, CEOs and performance directors. Although supported by a questionnaire survey the study is not an in-depth review of individual plans, metrics and detailed targets. It is an examination of the environment within which the plans are delivered and an awareness of and support for the high performance processes. Although focussed primarily on the 2012 Olympics they were not considered in isolation and the wider issue of sport and performance development was an important consideration. Although a standard pro-forma aided the delivery of comparable data; the interviews were not rigid and open discussions were encouraged.

This inevitably led to differing views of individuals with strongly held and at times contradictory opinions and we have sought hard to provide an objective perspective. At its simplest the fundamentals are, is the HPP system:

- ◀ Working as intended?
- ◀ Understood by those involved?
- ◀ Shared with and by key stakeholders?
- ◀ Sustainable – will it produce a regular flow of talent and success for the future?

2. OVERVIEW

Overall, there is a consensus that the development and management of performance sport has moved forward substantially since 2008.

The sophistication and quality of ISC funded performance programmes, the response to the higher demands being made by ISC of NGBs in this context, the quality of support being supplied by the IIS and relationships with the OCI have all improved markedly. Ireland sent 66 athletes⁵ to the 2012 Olympic Games to compete in 52 events:

- ✦ They won five medals in total, four in boxing (one gold, one silver and two bronze) and one in equestrian sports (bronze).
- ✦ A further two fourth places and six other top ten finishes were secured in athletics, canoeing, equestrian sports, modern pentathlon and sailing, illustrating an increasing strength in depth.
- ✦ Team Ireland finished 41st of 204 competing countries at the Games, 85 of which won medals.
- ✦ This is a marked improvement from 61st at the 2008 Beijing Games, not featuring in the medals table for the 2004 Games in Athens and coming 64th at the 2000 Games in Sydney.

To solely compare medals/positions to performance plans, targets and funding would be overly-simplistic as the bigger picture includes preparation for future European, World Championships and the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio. Furthermore, despite the medals won it cannot be assumed that everything is right in boxing and equestrian sports or that the absence of medals means things are wrong elsewhere.

Progress has been made

Overall, there is a consensus that the development and management of performance sport has moved forward substantially since 2008. The sophistication and quality of ISC funded performance programmes, the response to the higher demands being made by ISC of NGBs in this context, the quality of support being supplied by the IIS and relationships with the OCI have all improved markedly.

There has also been a major step forward in the pre-Games preparatory work undertaken by and the relationships between the ISC, SNI, OCI and NGBs. This has provided a stronger foundation for athlete performances and, with a continued focus on and an upwards trend in joint working and support, augurs well for future major tournaments.

The review has identified a sporting infrastructure that is undergoing substantial change as it shifts from individual coach and athlete led processes to more high performance based, systems driven, support and scrutiny processes. These are now better designed to optimise athlete performance on the basis of ensuring that all the contributory factors, at the requisite level of quality, are in place. This planned approach is consistent with that adopted in the majority of successful sporting nations throughout the world and while moving forward across the board is still, inevitably, at a different stage of progress in each sport.

⁵ In some instances several athletes comprised a team and therefore only one potential to medal eg: 4 x 400m

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The vast majority of those consulted considered the 2012 Games to be a much better experience than they could recall at any other major event. The training camp at Lensbury/St. Mary's University was seen as a particular success offering great facilities, an excellent location and well organised. The more experienced athletes interviewed said it was the best holding camp they had been to.

In a similar, positive vein, more athletes were involved with IIS/SINI than ever before; the OCI organised what was largely considered to have been an excellent camp; people arrived in a positive frame of mind; and the concept of Team Ireland was successfully embedded. This all had a positive effect and communication and interaction was encouraged between sports in a manner not seen before.

Building for the future

A focus on high performance, effective working relationships, shared objectives and a clear vision of how to achieve career peaks at major events is already moving into place across a number of sports. In some others the issue appears to be one of seeing it through – the foundations having already been laid. For a third group, there is not a system to produce a consistent flow of talented individuals and it is, at least for now, a case of how best to manage and support the occasional exceptional athlete.

Weak performance systems are characterised by a poor alignment between the aims and objectives of the NGB Board, Chief Executive, HPP team/PD, coaches and athletes. They fail to work together, only lead to occasional peak performances and make the least of the support systems around them. Conversely strong systems have a shared view of aims, objectives and how to achieve them; they result in career peaks at major events and lead to sustained success. Irish sport now needs to build on its successes for Rio; it needs concerted effort and belief rather than radical change. (See Appendix 5).

The Olympic Council of Ireland

There is widespread acknowledgement that a good core support team was provided by the OCI. As noted the holding camp at Lensbury/St. Mary's University was widely praised as was, in large part, the medical/physiotherapy support provided. Use of OCI provided service varied considerably: for example, boxing took full advantage of the resources available while some others preferred to arrange their own. Media support, particularly in 'non-core' locations was put forward as an area for improvement. The general view of the OCI's input was, however, favourable and it was considered to be real progress from Beijing.

The Irish Institute of Sport and Sport Institute of Northern Ireland

Strength and conditioning, sports psychology and sports medicine have progressively come to the fore over recent years and have all been seen to lead to improved performances, sustainable fitness and increased confidence. Similar advances are also being seen in logistics planning and media training would be a next logical area in a programme designed to leave as little to chance as possible.

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Sports medicine should move from a position whereby athletes and coaches turn to a doctor when someone is injured, to one where a 360° appraisal is part of the 'wrap-around' service provided – as is the norm in sports such as football and rugby.

Close working relationships should extend from PD, coach and athlete to include medical, physiotherapy, strength and conditioning services. Within this context, the OCI's recruitment for the Games was questioned as some people who had worked with athletes for a long time and been to major games were claimed not to have been given the opportunity to apply to be part of the OCI team for London 2012. The OCI perspective, however, was that Sport Science and Sport Medicine accreditations were provided on the basis of a priority list in each NGB drawn up by the respective PDs. The OCI also used rotational accreditations to ensure sports were covered better than in previous games.

2012 Technical Group

The concept of a technical group was acknowledged to have worked quite well, in particular with reference to the arrangement of the Lensbury/St. Mary's University holding camp. It ensured that every agency had the opportunity to discuss potential issues. While its function, for London 2012, was advisory rather than technical, it may be that the terms of reference with regard its role in the build-up to Rio should be more specific. It should also be complemented by a SS/SM sub-committee to ensure that due consideration is given to the more extensive array of medical, logistical and practical issues that will apply.

The London effect

Several tripwires were absent simply because the location was London; there were no cultural, diet, jetlag, support, climate or infection issues. Nevertheless, the whole experience was a step on from Beijing where people felt somewhat confined.

Issues and challenges

The learning from London must not be lost, it must be built on for Rio even though inevitably there will be more challenges due to the distance, climate etc. issues raised included:

- ✦ A lack of focus among some athletes – suggestions that some were happy just to have got there.
- ✦ Late payments – athlete support payments are seen as an issue, as is their timing
- ✦ Funding - some sports spoke positively about carding others saw it as a problem.
- ✦ Learning – some athletes spoke of the need to learn from other nations and sports.
- ✦ Policy - most NGBs only have an unwritten 'understanding' and acceptance of HP.
- ✦ Detailed plans – are not needed annually and should be replaced by a full plan once every four years, supplemented by annual reviews/appraisals.
- ✦ Media – some significant problems were referred to and were felt to have undermined otherwise careful preparations.

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Several of the issues raised and terms used are overstated; for example:

- ✦ Funding - often contentious, usually real but alternative solutions can also be sought.
- ✦ 'World class' - commonly used but rarely justified, it usually shows a lack of perspective.
- ✦ Communication - a problem for any organisation and often a two way issue
- ✦ Media - control of television, radio and press is unrealistic; it would be far better to develop a communications strategy and training for staff and athletes on how to handle the press and to provide ready access to a wider range of accredited communications personnel from NGBs.

Key requirements for success

Across the 15 sports and 122 people interviewed a number of recurrent themes emerged when they were asked to identify the key features of/requirements for success; these are briefly summarised below:

1. Ambition – the HPP must be a stretch but an achievable one to which everyone can sign up, that is transparent, in which they can trust and understand their role within it.
2. Personnel - the right people are essential for success, this includes high level skills, desire to win, a common purpose and an ability to work together via relationships....
 - between Board, CEO, PD, coaches, athletes and clubs within the sport.
 - for athlete with sports sciences/services personnel.
 - with ISC, IIS, SINI, OCI, organising committees etc.
3. Planned athlete development – a career perspective, mutually supported by PD, coach, and athlete - as opposed to peaking for every event.
4. Sports science and sports medicine – regular access to strength and conditioning, physiotherapy, sports psychology, medical support services, performance analysis etc. builds confidence and ensures that athletes arrive at key events 'fit to compete'.
5. Logistics – the removal of all extraneous issues from the athlete – accommodation, ticket requests etc. only leave them with their own performance to worry about.
6. Learning – regular review of practices elsewhere, other sports etc.
7. Technology – use of video analysis, live feeds, new techniques etc.
8. Flexibility – planning your sport to meet individual requirements, different opportunities, rule changes etc. - keep things lively, avoid athlete boredom.
9. Finance - effective management and resources are essential for equipment and for attendance at international events.
10. Sponsorship – clothing deal, technical equipment etc. not only has financial benefits but builds confidence - someone else feels you are worth investing in.
11. Facilities – whether a national rowing centre or a surface for tennis it has to be of the highest standard if athletes are to train in it, at it or on it for an international event.
12. Refreshed – whether coach, athlete or horse it is essential that all parties feel fresh, up for it, are not over-trained and (if possible) are not walking wounded.
13. Responsiveness - key decisions often need to be made quickly to be effective.
14. Focus - small things that will make big differences.
15. Media – careful management and preparation for those working with the media.

Broad conclusions

The vast majority of those consulted considered the 2012 Games to be a much better experience than they could recall at any other major event. Lensbury/St. Mary's University, was a success and experienced athletes said it was the best holding camp they had been to.

Another major step forward is the improved preparatory work by, and relationships between, the ISC, OCI and NGBs. This approach has provided a stronger foundation for athlete performances and is accompanied by a continued focus on an upwards trend in joint working. These improvements, in a coordinated approach and shared objectives, augur well for future major tournaments.

More athletes were involved with IIS/SINI than ever before and the (successful) concept of Team Ireland was also popular, worked well for most athletes and coaches and had a positive effect on communication and mutual support among sports.

Building on this it may be worth considering holding biennial training camps at which workshops could be run to elaborate on HPPs and the roles of all involved. Guest speakers should outline their own experiences in other sports, overseas learning, new training, technology etc. Established coaches and athletes could be invited along with younger, emergent talent so that as they rise in their sport they appreciate the wider picture, where they fit in and what will be expected of them if they progress to compete at the highest level.

Generic recommendations

Generic - high performance

1. Continue with performance plans and funding allocation, with the proviso that the:
 - i. planning cycle is brought forward to early November with a review in December, this will enable funds to be released earlier in the calendar year (ideally in January).
 - ii. full plans are developed for every four years with a change model, KPIs/performance review in the intervening years.
2. All NGBs should take account of the need for succession planning with regard to key high performance appointments to ensure continuity of HP programmes, practices and policies.
3. Encourage sports to identify younger athletes/players to gain experience and prepare them for future competitions.
4. Hold periodic third party and/or peer review of high performance to gain external perspective and provide a route for shared learning.
5. Adopt new learning as and when opportunities arise – cross nation, cross sport etc.
6. Actively look to create and develop a 'generic' PD role to support individual athletes across a number of sports where emergence of a high performer is a sporadic rather than a planned/regular occurrence.
7. Establish an ongoing presence for sports medicine as part of the standard package, similar to strength and conditioning etc., rather than as an add-on once problems arise.
8. (As a parallel) provide coach training development which highlights some limitations of coach knowledge about sports medicine and need for the above role.
9. NGBs should implement a clear selection rationale, this should be transparent, justifiable, openly communicated and thus reduce the need for appeals.
10. All NGBs should be required to work to the generic HPP format.
11. Policy – although most NGBs have an unwritten understanding and acceptance of HP this should (ideally) be addressed through formal HP statements (links also to governance).
12. Consider, in some NGBs with larger HPPs, running biennial training camps/workshops for coaches, athletes and board members to:
 - i. explain high performance plans and the roles of all involved.
 - ii. explain career as opposed to event peaks, the latter potentially leading to burn out in younger athletes.
 - iii. invite guest speakers to outline their own high performance experiences in other sports, overseas learning, new training, technology etc.
 - iv. outline what is expected of coaches and athletes who progress to compete at this level.
 - v. require coaches to sign up to key principles to secure/retain financial support.
13. Develop an awards system which recognises the contributions by youth / U21 etc coaches to final successes of elite players/athletes.
14. Ask PDs to prioritise requirements and thus realistic levels of support for key elements of the HPP – additional enhancements being seen as bonus and/or sponsorship items.
15. Establish a sub-committee of the Rio 2016 Technical Group to provide expert SS/SM input reporting in to OCI, ISC and through to NGBs on issues such as acclimatisation strategy, climate management, vaccination management etc..

Generic – NGB governance

1. Promote a business planning approach by tasking a finance director, board or committee with the generation of additional funds/ resources/sponsorship to support the NGB, athletes/players and coaches.
2. Produce a clear diagrammatic representation for the NGB and performance, this should show how all of the different components link together; make use of this for educational, contract, media and communications purposes.
3. Within their governance structure, if an NGB high performance committee is in place; this should comprise members with particular HP expertise and not necessarily be subject to the internal democratic process via which other committees are appointed.
4. Allocate funding relative to:
 - i. Attainment with reference to the sport's high performance pathway.
 - ii. Performance at competition.
 - iii. Need for equipment, fixed -v- variable costs (recognising differences between sports).
 - iv. Individual athlete plans based on sport specific templates which outline spend required for events etc.

Generic - communications

1. The ISC, OCI and NGBs should consider whether and how the successes of London 2012 and of future HP programmes and events can be more coherently and systematically communicated.
2. The ISC, OCI and NGBs should jointly commission media training to prepare athletes, players, coaches and others to better handle difficult press situations through a process of film and review to improve.
3. Develop a clear communications strategy and plans for how to handle specific scenarios – the dangers of being caught on the back foot should be minimised.
4. Clarify responsibilities in relation to media contact, for example in some sports extend to a specific overarching PR function to 'firefight' and develop a more positive working relationship with the media. (The degree of involvement will vary sport by sport; what is consistent, however, is the need for a structured process to which all participants feel able to sign up).
5. Contracts to include clause(s) outlining what athletes and the NGB can/cannot discuss with the press and circumstances in which contact should not be initiated.
6. Suggested that there should be a Sport Ireland plan which draws together executive summaries from each of the respective sports.
7. Stage a presentation / promote open discussion and learning from the Olympics for athletes/players and coaches prior to attendance at the next large scale competition .

Generic - other

1. ISC, all NGBs and other key stakeholders to continually review the situation of HPP athletes who are highly reliant upon additional parental or other support above and beyond that made available via the HPP and the new Carding process.
2. Encourage all sports to participate in the Team Ireland ethos.
3. Ensure that key sponsors, supporters and benefactors are factored into Olympic Games 'guest plans' of the NGBs..

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3. SPORT BY SPORT REVIEW:

This section is based upon the comments of the Chief Executive, Performance Director, coaches and athletes in each of the respective NGBs. They are supplemented by the views of coaches, Board representatives, IIS and SINI staff. The inclusion of statements is neither ratification nor endorsement. The comments are provided in confidence, are not attributed to specific individuals and at times reflect interviewer observations or interpretation of the views expressed.

Athletics

The Games

The original target for London was two medals and four top 12 places. On his arrival, the current PD, felt the targets were over-ambitious and his initial (informally) revised assessment was to achieve 7-10 top 16s. Over the build-up period, positive actions by AI progressively increased this number to the point where there were 23 'A' qualifiers, seven top 16 finishes and a highest position in any event of 4th in the 50 kilometre walk.

Athlete performances at the 2012 Games (in alphabetic order and by event)

Athlete	Event	Performance
Marian Andrews Heffernan	4 x 400	13 th
Jessie Barr	4 x 400	13 th
Claire Bergin	4 x 400	13 th
Michelle Carey	4 x 400	13 th
Catriona Cuddihy	4 x 400	13 th
Joanne Cuddihy	4 x 400	13 th
Joanne Cuddihy	400m	Semi final (5 th)
Derval O'Rourke	100m hurdles	15 th (semi finals)
Paul Hession	200m	27 th (round 1)
Ciaran O'Lionaird	1,500m	39 th (round 1)
Stephanie Reilly	3,000m steeplechase	27 th (in heats)
Alistair Ian Cragg	5,000m	17 th
Fionnuala Britton	5,000m	10 th (heat)
Fionnuala Britton	10,000m	15 th
Olive Loughnane	20km walk	13 th
Laura Reynolds	20km walk	20 th
Robert Heffernan	20km walk	9 th
Robert Heffernan	50km walk	4 th
Brendan Boyce	50km walk	29 th
Colin Griffin	50km walk	Did not finish
Linda Byrne	Marathon	66 th
Ava Hutchinson	Marathon	68 th
Catriona Jennings	Marathon	107 th
Mark Keneally	Marathon	57 th
Tori Pena	Pole vault	No height
Deidre Ryan	High jump	27 th (qualifying)

Note: All positions from BBC final Olympic tables, some positions taken from overall standings

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The OCI and IIS perspective is that Games liaison between AI and OCI was good; AI was considered to have been more professional going into London than it was for Beijing and has now introduced the makings of a good high performance environment.

In common with other sports, IIS input was widely seen to be useful and effective, offering SS/SM services of high quality. The ISC and OCI are also perceived to have worked much more effectively and coherently in this performance cycle to the general benefit of athletes. OCI's performance services team (PST) handling of logistics enabled the PD and coaches to focus more specifically upon athletes' needs. As a result, organisation of the holding camp and the removal of ticketing and logistical problems (from athletes) was widely regarded to be a success.

Having an athletics specific physiotherapist within the 'team' was well received and considered to have been an improvement; not least because work was undertaken with, and thus knowledge gained about, athletes prior to the Games. It was, however, felt that this could be further enhanced by the addition of a sport-specific medic who would be available to work with the athletes, thereby reducing the burden on the physiotherapist.

There were some claims that, rooming in the Village was given insufficient thought with regard to the fact that athletes still competing were sharing a room with others that had finished. Their understandably different mind-sets resulting from this were further exacerbated during the last weekend when the main focus was the logistics of leaving even though some people were still competing. This point was, however, strongly contested by AI staff who referenced a process taken to separate those who were still competing from those who had completed their events and suggested that, if anything, certain athletes and coaches made this more difficult by not wanting to change rooms.

There were some differences of opinion about the extent to which the accommodation at Lensbury/St. Mary's University was sufficient. While there were not enough rooms to enable everyone to stay in one place, coaches were allowed onto the site even if, for logistical reasons, they had to sleep off-site. It appears, however, that this was poorly received and was felt by some to have created a number of problems. In addition, a number of athletes attending the Games commented that they were unaware that LOCOG had a limited number of tickets which accredited athletes could use for events and/or to watch/support colleagues.

Management

The PD's view is that performances at the 2012 Games came largely on the back of already established personal talent and that the sport needed a fundamental change in emphasis to achieve sustainable longer term success. It is broadly acknowledged that he came into a sport that lacked a coherent high performance system and was tasked with the responsibility of installing one - a challenging brief. The timing of his arrival meant that it was too late, and was considered likely to have been counter-productive, to change too many things in the run up to the Games.

AI started to initiate change, while at the same time managing the balance of the programme for 2012 and supporting athletes within the existing systems. This was to take the form of establishing systems and processes that would help to drive the required culture change moving forwards. This was an explicit requirement of the role and much reportedly remains to be done. However, some of the communications issues about which more is written later, have led the sport to a position where the, sometimes dissonant, voices of those most at risk from change appear (at times) to be the loudest.

The performance trajectory metrics system now being applied is a key move forward. The PD is a strong advocate of and believer in using them to gauge performance, set targets, relate progress to 'performance funnels' and build confidence. It is, however, also recognised that this is not the sole progress evaluation mechanism. More expert coaching and other input is also needed from people working in and with the sport and those who have the right understanding of elite performance as well as at other pathway levels. Appropriate commitment is required to achieve success in the events that are likely to prove the most 'fruitful' in respect of ISC investment in athletes and coaches.

The use of 'performance metrics' should limit the number of disputes which adversely affect the sport. Selection decisions should be clear and fair. In general, athletes interviewed are in favour of the transparency that it offers as it does (or they believe it will) lead to a system in which people can trust. The focus upon athlete long term horizons and potential is also acknowledged to be vital. There is a general acceptance that some current practice is short-term and 'next event' as opposed to 'key event' fixated. It is essential that coaches, parents and athletes themselves recognise that gaining a medal at every event entered may not be necessary; sometimes a process geared to winning specific prizes must encompass experimentation, learning and 'race-testing' of specific strategies and tactics.

The absence of clear targets has, over time prior to this new regime, created an environment which tended to spawn appeals and counter appeals. Although steps have been taken to remove such inconsistencies and to clearly relate attendance to performance, one appeal led to uncertainty for at least one athlete who was unsure of selection until relatively late in the day.

The way performance is now tracked, with an eye on longer-term goals should enhance and clarify the process of athlete transition into the HPP. Individual athlete prospects of success will be realistically charted and used to underpin investment decisions with regard to coaching support, training camp and competition attendance. This is important because in the previous, less structured environment, there was higher risk of insufficient focus being placed upon major events, related targets and linked performance milestones in favour of entry into less meaningful event/competitions.

The shift from an individual to a systems based approach is critical to sustained success and is overdue. Of necessity it engenders considerable change, causes friction and may not be easy to introduce. As one consultee noted '...until these are resolved the sport will struggle to move forward...we are not working together towards one goal and therefore resources, people and opportunities are not being best used'.

At the time when the interviews for this review were conducted, the 'stand-off' relationship between the PD and others in the sport appeared to have become entrenched. This may be a particular issue for some of the athletes and coaches less likely to continue under the new system (due either to career stage or their buy-in to a new delivery model). In the post-Games period, as awareness of the new system rises and the mechanisms and routes via which communication about this develop, this situation is reportedly easing.

Even at the point when the review was conducted, in other quarters, it was suggested that the PD has become more flexible, has 'made a step' towards others and that, at U23 level, people are gaining experience. Although within AI it is recognised that structures/relationships and the sport's credibility with the ISC and IIS has improved, it is also accepted that there is room for yet further improvements to be made.

An alternative perspective, however, and one that has reportedly improved yet further in the intervening period, is that he has helped to make and push through hard decisions that have been needed for years. Consequently, it would be legitimate to anticipate accelerated improvement now that some of the 'hard yards' have been covered. A continued change in culture will, nevertheless for some, remain a challenge and it is important that the CEO, PD, HPC, coaching and administrative infrastructure are all 'pulling in the same direction' if the full potential of AI is to be realised.

AI faces major issues in respect of who 'owns' or controls the athlete programme. There is a need to strike a balance between coach continuity and the fact that some hold on to athletes that have 'outgrown' them. The task going forward is to develop a national performance coaching team which bases its work around longer term achievements.

The new HPP in athletics is vital because up until this point, too many coaches have reportedly been working to their own agenda; outside any recognisable system. There appears to have been a tendency for some coaches, possibly to maintain their own profile, enter athletes in competitions that may not best suit the athlete's long-term development and/or be the best build up to key major international events. Athletes are not always in the best position to understand this.

Alongside this, continued limitations in real understanding of sport science/sports medicine (in particular the need for on-going medical input and support for athletes and coaches) are likely to mean that athletes do not benefit from the full 360 degree management support that the most elite performers require in order to achieve the highest possible levels of attainment. Keeping athletes sufficiently healthy to compete consistently is a key requirement. There is cross-sport confidence in the value and benefit of the IIS; plaudits for its contribution were a regular feature of interviews. This noted, while it is improving rapidly and all attest to the positive direction of travel, there is still ground to cover to match the best nations.

High quality sport science and sports medicine support is presently too thinly spread and tends (according to the feedback provided) to be Dublin-centric. The consequent cost, limited expertise of the practitioners to which they have access and transport/logistic problems faced by some athletes are an issue. Expert SS/SM input is a standardised and on-going element of athlete management and development. This must be maintained to

ensure that Irish athletes are less likely to break down prior to and during competition; this will, consequently, optimise performance levels.

Several commentators referenced a tendency for some coaches to be overly complacent and to over-rate their own ability and that of their athletes. This lack of a wider perspective also has a capacity, for some, to colour all other statements made in relation to the sport. It also, in turn, helps to feed media expectations with regard to Ireland's performance at major competitions, including the Games, thus generating artificially inflated expectations (by people other than the PD) which are then used to the detriment of athletes and coaches when their achievements are more realistically seen at an international level.

The issue of full time coaches was high on the agenda. Many had to fund their own arrangements for the Games and through the Olympic cycle or were reliant upon their athletes funding them via athlete support payments. This inability to stretch finances far enough reportedly contributed to the situation where certain athletes reportedly had to choose between pre-Games competitions best for their build-up and those that offered the largest cash prizes to help fund preparation. The answer to this probably lies somewhere between making harder edged decisions with regard to athletes with genuine meaningful prospects and being able to provide better resources to support a smaller overall number on the HPP.

Arguably, the competitive disciplines in which Ireland might legitimately achieve success (and upon which concentration may be more fruitful) tend to have less profile. Long-term focus on success in such events at key championships may push other disciplines, in which the realistic likelihood of Irish success is limited, down the pecking order. Consequently, greater focus on technical events such as walking may mean more precisely targeted investment. A similar degree of selectivity should be applied to the competitions at which Ireland's chance of medal success is relatively high (e.g., the European Championships).

Governance

The PD was appointed with a remit to transform the structures, systems and processes in the AI high performance programme. Operationally he reports directly to the CEO who has a generally sound understanding of his role. The relationship between the two, notwithstanding the pressures of working in athletics in Ireland appears to be cordial and to reflect mutual respect. The PD's perspective is that it is the role of the CEO to deal with the Board and for him to deal with performance although there may, of course, be occasions, when it is appropriate for the PD to report in at this level about the progress of the HPP.

On the basis of the interviews conducted to inform this review, there are clearly a range of views within AI on this subject. There is a broad consensus that the CEO is doing a good job. However, at the point at which the review was conducted, certain elements of the governance system did not appear to be assisting either the CEO or the PD to 'do their jobs' with regard to high performance; the reported improvements to this since the review was undertaken should be maintained.

Similarly, the consensus and level of support provided from the Board for the HPP process and staff, while it may have improved since the consultation underpinning this review report

was conducted, has not yet demonstrated the level of consistency that is probably required. It would benefit high performance across the sport if a stronger level of specific commitment to current plans in the HPP was made and clearly visible.

At HPC level it is acknowledged that the PD 'knows his stuff'. Valid concerns were voiced about his communication skills and orientation and the effort not yet made to secure the understanding and buy in of key people across the sport. A number of those in the AI system, including some coaches and staff, accept the need to make the shift from an individual to a systems-based approach and have bought into the programme being introduced. AI has yet to fully shed (albeit that significant progress is being made) something of its amateur ethos which cuts across the implementation of effective elite athlete development. Without defending all the practices adopted under the performance regime now being implemented; a proportion of the resistance appears to stem as much from 'loss of empire' as much as it does from any dissatisfaction with management methods applied.

At the time of the review, the PD was required to report, every six weeks to an Athletics Ireland HPC. This is unnecessarily frequent and bears no apparent relation to the cycles and programmes of the role. Parties on both sides appeared to confirm its general futility as a process. The HPC no longer sets performance targets and its specific role with regard to the support, advocacy and scrutiny of the HPP was not as well defined as it should have been.

AI Board, key committee and cross-NGB support for the programme as being implemented is vital in order to enable the ISC to confidently invest in the sport's HPP. Its governance processes also need to be more specifically geared to the operation and cycles in the HPP. On the basis of the evidence presented we would go so far as to say that AI needs to either disband the HPC or alter its accountability processes and amend its role to one which is more committed to advocating, supporting and communicating about HP processes. (It is understood that action has already been taken in respect, for example, of the HPC's terms of reference and the frequency with which it meets).

Communications

A primary criticism of the present HPP and PD revolves around communications. The overwhelming weight of comment makes it clear that, at the time of the review, HPP managers had not been communicating effectively with any part of the system. The PD has established a high performance website but had not fully taken on the interpersonal side of the role. At that point the PD was not perceived to have embarked fully upon what would, in retrospect, have been a range of simple steps to help build relationships and get things done. The lack of visibility and limited communication appears to have led many to question what is done. While there is a degree of validity in these observations it is also, arguably, a perspective of convenience for those who, for whatever reason, do not wish the new approach to running high performance athletics in Ireland to succeed as they would prefer to retain the existing status quo.

Cross-sport understanding (within athletics) of the principles, mechanics, value or benefits of the performance system that the current PD is seeking to implement is presently limited. As noted above, it has not been fully bought into by AI's HPC and there is considerable resistance among some coaches and athletes. Consequently, while AI is a large and

complex sport in which to implement a HPP, relative to some of Ireland's other key Olympic sports, there is not yet the right level of commitment from all quarters to a commonly shared and agreed agenda.

It is also a fair criticism to infer that few athletes had any real appreciation of the PD job description, roles and responsibilities and some consultees suggested there is no apparent accountability or transparency with regard to the role. In the absence of detailed understanding, rumour and misinformation will understandably thrive. It is understood that the PD cannot personally manage the number of athletes that were on the programme when it was inherited but it is also true that insufficient effort has gone into establishing structures and relationships designed to keep athletes 'in the loop'.

Irrespective of their stance on the new programme, a common concern voiced by coaches relates to perceptions that the PD does not sufficiently value or respect them. While this may have improved over the period since the review was conducted, arguably, the limited communications effort referred to above and the limited operational management support in and around him has been insufficient to take the new processes far enough 'into the sport'.

This fuels the perception that the PD simply does not communicate with coaches even those located 'on his own doorstep'. This is vital because to reach many athletes the coach is a key conduit. If the athlete is unaware of, or not being provided with, the right HPP information a positive response is less likely. Communications could thus be said to underlie issues with regard to:

- ✦ Vision – understanding or awareness of the sport's long term HPP or vision.
- ✦ Personal interaction - references made to the absence of contact or unreturned calls and emails while anecdotal, were too numerous to be dismissed as inconsequential.
- ✦ Support – actions such as the dismantling of warm weather training camps were (it was claimed) not fully explained. Irrespective of the benefits of taking such actions it is suggested that, at times, it is just as important to be seen to have explained the rationale for the decision – this should reduce the propensity to criticise.
- ✦ Feedback – one athlete questioned the benefits of submitting a personal plan when he/she felt the feedback and advice was very limited.
- ✦ Debrief – to this point there appears to have been no debrief following the Games and athletes are unaware of any plans for one. (It is acknowledged that AI intends to make this report the basis for a wider debrief within the sport).

On the wider communications front, the lack of media objectivity about athletics in Ireland is a strategic issue. The fact is that, despite the absence of medals, 50% of Ireland's athletes achieved personal bests at the Games. This compares to 29% of European athletes. This was not, however, reflected in press coverage. Media expectations with regard to athletics are probably too high. There is little apparent realism with regard to actual potential and variable understanding of the quantum leap involved in making the grade to win medals.

Sensationalised reporting is considered to be a problem by athletes, coaches and the PD and there is a degree of consensus about the need for AI (possibly working closely with the ISC and OCI) to do its best to manage this better.

A key area in which clarity is required moving forward is whether media management is/ should be the responsibility of the PD, the CEO or the NGB board. AI may need some form of improved overarching PR function to 'firefight', develop more benign media relationships and have an input to the contractual relationship with supported athletes.

Athletics recommendations

It is recommended that Athletics Ireland:

1. Stays with the present HPP process and sees through the changes to a system grounded in performance, key milestones focusing more specifically on disciplines that, according to the metrics applied, are most likely to result in the ultimate winning of medals.
2. Develops a clear communications strategy and in so doing requires HPP staff to:
 - i. Continue to 'up their game' on communication.
 - ii. Develop and implement plans to handle specific competition/ training/selection scenarios.
 - iii. Publish standards and targets (per event/competition), explain why they are above European levels (if they are) and use examples to explain how focused strategies to win in other countries have led to unprecedented success.
 - iv. Develop training to help prepare staff/athletes to handle all, and in particular, difficult media situations.
 - v. Institute a specific programme to improve the communication skills of senior HPP staff (see primary recommendations).
 - vi. Support the PD and senior managers to better manage their work/time in respect of improving communications in and across the rest of the sport, day to day liaison with coaches/athletes.
 - vii. (As part of this) run an annual series of workshops for coaches and athletes to explain (for example) the HPP process itself, the roles of management and various staff, performance funnels, the use of metrics, the backing of youth development etc.
 - viii. Devote (say) a minimum of one day per fortnight to getting out and about to meet coaches and athletes.
 - ix. Improve the reliability and tone of electronic communication utilised.
3. Appoints an Assistant PD to act as an operations manager and be developed and trained to, potentially, take over the mantle thus building in continuity and safeguards for the future programme.
4. To facilitate delivery of the communications based recommendations made above and other aspects of the role, AI should consider providing additional PA style support to the PD or allocate an existing member of staff to manage his diary.
5. Substantially improves across the board coach knowledge/use of SS/SM.
6. Develops satellite hubs/performance centres, possibly linked to colleges, to help tackle the Dublin-centric issue and make support more readily accessible.
7. Redefines the role of the HPC to build capacity, funding and contacts that open doors and facilitate actions of/for the PD based on an agenda set by the PD/CEO and reduces the frequency with which the PD and/or HPP staff are required to report to it.

OR

8. Considers dismantling its HPC and have the PD simply report to the AI Board either directly or via the CEO.
9. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations made in this report.

Badminton

The Games

The sport's principal target for the 2012 Games was to qualify two players; this was achieved despite the fact that funding was at a level one third of that available previously.

Athlete performances at the 2012 Games (in alphabetic order and by event)

Athlete	Event	Performance
Scott Evans	Singles	16/32
Chloe Magee	Singles	16/32

Note: All positions from BBC final Olympic tables, some positions taken from overall standings

Many of the views expressed about the Games were positive, for example: the Lensbury/St. Mary's University holding camp was widely felt to be excellent, even to the point where the athletes would have preferred to have stayed there as there was so much going on at the Olympic Village that it was very hard to focus. The IIS' support services, in London, were highly thought of and well received; similarly the IIS felt that badminton made a good use of its services. Logistics planning was well organised, managed for the athletes, much better than it had been in Beijing four years previous and the OCI was thought to have had an effective presence at the Games.

There were, however, a number of concerns; it was, for example, felt by some that Badminton could have been more directly involved in the 'Team Ireland' atmosphere than it was. This suggestion could have arisen partly due to the location of the competition venue as it was 'away from the centre'. It was also claimed that one month prior to the Olympics there was an announcement of changes in post-Games coaching personnel (there were, however, differing opinions as to the precise chronology of events).

Management

High Performance management within the sport has undergone significant transformation over the past two years. The meeting with the CEO and PD outlined a sport in transition with short and long term plans for its future and an emphasis on personal career development and sports development pathways for athletes, rather than expecting them to peak for every tournament. They similarly, advocate a transparent pathway which outlines what athletes need to do to progress, they see this as fundamental to building trust.

The CEO and PD are 'on the same page', they have a shared view of direction and ideals for the sport and are mutually supportive. BI is also understood to have also taken recent steps within its 2013-16 HP plan to add clarity to the definition of the roles of CEO, PD, High Performance Manager and Head Coach. All of this augurs well for the future of the programme.

This view is shared by the OCI which considers the CEO to have changed things around quite dramatically in going for mixed pairs, sorting out personality issues and using funding

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in a structured and effective manner. Communications in the sport are also considered to have improved.

There is a reported growing sense of confidence in the sport and an approach which is now programme rather than player led. It is, however, also recognised that this wider culture change can present a challenge to older players.

The CEO and PD have shared, active and forward looking views on ways to advance the sport, all of which, it is hoped will keep things fresh for players and coaches; they relate to:

- ✦ Sport psychology's huge importance, supported by an IIS perspective that the institute engages well with Badminton Ireland and vice-versa.
- ✦ Youth development as the route to future and prolonged success for the sport.
- ✦ Greater emphasis on being athletes and not just gaining fitness through playing.
- ✦ Development of annual plans with two or three peaks per annum for players.
- ✦ A 'traffic light' system linked to personal targets to help determine who BI should back longer term, conversely this should providing players with a clear understanding of their own responsibilities if they are to progress.
- ✦ Learning from Asian and European playing cultures – incorporating the high level of Asian skills, possibly via a quarterly input from the Korean national coach, alongside strength and conditioning guidance on the approach taken in Denmark.
- ✦ Incentivised coach development is considered vital to a sustainable upward trajectory.
- ✦ A balanced learning strategy, players are sent to lower ranked tournaments to learn how to win and higher level tournaments to appreciate the level at which they aspire to win.
- ✦ Lifestyle reviews and assessments of personal maturity, supported by mentoring to optimise the likelihood of players transitioning from junior to senior/elite levels.
- ✦ Use of video analysis of opponents' strengths and weaknesses.
- ✦ The need to retain players through their educational, college, university years.

Particular concerns were voiced about resources. Badminton is a resource intensive sport that takes around four years to get a player into the world's top 70. One concern voiced is that parents have to contribute to the cost of young players competing abroad. Similarly, one or two suggested that the reduction in junior development grants is indicative of a short-sighted vision and plan. This perspective, however, contradicts comments by the CEO and PD where the focus is quite strongly on youth development and it was suggested the cause is more closely related to changes in the basis for ISC Carding Scheme funding for young players. It is, however, symptomatic of a belief that high performance in badminton is underfunded relative to other sports.

Some concerns were voiced with regard to a lack of understanding about the need for players to set themselves up abroad to be able to play and consequent feelings of isolation. The value of the high performance system, in such a context, was questioned as they were, in effect, less able to access it. This perspective was, however, challenged with a substantial range of support for overseas players being cited by the CEO and PD.

In overall terms the key features of/requirements for success in high performance were seen as having the right athletes, a collaborative approach, using sports sciences to their full potential and having the necessary level of resources to fully support your athletes.

Governance

There were few reported governance issues within the sport. There are around 60-70,000 players in Ireland; consequently, the talent pool is sufficiently large to ensure that short term improvements can be achieved with relative ease. Furthermore, it was claimed that, the framework below HP level is excellent as it encompasses schools, colleges, continuity after school, returners etc.

However, sustainable long term changes will require increased resources whether this is to facilitate high volumes of schools competition or to support players travelling overseas. Although high performance is distinct from club play it must not be so removed as to alienate itself from clubs and the wider support of the sport at all levels.

Communications

In a sport characterised by younger players and less experienced coaches, communication is regarded as very important, a point recognised by the incumbent CEO and PD.

One athlete commented that there was great communication with the PD, he had (and continues to have) regular contact with the players and understands them and their needs. Conversely, however, another contradicted this perspective completely and some said they do not know what the high performance plan is or how they could access it. This is despite the fact that information, from playing techniques to operational plans for the next four years, is made available via the Badminton Ireland website. This comment is not, however, exclusive to badminton and it may be that there is a need for a workshop day with presentations to outline how all of the pieces fit together, expectations, responsibilities, support mechanisms etc.

<i>Badminton recommendations</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The ISC should:<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Continue to support Badminton Ireland's HPP process and planned restructuring.ii. Increase sport science and sport medical support for athletes (and coaches).2. Badminton Ireland should:<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Continue to progress with its plans as present.ii. Address issues associated with players based overseas who feel they are not fully supported by the HP system.iii. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier in this report.

Boxing

The Games

As is well known, Boxing was Ireland's most successful sport at London 2012 maintaining its position as the Country's pre-eminent Olympic sport. The measure of disappointment about the fact that Darren O'Neill and Adam Nolan only reached the round of 16 is indicative of the quality of the programme and the expectations that the sport now has.

The sport was happy with arrangements made and support provided by the OCI and the relationship with it was clearly cordial and productive throughout. While relatively self-sufficient, boxing was able to take advantage of the additional services available and did so.

Athlete performances at the 2012 Games (in alphabetic order and by event)

Athlete	Event	Performance
Paddy Barnes	Light Flyweight	Bronze
Michael Conlan	Flyweight	Bronze
John Joe Nevin	Bantamweight	Silver
Katie Taylor	Lightweight	Gold
Adam Nolan	Welterweight	Round of 16
Darren O'Neill	Middleweight	Round of 16

Note: All positions from BBC final Olympic tables, some positions taken from overall standings

Management

The HP programme is well-led. The majority of staff involved are of high quality, are dedicated, presented a cohesive picture of what is going on in the sport and are mutually supportive. Athletes too were complimentary about the quality and input and support they receive and, allowing for some of the minor criticisms outlined below, highly supportive of the programme, the environment, the coaching, sports science and sports medicine received.

The HPP process is well understood and the performance set up is such that young boxers can identify the pathway through the development levels of the sport. Current elite athletes had, prior to attaining this status, been clear about their aspirations to be part of what is regarded as a successful programme.

The PD and colleagues are aware of the international competition in the sport and adept at selecting international competitions and training camps to attend. One problem now faced is that the success of the Irish team arguably makes it less easy for federations in other countries to welcome them so it may be that, moving forward, this necessitates greater investment of time to secure access to the quality overseas training and competing environments that Irish boxers merit.

The 'hot-housing' process adopted where athletes work and train predominantly at the National Stadium works well and athletes are unequivocal about the impact that living and work at the centre has had on their development. Athlete response to and understanding of the value of the specialist coaching, strength and conditioning and other support provided is

good. The combination of technical and motivational inputs to coaching are clearly recognised and appreciated by athletes and it is clear that the coaches themselves interact regularly and positively.

Among the current crop of elite performers, this positivity extends to most aspects of the support received. One or two did not wholly endorse all aspects of the nutrition advice provided and the frequency with which physiotherapy support was made available was also questioned but all within the context of a general level of satisfaction with the service provided.

One significant proviso appertains to the quality, adjacence and flexibility of athlete accommodation. At the time of the review, athletes were staying in hotels and the boredom associated with this clearly affects motivation.

Among the advantages of conducting interviews within the setting of the national stadium was visual confirmation of just how busy this facility is. This illustrated a second concern related to how cramped, at key times, provision for strength and conditioning is. While all athletes profess themselves to be happy with the instruction and guidance received, they are clearly not enabled to train to optimum; this is a facet of physical provision that requires attention.

Boxing is perceived by the IIS to be an enthusiastic user of its services and to have been open to, and active in the adoption of good practice. It is, for example, reportedly one of the first sports to fully embrace sports medics in all aspects of athlete development. The IIS perspective is that boxing has a very good medical programme; it provides physiotherapist support, strength and conditioning and nutritionist advice. Furthermore, it's staff work in an environment that promotes robust discussion and in which coaches (and athletes) are open to opportunities to learn and progress.

Accompanying the need to maintain the very strong athlete focus, there is, if the programme is to work to optimum, a requirement to consider the rest and recovery time available to the PD and key coaches running the elite programme. In addition to the hours and the pressure of the jobs, pad work in the ring is physically punishing and without adequate recovery time the capacity of key coaches to provide this and the requisite quality of athlete technical guidance may suffer.

Governance

While the HPP itself is strong, effective and in terms of medals represents good value for money in terms of ISC support there are clearly issues and frustrations in the wider structure of Irish boxing. There are still situations where IABA committees have the constitutional authority and see fit to over-turn or challenge PD selections, to ask specific athletes to enter 'box-offs' against the advice of HP staff and have imposed specific members of staff on the HPP without PD assent.

This has led to the PD and his team, at times, having to work around rather than with the NGB in the context of, for example, employing temporary and sessional coaches rather than

permanent staff to avoid having to 'do battle' about who (on what terms and for what purpose) is employed.

When interviewed the CEO acknowledged the issues faced in respect of the match between the governance of the sport and its present fitness for purpose to host what is, in effect, the country's leading performance programme. It is also important that the finances attached to the programme are handled in a transparent format so that ISC as the auditor of HPP investment in Ireland can clearly assess what is invested, where and why and with which outcomes. This is essential to ensure full and appropriate PD accountability.

In conversations held during and towards the conclusion of the review, the CEO committed IABA to addressing these issues and to ensuring that the HPP will be able to work within a sport where the prevailing approach is supportive rather than grounded in modes of interference.

There is, arguably, from an ISC perspective, a case for insisting that certain aspects of the IABA committee structure are either disbanded or have the elements of their constitutional remit that have enabled them to make decisions to cut across those made by the PD and his team, amended. Specific proposed actions are included in the recommendations section that follows.

Operationally, at present, the PD also functions as the head coach. While this creates additional pressure for him, all athletes and his fellow coaches have stressed the importance of this aspect of this role. There is, thus a need to ensure that the programme is adequately resourced to ensure that both key PD functions and other management roles are fully staffed and that the PD is supported to improve aspects of his leadership including delegation and empowerment of other staff. He should also, as is the case in the well-managed NGBs in Ireland report and be directly accountable to the CEO (and through him to the Board).

There may also be a case for considering the extent to which some of the boxers coming off the other end of the performance conveyor belt could be considered as potential contributors to the programme building in expertise, continuity and an element of career progression. This was mentioned by one or two athletes interviewed as a concern and may also make managing the issue of boxer payment and what the sport chooses to do to replace Carding Scheme PIP payments slightly earlier.

Communications

Communications with athletes and their families is generally good and the sport has probably gone further than most of its counterparts in areas such as early communication with families, ensuring full athlete and family member understanding of the commitments being made when they come onto the programme. There also appears to be a positive use of 'star performers' with regard to returning to their home town clubs and promoting the sport in that way.

In general, communications within the HPP elements of the sport and between it and agencies such as the ISC, OCI and the IIS are good. Recent specific support provided by the IIS for the PD is also clearly being well received and has benefitted the programme.

The situation, reflecting the observations made in the governance section, is less positive in respect of communication between the HPP and, in particular, IABA Board and committee members. This cuts across athlete communication and, to an extent, impinges upon the interaction between the HPP and the regional structures of the sport. This, linked directly to the governance issues noted earlier, needs to be addressed.

Boxing recommendations

It is recommended the ISC in agreeing the next round of HP funding with the IABA ensures that:

1. IABA sets up the HPP staff structure so that:
 - i. Within the HPP, the PD is supported by a strong Operations Manager; enabling him to spend an appropriate proportion of time 'ringside'.
 - ii. Staff appointed to the HPP are engaged by and accountable/report to the PD (and this process is not subject to interference or overrule by IABA members or committees).
 - iii. The number of coaches, specialist support staff and administrative, logistical and PR support personnel or contractually engaged staff is appropriate for a programme of this scale.
 - iv. The power of key IABA members or committees to either sanction or change HPP team decisions with regard to athletes selected entering (or not entering) domestic or international competitions is ceded in its entirety to the PD and HPP team.
2. The relevant committee structures, remits and, if appropriate, constitutional rights of IABA committees with regard to these requirements be amended to reflect this.
3. The HPP team is directly and fully responsible and accountable for all HPP funding going forward.
4. That consideration be given by the HPP team to increasing the extent to which individualised training, strength and conditioning, nutrition/dietary advice and generic SS/SM support is available for athletes.
5. IABA commits to actively and within a specified time, investigate the potential to extend (or replace) the present HP facility to add/ensure:
 - i. That elite athletes are able to train at the right times of the day/evening and do not have to fit in around other centre users.
 - ii. Appropriate space for strength and conditioning.
 - iii. Proper office accommodation.
 - iv. Good quality on-site personnel accommodation and amenities for HPP athletes.
6. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Canoeing

The Games

Irish athletes came 10th and 14th in the slalom kayak and 9th in the sprint (men's C1 200m). However, despite what might be argued to be significant placings at London, it is anticipated that funding will continue to be a problem.

Athlete performances at the 2012 Games (in alphabetic order and by event)

Athlete	Event	Performance
Hannah Craig	Slalom kayak (single)	10 th
Eoin Rheinisch	Slalom kayak (single)	14 th (semi finals)
Andrzej Jezierski	Sprint C1 200m	9 th

Note: All positions from BBC final Olympic tables, some positions taken from overall standings

The slalom athletes stayed in accommodation at Lee Valley that they were allowed to choose and which was funded by the OCI. The sprint event did not take place until the latter part of the Games. Consequently, the athlete arrived three days before his event and stayed at Eton Dorney, a satellite to the Olympic Village. Both approaches seemed to work to the satisfaction of the athletes involved.

One of the other main tactics to establish the right environment for performance was to take all pressures and distractions away from the athletes, other than for training and performing. For example, arranging tickets for friends, renting apartments near to the venue to reduce travel time, providing sand to remove sweat before competing. The I.C.U. placed a considerable emphasis on attention to detail.

There was some confusion around the way that rotational accreditations worked. They allow support staff access to village and venue during the athlete's competition and can then be transferred once to allow another sport to benefit from the accreditation. Although one athlete felt that this limited the amount of support he/she could access following completion of their Olympic competition, it is important to note that it was beyond the remit of the ICU and the OCI as the rules applied to all personal coaches.

Management

The slalom kayak and sprint canoeing are in many respects entirely different disciplines; it thus requires different skillsets and expertise. For example, analysis for the slalom kayak is not so much about metrics as it is about walking and viewing the course, video analysis etc., including live feedback during the event to look at how certain obstacles, gates etc are performed and the problems they pose – sprint canoeing is much more a 'straight line' sport.

Canoeing has undergone significant personnel changes over recent years as the previous Performance Programme Manager was replaced, after 25 years in post. The CEO has fulfilled his own plus the PD role in recent years but it is felt that a separate PD would enable the CEO to focus on his own role. This reflects our interpretation of the OCI perspective as a

sport that is emerging from a state of flux and has reasonable prospects under the leadership of the current CEO.

In the past High Performance had been based around personalised plans which appear to have worked well when there are good, proactive athletes coming through. However for the long term development of the sport there needs to be more of a whole sport plan – athletes were not convinced it is there as yet.

Prior performance and personal relationships were felt by some athletes to have previously played too significant a part in the selection process. However, it was seen as a positive that things were now far more black and white with people having 'to do their talking on the water'. Examples were given where it had been made difficult to 'hold the line' of a shift to results based decisions but doing so will prove beneficial to all concerned as the sport moved forwards.

After stagnating for a number of years there is a feeling that the sport has a lot to sort out 'in house' but is finally moving in the right direction. The performance pathway has improved from previous years but work is still needed to ensure that it is clear and fully understood.

Senior athletes feel there is a good set up within the sport with the scope for them to use their own coaches. This differs from the team ethos of many high performance coaching plans and whichever approach is finally adopted there is a need for coaches to gain more exposure to, and experience of, international events. Furthermore, considerable care needs to be taken to ensure that athletes, coaches and the national team all work to the same goals.

This change to a coaching team rather than individual coaches should also prove more cost effective. The move to squads reflects the model used by GB, French, German and other nations. However, it is recognised that this would have been too disruptive to start prior to the 2012 Games.

Canoeing is in a transitional phase in its shift from an athlete to a process driven squad system. As part of this shift, coaching courses are in place for Level 2 Club coaches to bring juniors up to an appropriate level.

One athlete commented that there was a better service now than ever before; contrasting views were, however, also expressed. Athletes have bought into the idea of not peaking for every event and the need to work towards a career plan with major event peaks for real high performance achievement. Coaches, however, are more likely to wish to see their athletes 'place' or reach the final at every event as this reflects on their own inputs and achievements. This creates understandable stress with the reputation of each party measured along different time-paths. Ironically the sport is not that vulnerable to coaches leaving as it does not actually have that many.

While one athlete said the PD is good to work with, has an understanding of high performance and the sport is moving in the right direction, another suggested he does not have the relevant experience, makes poor judgements and bad decisions. The issue appears to be founded more in a personality conflict than to be an issue of performance.

Similar difficulties also appear to have extended into the work between individual coaches and athletes and affected the team's ability to make effective representations at appeal. In essence it does not always appear that people are all pulling in the same direction.

Other concerns centred on funding and facilities. It was suggested that serious cuts in funding, compounded by delays in payment, were creating a situation whereby (at least for a period of time each year) athletes were having to fund themselves. Furthermore, a lack of facilities is considered to be holding the sport back in Ireland; consequently some athletes must travel over 200 days per annum to get to and train at suitable facilities.

In a more positive vein:

- ✦ CI has taken a 16 year old to the Senior European Championships to give him experience at this level and prepare him for what should be a long career. The sport also recognises the importance of his maintaining his education to safeguard his future.
- ✦ Olympic athletes are used to paddle / coach with the Under 23's and juniors as this helps to enthuse younger rowers, promote credibility etc.
- ✦ By at least one measure, youth development is working as at the Junior Slalom World Championships, Irish canoeists achieved 4th, 8th and 11th positions, with the added bonus that by working as a squad they have become more closely knit and a stronger team under one coaching structure.
- ✦ The technology used includes, for example, 'dartfish' (an animated imaging system) which allows you to overlay one performance on another – as used, for example, in Top Gear. It is then possible to see where you are winning/losing by section, entry to gate etc. the intention being to achieve improvements by coaching out weaknesses.
- ✦ Motivational speakers are to be brought in from other sports to bring credibility and understanding of what it takes to win.

In overall terms the key features of/requirements for success in high performance were seen as management (removing all extraneous distractions and pressures), preparation (for example, the right accommodation, walking the course etc.), sports sciences (access to medical, sports psychologists, strength and conditioning etc.), technology (effective use of video feeds etc.) and relationships (with coaches, other organisations etc.).

On balance, the performance levels achieved would suggest a case could be made for improved levels of funding based upon its demonstration of a capacity to drive a specific, well-implemented plan.

Governance

In terms of overall governance within the sport each of the seven disciplines has its own committee with specific knowledge and technical expertise. Most importantly, however, while some of the Board understand HP they are happy to give the CEO/ PD space to run the programme as they see fit.

A number of practical and historical issues were referred to during consultation. Historically, the process involved in the investigation and restructuring of the sport was felt to have impacted negatively on athlete preparation. During this time it was suggested that the NGB was able to make any decision it wished to without consulting or considering athletes.

Bureaucracy, it was claimed, remains an issue for athletes recovering expenses. They are encouraged to meet their own costs during preparation with the promise that they will be reimbursed. However, the process is too long, onerous and distracting; one athlete stated that s/he had an outstanding expenses bill of €25,000+ during the run up to the Games; contrary to this, we were informed, the system requires athletes to submit receipts with payment taking no more than a week so long as any queries are answered satisfactorily.

Communications

A direct link between communication, culture, behaviour and performance with clear targets is regarded as the correct approach for sustainable improvements. Although not too many specific comments were made in this regard during the consultation exercise some comments were voiced about a lack of feedback

Since returning from the Games, the I.C.U. has, however, written to congratulate all athletes and has also invited them to consult and have input on the 'Road to Rio'.

Canoeing recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The ISC in association with the Irish Canoe Union:
 - i. Examine the option to establish a PD post or the alternate inclusion of CI within a series of 'bubble' sports to be covered by a cross-sport PD / facilitator.
 - ii. Support a shift to coaching of squads rather than individuals.
2. The Irish Canoe Union should:
 - i. Develop a training programme for coaches focusing on the development of career peaks for athletes, thereby aligning all coaches in the same direction.
 - ii. Invest directly in, and examine the potential to jointly develop and test IT products for, high tech video, live playback, analytical tools etc with Universities, IT companies etc.
 - iii. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

The Games

The sport does not have a high performance programme. The technical director was nominated after Beijing but had to pull back in 2010 due to time and resource issues. The objective was to get one shooter to the Games, this was achieved.

Athlete performances at the 2012 Games

Athlete	Event	Performance
Derek Burnett	Trap qualification	27 th

Note: All positions from BBC final Olympic tables, some positions taken from overall standings

It was felt the shooter had a good working relationship with the Technical Director, in effect he was there as and when required and support staff, in particular the physiotherapist, were extremely helpful. There was a feeling that the shooter had worked well from two years out and that he only needed a limited level of support from the IIS but could possibly have availed himself of strength and conditioning services more than he did.

Conversely, however, there seemed to be less funding in the Olympic year than previously and sports psychologist support was not offered, as it had been in the past. It was assumed that this was a funding problem and it became a specific issue when it became hard to retain focus at the holding camp. The feeling was that the support services provided throughout the run up to the Games was generic and needs to be more sport specific to be appropriate to the needs of shooting.

Management

Similar to a number of other sports, it was stated that the need to produce a HP plan and then be asked to prune it was somewhat soul destroying. Furthermore, the perceived delay until April before funds are released creates difficulties and insecurities for all concerned. As with others, it was said that to receive funds below your view of the level required to deliver the performance plan and subsequently be asked about the level of performance seemed somewhat unfair.

As the HPP works to a relatively fixed template it fails to pick up subtleties for a sport such as shooting. Consequently, there is an apparent failure, for example, to recognise practical issues such as the high cost of disposables such as cartridges for training, transport and facility rental for an elite shooter. Costs are c. €15 for a 20 minutes session and there is only one functional range in Ireland. By contrast, in Italy the state employs shooters as rangers, police etc. and via this route also offers them the means to become 'full time athletes'. Consequently, it is considered that Irish shooters enter the fray at a disadvantage.

Shooting is a highly individual sport with personal characteristics and confidence playing a major role. Metrics do not work too well as the variables include environment and equipment, with some disciplines only appearing at the Olympics. It is largely timing based with differences reflecting milliseconds. A measure of how fine the lines are can be seen in the

apparent difference made by phonetics in the command to 'Pull' with the emphasis on the P or on the L dependent on one's accent influencing the timing of the release and shot.

Shooting appears to be moving progressively to a younger age profile, with competitors coming through in their mid 20s. However, Ireland does not have a system in place to promote such a shift. In 2006/07 the Irish team comprised a squad of six and was able to build competition amongst shooters. However, lack of support has seen a decline in the squad system and this level of shooting in Ireland. Given these factors and others such as the fact that young people can start shooting in other countries from the age of 11 years but not until they are 16 in Ireland, their loss to other sports by the time they can shoot and the progressively younger peak age for shooters it is difficult to see it returning given to a squad level in Ireland – at least in the foreseeable future.

In overall terms the key features of and requirements for success in high performance were seen as:

- Confidence (borne out of success at events);
- Handling pressure (can be fragile due to changes in equipment, rules etc.);
- Resources (the high costs of competing and training); and
- A squad approach can help improve performance (this is not, however, a realistic proposition in the current situation).

Governance

The NGB appears to have a greater interest in the non-Olympic disciplines such as Home Countries competitions as they impact on grass roots participation. Consequently, athletes focused on the Olympics get limited support. This is the opposite of the pattern seen elsewhere where other nations focus largely (even entirely) on Olympic disciplines and, (arguably) as a result, enjoy more success. This sentiment was also reflected in the fact that the NGB did not promote or celebrate the achievement of it having a shooter at the Games.

Communications

No specific communications issues were raised in the interviews; however, it was stated that there is no apparent long term plan or vision in place within the sport - if there is it needs to be better communicated.

Clay Pigeon Shooting recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The ISC in association with the Irish Clay Pigeon Shooting Association:
 - i. Examine options for the inclusion of CPS within a series of 'bubble' sports to be covered by a cross-sport PD / facilitator.
 - ii. Examine the levels and sources of funding, specifically in relation to the high level of costs associated with specialist equipment and recurrent costs such as consumables.
 - iii. Support longer term initiatives, if developed by the NGB, to identify and nurture talent.
2. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Cycling

The Games

Four athletes went to the Olympics on behalf of Cycling Ireland; Martyn Irvine came 13th in the Omnium and David McCann was 27th in the Time Trial, while David McCann, Nicholas Roche and Daniel Martin finished 55th, 89th and 90th respectively in the Road Race.

Athlete performances at the 2012 Games (in alphabetic order and by event)

Athlete	Event	Performance
Martyn Irvine	Omnium	13 th
David McCann	Time trial	27 th
David McCann	Road race	55 th
Daniel Martin	Road race	90 th
Nicholas Roche	Road race	89 th

Note: All positions from BBC final Olympic tables, some positions taken from overall standings

The best finish; the 13th place for Martyn Irvine, was below the target set which had been a place in the top nine, with an outside chance of a medal. This, lower than hoped for performance, was put down to overtraining and possibly, to a degree, too much travelling. He is based in Palma and flew in for the national championships, flew back, went to a six day meet in Italy, went 'home' again and then flew to London 10 days before the event. With hindsight, this was probably too early (a point raised in the Olympic manager's report). In a broadly comparable situation, David McCann was expected to finish in the top 20 but came further down the field. He has since retired from international competition.

The sport and competitors within it have a decent knowledge of other teams and their strengths. Martyn's pre-Games schedule was shared by his PD and coach. All sports science figures were on trajectory prior to the Games. He trains with another Olympian, however, at the event prior to London, in Italy, he raced in 40^o heat and, with hindsight, probably over-exerted himself.

Accredited support staff, available to athletes at the Games, were not all sport-specific. This caused some issues in preparation for cyclists as it would, for example, have been preferable to have a sport specific masseuse. This might have been alleviated had team members been able to bring their own staff. This statement does not place responsibility on OCI or CI, it simply references an improvement that could be made for future Games.

There were conflicting views in respect of the arrangements about where cyclists could stay. A cyclist perspective was that they were offered no flexibility between the village and Lensbury/St. Mary's University. However, the OCI gave CI the freedom to choose where the team stayed.

Arrangements made by LOCOG were, however, less accommodating; for example, the Manager's meeting for the TT took place in the Velodrome while official TT training took place on the TT course (1 hour and 40 minutes away).

While there was a suggestion from one athlete that the appeals process led to delays and did not enable him to prepare as adequately as he would have liked, in actual fact the programme did not deviate from its outline as a January to May qualification period. Consequently, it was inevitable that appeals would be heard by the OCI in June to early July 2012. Alternatives such as moving the qualification process to an earlier date may themselves create problems and there is, thus, no simplistic solution.

Perhaps unlike athletes in some other sports, elite cyclists are now used to the regular availability of a comprehensive assistance set up. Feedback suggests that, in the athletes' view, the support received during the Games was not of the standard to which they are accustomed in the normal course of the professional tour environment.

Furthermore, given the professional racing calendar, the timing of the sport's own major annual events inevitably places additional pressures on cyclists that are possibly over and above those faced by other athletes. In such circumstances, the natural pinnacle and only major focus which the Olympics provide for many sports is arguably less significant for road cyclists in particular. This is despite the fact that CI set targets for competitors which would counter this perspective.

The relationship between some athletes and NGB staff appears to have been strained. When consulted there was, a focus on the negative, repeated criticism about communication. There was also a suggestion, from some quarters, that the Head Coach could have been more astute in his selection policy; the process, nevertheless, was considered by others consulted to stand up to external scrutiny.

While there were some suggestions that the NGB's own management and the PD in attendance at the Games might have been overawed by the experience a counter argument is evidenced by the fact that he was the manager in Athens 2004 and has worked at a senior level with CI over the intervening eight years. Among athletes, there was also a stated perception that (some of) the people running cycling in Ireland do not know the sport well enough and lack experience. They went on to suggest that CI managers need more authority and the confidence to make the strong decisions that would be of benefit to the sport and its athletes.

Management

In the context of future performances at the Olympics, the sport faces a number of problems including the fact that it has limited control and influence over the training and competing schedules of its (male) athletes - who train and compete all over the World. In respect of the Games, the NGB did all it could to support athletes. A specific difficulty is that in cycling (particularly men's) athletes have their own coaches and support teams outside of the Games environment. Feedback from certain competitors implied that the NGB seeking to get more involved may have had a negative rather than a positive impact.

In cycling, the Olympics is possibly seen by some as 'just another race' on the calendar; once every four years. While this causes issues (see below) it also means that the pressure on athletes with regard to achievement in the Olympic cycling competition is not felt as keenly. (This is a marked contrast with GB where despite the commitment to road racing, tracking and Olympic events have retained their elevated status).

Management issues highlighted by this include:

- ✦ The need for consideration of the impact of professional commitments on cyclist performance at key events on performance and recovery times.
- ✦ The limitations of PD influence and control over athlete schedules.
- ✦ The extent to which Olympic participation has the level of priority that the provision of ISC high performance funding for the sport might arguably demand.

In the context of the sport's prospects, at junior level, Irish riders have recently featured in the top 10 positions, and a silver medal was won, at the European championships. The sport does not, however, have a recognisable talent ID system outwith the process of reviewing racing results.

It is felt that senior management is over-stretched with the CEO having to cope with both the performance director and his own role. This is clearly a difficult if not untenable situation in the context of fully optimising performance development.

Providing useful athlete support services is logistically problematic and not particularly successful for cycling as it necessitates effective 'organisational diary management'. For cyclists based overseas the process can be difficult. Consequently, for example, one rider struggled for physiotherapist support and whilst a number of other sports reference the importance of IIS and SINI, their services did not feature prominently for cycling. Some improvements have occurred, for example responsibility for all forms of logistics formerly fell to coaches while we understand that a proportion of this is now picked up by CI.

Overall, while high performance funding has been reducing and it could be argued that this is contributing to some of the difficulties faced by the sport ; it is difficult to make a case for retaining investment at current levels unless a substantial overhaul is implemented with a focus on fitness for purpose to produce and deliver a HPP and address the staffing, coaching and other infrastructural requirements necessary to produce valid Olympic Games related planned outcomes. However, CI would, with a degree of validity, argue that poorer performances would be an inevitable outcome of further funding reductions and certain aspects of an overhaul would, of necessity, be dependent on the availability of funds.

With reference to the programme; the overall general focus, NGB and athlete adherence to it and their interest in the rationale for ISC support must improve. A broader perspective on cycling, one voiced by the OCI and IIS is that to a certain extent, the focus of professional cyclists on their own calendar (as professionals) plays a more significant role in determining the shape of HP cycling than is the case in the majority of other sports.

C.I. would, however, argue that while professional riders only race once or twice a year for Ireland, their professional rankings and qualification places secured open up opportunities for younger developing riders at major events. Consequently, C.I. would take the viewpoint that they bring a range of positive impacts, whilst the majority of CI funding is spent on teams, coaches and programs that CI has a direct influence on.

By its own acknowledgement, CI recognises the fact that the work it does with talented young cyclists effectively prepares them to progress on to take up a professional career and does not have a particular emphasis on the Olympic/Paralympic competitions to which ISC HPP funding is most closely geared. This aspiration, which is openly acknowledged by the NGB, is not a direct match to ISC objectives with regard to securing Olympic medals as some of the issues cited above clearly illustrate.

It also does not have access to a velodrome on the island of Ireland around which to focus such work; hence the greater emphasis on road-based work. The development of a facility probably would make a substantial difference but would need to be accompanied by a review of the way in which high performance in the sport is managed.

CI will also, if it is to retain ISC investment, need to evaluate how it can realistically resource this. Notwithstanding the recent World Championship medals, in HPP terms, CI appears to be in a difficult position. Despite these results, the consensus is that, at present, its work in performance is not consistently strong. The level of resource it is able to apply to it is reducing and it is under valid pressure from ISC and others with reference to results being achieved consistently. It is, in part, valid to point to the resource limitations faced and it is acknowledged that, in the run up to the 2012 Games, its support for Paralympic competition absorbed a ring-fenced 75% of its overall HPP funding and it should be noted that five cycling medals were won at the Paralympics.

To this end, Sport NI has initiated a Performance Focus exercise with CI. This will involve it inviting external support to assist a strategy review for its HPP process.

One alternative focus to consider as part of this exercise might be to have a greater focus on women riders and, for example, MTB although it would appear that such programmes would need to be, to an extent, constructed from scratch. This programme for development-level cyclist with a particular emphasis on women could possibly be based at a velodrome venue in the UK. Informal soundings have, for example, been taken (by KKP) with Glasgow Life which manages the Sir Chris Hoy facility in the city and it would be receptive to an approach in this regard.

One way or another, key people and agencies remain to be convinced that Cycling Ireland is, at the present time, fully able to demonstrate its fitness for purpose to maintain an HPP going forward.

Governance

In governance terms, the sport may need to reconsider its present stance with regard to high performance. There clearly has to be a recognition that its support and intervention work may ultimately lead to some of the best cyclists going off to ride for professional teams. However, if the sport simply accepts this and does not seek to place Olympic competition more squarely at the centre of its programme it will, somewhat inevitably, be difficult to make a compelling case for HPP funding geared to these outcomes.

If, as has been stated, the entire focus of the last two years of HP Program was support for athletes (Olympic and Paralympic) going to London alongside, investment in development to maintain the pathway for future athletes, in terms of Olympic Games outcomes the return on investment was limited.

Given the importance of Olympic performance and profile with regard to the rationale for ISC HPP investment, it could be argued that elements of the sport's governance with regard to adoption of a definitive orientation to Olympic Games related outcomes as opposed to other forms of high performance cycling, also need to be assessed to enable it to be a valid recipient of such support moving forward.

Cycling recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The ISC in association with Cycling Ireland:

- i. Examine the extent to which CI is able to demonstrate its capacity to develop, manage and deliver a productive and accountable HPP for cycling geared to entering athletes into Olympic and related competitions albeit in the context of an understanding that some athletes may, in any event, progress to become professional team cyclists.

AND/OR

2. Develop a more selective HPP which is targeted at, for example:

- i. Examining the potential to establish a performance programme geared predominantly to the production of women cyclists.
- ii. In the absence of a velodrome in Ireland, consider approaching (say) Glasgow to investigate the potential to base squads at the Chris Hoy centre on a full time basis.
- iii. Targeting specific Olympic cycling options such as MTB in the international competitor landscape specifically seeking out emergent talent and devoting resource to these areas.

3. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Hockey

The Games

Although neither team qualified for the 2012 Games the fact that the men's team reached the Olympic qualifiers was, in the view of the sport and other commentators, indicative of an upwards trajectory. For this sport the main interview was held with the incoming CEO, the former CEO and the PD for the previous four years.

At the final qualifying event, the men's team was unfortunate in that its qualifying pool was particularly strong. It lost 3-2 conceding a goal with 9 seconds to play in a final match against the Korean team that went on to finish sixth at the Olympics. The situation was not too far removed from the Beijing experience where the team missed out on qualification due to goal difference.

Different approaches were taken for development of the respective men's and women's teams prior to the Games. The men adopted a dispersed approach, playing for clubs overseas in professional leagues and the quality of their performance has improved in recent years. The women did not have the opportunity to play in professional leagues and thus took the opposite approach and centralised in Dublin from 18 months out to place greater emphasis on development as a team rather than as individuals.

This approach had some positive and some negative outcomes. While performances in the build-up were not as strong as the men's, once games began they beat Spain for the first time (top seeds) and drew with Belgium (despite a player suffering a broken jaw). Thus, although centralisation has been shown to work it could not be sustained for four years.

Although not qualifying for London was a setback, the players have apparently responded positively at subsequent competitions and training in Argentina and Amsterdam. It is also understood that the age profile is right for them to play in Rio and the self-belief which comes from having since beaten teams that played in the Olympics is instilling greater confidence. It was opined that the step change from playing abroad was so significant that the men would have qualified had they made the change a year earlier.

Management

Both teams have continued to surpass their respective targeted performance rates for conceding corners, increasing conversion rates, entries to chances and in essence converting territory to a score. Strength, conditioning and fitness work meets anticipated targets and technology is used to assess fitness and recovery times during games, assess physiology and help select substitutions.

In preparing for competition, hockey squads utilise a library of information compiling tactical, technical, set pieces, players and positions for every position using markers against the top eight teams in the world. Their tracking of the performance and progress of other teams leads them to the opinion that Ireland's ranking is (or will) rise. Furthermore the qualification process is now more open, with only one automatic position for Europe; consequently Ireland should have a better chance of qualification for Rio.

The women now play against boys' and men's teams in order to hone their physical edge. Coaching standards are being driven up but there is a need to revise the competition structure to develop a layer / create a bridge between club and high performance levels – possibly similar to the provincial approach applied in Irish rugby.

The approach with younger players is felt less likely to lead to attrition and/or burn out, and is considered to be more likely to provide support than prior structures. The essence of this is the identification of talent at a younger age, promotion of a long term personal development process and ensuring they understand high performance expectations earlier in the process.

Last year the IHA entered 10 junior competitions and won eight. While some older players have reportedly not bought into the high performance culture younger athletes are more open to it. Emerging, improved leadership traits are also seen off-field; there is greater positive conformity between players, growing confidence in skills and an emphasis on the requisite much higher levels of fitness needed in the modern game.

The value of the strength and conditioning, physiotherapy, sports psychology and services typically provided (in Ireland) by IIS were confirmed although providing such support for elite male players clearly poses logistical and practical difficulties given their distribution while being much easier to facilitate for predominantly Dublin based elite women.

The outgoing PD's view is that there is a need for a sports psychologist to work closely with the new head coach if it is to emerge as a stronger team. Whilst a couple of the players in the current squads are expected to retire prior to Rio they will be replaced by younger ones who are considered to be as good or even better.

The biggest threat is probably seen as the potential attraction for players based in the North, to play for GB. This is, however, less likely to happen if the Irish team starts to reach finals and players have already been awarded senior Ireland caps⁶.

The main issues at levels below international standard were cited as:

- ✦ Coaching standards.
- ✦ League competition – ensuring that it does not create 'yo-yo' clubs, a senior league of eight or nine clubs was suggested.
- ✦ Retention of young players, in particular the 18-21 year old age group to ensure that the sport does not lose players on entry to/leaving University, for example.

A new women's coach will be appointed and it is intended that the squad will have sessions together on a regular basis rather than locate together on a permanent over the four years. The key difference between the two teams lies in the higher net cost of maintaining a women's team while male players are able to attract salaried employment thus creating income streams for the players. Some have gone to the United States to play, however, while they tend to end up in better physical condition the quality of play itself is not usually sufficiently high to enable them to develop as far as is required as players.

⁶ Having received a senior cap for one country prevents from playing for another for three years.

In overall terms the key features of/requirements for success in high performance were seen as dispersal of the men's team and centralisation of the women's; financial management of a complex model for each of the above scenarios; sports sciences; coach freshness going into competitions; and infrastructure e.g. the National Sports Campus at Abbotstown.

Governance

In governance terms the Board comprises volunteers from the sport and whilst very committed is not fully attuned to the specific requirements of high performance planning and delivery. This can lead to a tendency to concentrate on detail without necessarily seeing the bigger picture. There is, thus, a need to inform and 'educate' board members to enable them better understand the challenges, resource issues, expectations associated with elite performance and how they, and the sport as a whole might best contribute to the development of successful international teams.

Communications

The (previous) men's coach used a mix of Skype, video, club contact, agreements to use and develop players in certain situations and other techniques - referred to as a cuckoo system - to maintain contact with and development of overseas players. Relationship building with clubs, players and overseas coaches is considered to be crucial given the situation. The new coach for the men's squad will be located in Germany as many of the players are based there; this will reverse the supporting role back to Ireland.

Hockey recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The ISC in association with the Irish Hockey Association:
 - i. Increases the level of sports science (esp. sports psychology) and sport medicine input.
 - ii. Review investment in coach development – skills, awareness of career peaks etc.
2. The IHA should:
 - i. Continue with current plans for dispersed and centralised squad/player development recognising differences between the men's and women's games; while ensuring women's hockey does not 'lose out' as a consequence of the location of the new men's coach in Germany. The planned appointment of a new Head of Performance Development, in 2013, who is to be based in Ireland should avoid any such problems.
 - ii. Revise the structure of the sport, as outlined by CEO/PD, to create a provincial/ regional level between club and high performance.
 - iii. Investigate ways to sustain player interest and increase the competitive nature and standard of college / university level hockey.
 - iv. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Horse Sport

The Games

Eight riders went to the Olympics on behalf of Horse Sport Ireland (HSI); Cian O'Connor won Bronze in the Individual show-jumping while Billy Twomey came 56th. This was Ireland's first Olympic riding medal in more than 100 years (since 1912). In eventing the team came 5th while Aoife Clark came 7th, Joseph Murphy 14th and Mark Kyle 21st in the individual eventing and Anna Merveldt was 33rd in the Dressage grand prix.

Athlete performances at the 2012 Games (in alphabetic order and by event)

Athlete	Event	Performance
Aoife Clark	Eventing - individual	7 th
Mark Kyle	Eventing - individual	21 st
Joseph Murphy	Eventing - individual	14 th
Michael Ryan	Eventing - individual	No ranking
Camilla Spiers	Eventing - individual	No ranking
Aoife Clark	Eventing - team	5 th
Mark Kyle	Eventing - team	5 th
Joseph Murphy	Eventing - team	5 th
Michael Ryan	Eventing - team	5 th
Camilla Spiers	Eventing - team	5 th
Anna Merveldt	Dressage	33 rd (grand prix)
Cian O'Connor	Individual jumping	Bronze
Billy Twomey	Individual jumping	56 th

Note: All positions from BBC final Olympic tables, some positions taken from overall standings

Eventing at the Games

A large percentage of the available funding was spent on qualifying, in part because the eventing team had to attend additional events to do this. For example, the first Olympic Qualification event, the 2010 World Equestrian Games took place in the USA and placed a considerable strain on the budget as the costs of flying horses to the USA was substantial. Consequently, budgets were stretched for the immediate build up and preparation once qualification had been assured.

At the eventing, the PD was described as efficient, business minded and was reported to have ensured that everything ran smoothly. The quality and value of her advice before, and input during, London 2012 was also praised. Similar references were made with regard to the Equestrian Sport Co-ordinator and the HSI Eventing High Performance Administrator both of whom dealt with organisational and logistical issues in the lead up to and during the Games. The support system available to eventing riders was generally considered to be good, in particular the sports psychologist. Games support staff also included an excellent and supportive vet whose input was widely praised.

For the eventing, the majority of the athletes also felt that both the horses and themselves were in the best possible condition leading into the Games and that they had benefited from

the positive, relaxed atmosphere created within the team. Facilities available to the athletes and horses were excellent and of a high standard and the lines of communication between athletes, PD and HSI all worked well.

The level of additional support provided in the immediate build-up to and during the Games was specifically referenced by riders who, without being critical of the programme opined that support at this level would be beneficial throughout the whole Olympic cycle.

In the context of eventing, the HSI and the OCI have a reportedly good working relationship. Following Beijing key lessons were learnt from the Olympics experience there and amongst a series of outcomes, for example, the OCI has helped to source an eventing sponsor.

In the run up to the Games the Irish team was the 11th of 12 to qualify and had finished 8th at both the 2004 and 2008 Games. The Team, however, appears to have performed to expectation having set a target of finishing in the top six and coming 5th. In addition to generally meeting targets set, the adjustments to the coaching team made mid-term and supplementary focus on dressage appears to have paid dividends in the context of team improvement in the run up to London.

Since Beijing, the PD has sought to make it more competitive and to increase levels of internal competition. The intention had been to qualify for London at the World Equestrian Games in Kentucky (2010) and the European Championships (2011) but these did not go quite as planned (albeit by a small margin). This led to riders having to qualify on the basis of World rankings. Notwithstanding this a team ethos appears to have been developed and maintained.

Over the period 2008-2012 improvements have been made with regard to sports psychology input, veterinary support, (rider) nutrition and eventing discipline specific coaching. The performance in the previously troublesome phase of Showjumping was particularly noteworthy as Ireland was the only country where two riders jumped a double clear (in SJ). The focus on dressage has also impacted positively on performance in the other two elements of eventing along with horse and athlete fitness.

Showjumping at the Games

In showjumping, rider comment was varied. Some expressed serious reservations about selection processes and HSI concerns about doping, others made critical references to the Chef D'Equipe and other staff whereas, in contrast, others reported having a very good relationship with the key characters involved, considered HSI to be characterised by good people and felt that all went well in the run up to and at the Olympics.

The general disruption to/of the run up to the Games did affect preparation. One rider in particular felt that his horse was over-jumped in the lead up because despite Ireland having qualified he had not been guaranteed a place on the team⁷. Arguably, this uncertainty meant that optimum performances at London were not achieved.

⁷ The place goes to the country not the rider.

Tickets and accreditation were again an issue but HSI and the more experienced riders warned others on what to expect, to minimise the impact. While there was a view that it would help in the future if this was better organised to take stress away from competitors, further discussion on this topic would suggest that addressing this in any way other than was done was not within the 'gift' of HSI. For example:

- Accreditations were made for two owners for each horse by and through the IOC; the decision about who to 'pass these on to' was made by individual riders – not all of whom, it is understood, may have passed them on to the respective owners. The issue here is thus whether or not it might have been possible to acquire more accreditations or tickets.
- Two passes were bought each day by HSI for each owner to make use of a dedicated hospitality area; again the limited number may have been a difficulty, but it would be incorrect to suggest that HSI did not seek to take appropriate steps.
- HSI and OCI staff queued to seek to obtain tickets (available via the IOC) for riders and their families. This was a much welcomed OCI initiative; however, the main difficulty was that tickets were not released by the IOC until the day before, or the actual day of, the competition.

A further point was raised in respect of the fact that HSI, through its riders, gains access to private owners' horses and it was suggested, by some, that it might have done more to make hotel bookings or acquire tickets for owners to reflect this. HSI, however, feels that it made a reasonable level of provision for riders and owners and specific requests in respect of accommodation were not made by any owners.

Management

Horse sport, across all of its disciplines, is complex; it combines management of horse and athlete, keeping both fit; a failure for either effectively means a failure for both. Pre-Games problems were faced by HSI with regard, in particular, to the issue of hyper-sensitivity. The number of occasions during the period prior to the Games where Irish rider's horses failed tests for hypersensitivity led to the establishment of a monitoring group to review the case(s)⁸, contributed to by the then Chef d'Equipe who is responsible for such matters.

Recommendations set out by an expert group convened by HSI for this purpose produced anti-doping guidelines in 2009, introduced rider logbooks, a monitoring group and a requirement to supply the team vet with details about treatments over the previous 60 days. Riders, initially averse to the recommendations, have now taken them on board. HSI ventured to suggest that Ireland is now the most regulated set up in the equestrian world. All horses going to the Games were subject to pre-games medication and banned substance testing by HSI in keeping with FEI guidelines.

Various events (including those noted above) in the build-up to the London Games meant that HSI and the OCI had to work closely together. This working relationship is underlined by the fact that OCI is on the panel which reviews doping issues. It has, as and when required, made its representations forcefully in this regard. This has enabled HSI to follow up thereafter, one step removed. The perception is that this worked well.

⁸ One of Billy Twomey's horses also failed a test

Historically, it can be argued that the sport has not been good on protocols, however, over recent years several procedures, which work well, have been introduced and are seen as the cornerstone of good governance in this regard. While certain riders object to the use of said protocols it again emphasises the need for strong leaders to handle equally forceful competitors and to implement processes that support such actions. They need to be implemented rigorously and the use of one such protocol underpinned the leadership role now being taken by HSI and was the rationale for one rider's de-selection in the run-up to the Games.

Riders compete across the world throughout the year and handle horses, usually owned by a third party that can be worth millions. Owners are now purchasing horses specifically for them to perform on the world stage.

There is a need for a greater promotion of the sport and its success to date. Through this it needs to highlight the further support that will be required to entice more owners (and their horses) to become involved. This could help to ensure that riders have good 2nd and 3rd choice horses available to them should anything go wrong in preparation with their first choice mount.

This all serves to illustrate a complex sport which requires individuals capable of making difficult decisions and promoting change if it is to progress. Team management is said to have improved significantly, as has planning within the sport over recent years. There is a relatively strong set-up to support riders and horses, all of which is supported by strong administration; this ranges from advisers, a sports psychologist and nutritionist to a team veterinarian who is clearly highly rated. The strong leadership now being provided needs to be maintained and should, if carried through, manifest itself in uncontested selection processes and smoother pre-Games build ups.

The technology used extends as far as imaging, x-rays and ultrasound – using an experienced eye to balance the art and science of equine care.

The IIS perspective is that the focus is usually largely on the horses with athletes looking after themselves. Things appear to have improved slightly with regard to rider fitness, diet etc., since Beijing and HSI reportedly does its best to facilitate this. However, riders, who are inherently independent; particularly in show-jumping, do not always wish to engage.

Eventing (management)

It was suggested that, until recently, competition to get onto the Irish Eventing team had not been as fierce as it is in certain other nations. Nevertheless as a team it performed relatively well and the level of internal competition has risen over recent years. It is now considered to be relatively close to the level it needs to be at to win medals. It has, for example, beaten the Americans, Canadians and Australians while, reportedly, working with smaller budgets than these nations have at their disposal. Dressage, for example, has improved by around 10 points over the past four years and there is possibly a case to be made for HSI to steer funding towards coaching to achieve the next step up.

The key issue now is to focus on specific weaknesses and, thus, to make the best value for effort gains. This may require additional funding or possibly spend directed differently. It is also suggested that the development path needs further work to identify people and absorb skills at an earlier stage.

Eventing is fully aware of the key rivals against whom its riders compete at various events throughout the world. Longer-term plans include ensuring that 'bases are covered' by having a wider range of elite riders upon which to draw. In addition, options to regularly attend training camps many of which can be 'sourced' relatively easily in the UK would make a difference. In common with Modern Pentathlon, eventing would benefit from further improved partnership options with the Army Equitation School and the McKee Barracks was cited as a venue that would be ideal to accommodate work on the dressage and eventing disciplines.

It was suggested that more understanding of athlete's personal circumstances is needed, in particular where they are based. Several competitors are based in England for a number of reasons and cannot (easily) access the set up in place in Ireland. This is seen as another justification for more one-to-one training and support sessions.

An objective look at improvements in eventing would suggest that the points uplift over the 4 years of the programme was quite small. This would imply that further improvement in the HPP system is still needed. There was, again, general consensus with regard to the value of being able to attend more coaching sessions, access to one to one support and having a greater support services programme to call upon. The loss of the development squad that was formerly funded was also questioned particularly by riders now competing at elite level who viewed their progress through it as a key 'kick start' to their careers.

Showjumping (management)

Although a relatively successful sport for a number of Irish riders, in show-jumping there were several points of contention not least that one rider performed considerably less well than had been predicted (and he had reason to hope for). There is and has been considerable debate within the sport about the selection and management of riders and the disputes that occurred within the sport have been fairly widely publicised. There are clearly differences of view about the extent to which the run up to the Games was disrupted by a de-selection process. It clearly was not the ideal run-in and had an impact on the effectiveness of horse and rider preparation.

Governance

Clearly this is a difficult and complex sport to manage. By common consent the current chief executive of HSI has made considerable progress in seeking to sort out the convoluted and substantive issues that affect its governance and the management of HPP programmes. At present, in some (but not yet all) quarters, the HPP is not considered to be sufficiently aspirational or set at the standard the athletes expect and the performance pathway is not clearly defined.

Conversely, HSI can legitimately argue that it has initiated significant steps in the right direction and is looking to continue down this path. In the 2005-2008 Olympic Cycle Ireland won 5 Championships medals across Eventing and Showjumping at all ages; over the same period (2009-2012) 25 medals were won. Furthermore, since improving its processes, and over the same four years, no Irish rider has tested positive in International competition despite over 400 horses being tested. HSI would, thus, argue that it is on the right track whilst accepting that there is more work to do and no room for complacency.

Key features of/requirements for success were seen as:

- ✦ Clarity – and improved 'audit trail'; always put things in writing.
- ✦ Image – this process has started but further work is needed.
- ✦ Direction – most people seem to think HSI is broadly on the right track under the present management regime.
- ✦ Reaction capacity – in a sport of this type building in response resilience is vital as is having the resources and ability to respond quickly and confidently.
- ✦ Effective, considered management of relationships (with riders, coaches, vets, owners etc.). This can be contentious in many sports, but is especially volatile in equestrian sports.

<i>Horse Sport recommendations</i>
<p>It is recommended that ISC requires HSI to ensure that its next performance plan incorporates:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Greater focus upon the analysis of individual shortcomings and specific targeting of resource at individual rider weaknesses.2. More definite targeting of early qualification (in both main Olympic disciplines) so that the quality of build-up and run-in to the Games optimises rider readiness and horse conditioning.3. Explore with the Army Equitation School, as appropriate, the potential for even greater access and use as a training venue to underpin Ireland's future success (as outlined in the SIA report).4. Rigorous implementation of new processes designed to eradicate issues associated with horse doping and hyper-sensitivity to ensure that the sport continues to build upon its growing reputation for a 'clean' approach and its attempts to eradicate protracted disputes, court cases and other debates surrounding athlete selection.5. Where appropriate, adoption of the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Judo

The Games

Prior to the Games Lisa Kearney had won seven World Cup medals and at London 2012. She performed well and reached her anticipated target level.

Athlete performances at the 2012 Games (in alphabetic order and by event)

Athlete	Event	Performance
Lisa Kearney	48kg	Last 16 stage

Note: All positions from BBC final Olympic tables, some positions taken from overall standings

On the whole the Games were seen as a very positive experience that could obviously be focused around the athlete's needs as it was a one athlete team. Preparation was excellent with specific work carried out along with a good number of international competitions. Games support staff and services were considered to be first class and a great help. The support programme to help the athlete qualify was highly thought of and Lisa credited the Technical Director (TD) with the plans that were put together. Good support was provided by the ISC (funding & nutritionist) and OCI (financial support).

Management

The Irish Judo Association (IJA) does not have a recognised performance programme and, at Olympic level, presently only seeks to support one player: Lisa Kearney. It has a significant resource problem which means that TD (Ciaran Ward⁹) has struggled financially to provide support (as he was unfunded). He has, it is understood, latterly been invited to pitch for resources as part of the current submission.

The sport describes itself as being viewed as slightly lower down 'the pecking order'. It only has 1,800 members and thus faces valid questions with regard to the extent to which a member base of this size is likely to produce enough competitors and/or generate sufficient monies to support high performance at an elite level. It has, however, seen significant proportionate (300%) growth over the past four years from some 600 members; this has been a mix of increase participation, improved registration and lower attrition. Nevertheless, there continues to be a loss, particularly of girls aged around 14-15 years.

Lisa trains in Scotland as the training set up is far better for her. However, this in and of itself creates problems in terms of gaining access to personal support mechanisms e.g.: physiotherapy. She is considered very adaptable to the rule changes that seem to pervade the sport from one competition/year to the next.

Performance analysis is used with video footage to assess the strengths and weaknesses of individual opponents and fights are designed around these. It is a sport based on very specific targets which are mainly technical and cognitive. Lisa is already (at her weight) one of the strongest performers in the world, has excellent performance behaviours, is highly receptive to advice, has first class levels of strength and conditioning etc.

⁹ Ciaran Ward – more accurately describes his position as that of Technical Director

Systems are reviewed as far apart as France, Japan and Mongolia. Fight plans are developed with targets set, for example, attacks per minute, specific moves, counters etc. The big step up has been in learning to adapt during a fight at this level, this happened during the Olympics where for the first minute Lisa went behind but then adjusted her plan successfully.

Despite achieving cadet and junior golds in 2010, at male and female levels there is only one player left in the system and there is currently no established pathway to get anyone else through to a high performance level. This is exacerbated by the fact that men's and women's competitions must be attended to collect ranking points and they are often held at the same time in different countries. Consequently, it is very difficult from both a logistical and cost perspective to support two or more athletes, particularly of both genders. This is highlighted by the fact that Lisa had to compete in 35 events spread throughout the world in the 24 months leading up to the Games.

Even though the athlete felt that the support she got through the system was excellent there is still a feeling that this is largely down to the TD and that it needs to be improved and to have resources increased if it is to provide a proper high performance route for others. SINI has been pivotal in the set up and ensuring Lisa's progression over the past two years. There has also been dietary advice from IIS and the Sport is currently in discussion with Herriot Watt University (Lisa trains in Edinburgh).

The TD has worked for some time on an approach which he believes will work to develop pathways and encourage identified talent to develop correct behaviours. However, having lost a cohort of competitors he feels it may take an eight year programme to establish a sustainable approach capable of delivering more than one athlete at this level – the national squad still exists but is fragile.

In overall terms the key features of/requirements for success in high performance were seen to be the athlete's inherent ability and willingness to learn, respond to rule changes etc. and the close support network provided by the TD and IIS. Resources are clearly a limiting factor for the reasons outlined above; and the TD was personally cited by the athlete and the General Secretary for the sport as a key to success.

Governance

The TD is, according to the General Secretary (GS), very open, hugely respected by the Board, has its trust and this is reciprocated. Similarly, the commitment, knowledge and skill level of Lisa is also recognised. The Board understands what is required at this level and is able to coherently review performance information supplied.

The GS sees the biggest challenge to be one of resources and that the sport's future pivots on its capacity to effectively bridge the gap from club to region to national to international level performance.

Even with a World Class athlete such as Lisa, it has proven difficult to raise the profile of and sponsorship for judo. There is also a feeling of vulnerability as the TD may have to redefine his own priorities if funding continues to be a major problem.

The Board feels that the achievement to date is good, given the level of support obtained; however, it has ambitions to take the sport a step further. Consequently, it is considered that there is a need to overhaul the single player approach and to move to a HP squad system if advances are to be made and prove sustainable.

The reality of the current situation is seen in a positive light by the TD and athlete; it is recognised that IJA does not have the necessary funds to offer substantial support, despite an increase of 230% in membership during the last cycle.

The current danger, as viewed by the TD, is that Lisa may continue to improve but might not get to Rio due primarily to the resource issues required to enable the right level of competition and attendance at key qualifying events. What seems less likely (but still possible) is that she would transfer to another country as it is understood a two year rule would prevent her from competing at this level.

Communications

No specific communications issues were raised in the interviews

Judo recommendations
<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The ISC in association with the Irish Judo Association examine:<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Options of a Performance Director post for IJA or the alternate inclusion of IJA within a series of 'bubble' sports to be covered by a cross-sport PD / facilitator.ii. Resource requirements for coaches and athletes to support more than one player / gender – and ways of funding such a programme.iii. Resource requirements and funding/sponsorship opportunities for the reinvigoration of a squad system to produce elite performers.2. The Irish Judo Association should:<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Focus on strategies to bring through and retain players to an elite level, in particular girls/ young women as it is believed there is a higher attrition rate by gender.ii. Improve coach education and training.iii. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Modern Pentathlon

The Games

The sport operates to a specific performance plan and the target to qualify two athletes for London (one man, one woman) was achieved over what was, in effect, a two and a half year plan implementation period. For the London Games there were two ways to qualify; one via performance in specific competitions the other by World ranking; which was how Natalya Coyle qualified. She delivered against the PD's plan expectation and finished 9th in the Games.

The men's qualifier: Arthur Lanigan-O'Keeffe, although improving rapidly, was one of two men for whom qualification for the 2016 Games in Rio was the realistic target. Having exceeded what was expected of him in terms of competition performance he secured a place as a reserve for London and, when a Polish athlete failed a drug test, was entered and attained a creditable 25th place.

Athlete performances at the 2012 Games (in alphabetic order and by event)

Athlete	Event	Performance
Natalya Coyle	Pentathlon	9 th
Arthur Lanigan O'Keeffe	Pentathlon	25 th

Note: All positions from BBC final Olympic tables, some positions taken from overall standings

The holding camp at Lensbury/St. Mary's University was considered to be excellent and due to the fact that the MP competition was held on the final weekend of the Games athletes spent most of their time there. A lot was learnt at and from London 2012 in part simply because it is a new organisation and the Games was a new experience for all the athletes involved. This is, thus, an opportune time to ensure that this experience benefits the sport and its athletes moving forward.

Support services were rated as excellent and very easy to access. It helped that they were already known to the athlete before the Games and that relationships had already been developed. The HPP was well thought out and organised and the athletes were clear about goals set and worked assiduously to achieve them.

Particular gain was achieved as the result of the, perhaps slightly fortuitous, recruitment of a high quality fencing coach. Upon reflection, the view of the PD is that more emphasis could beneficially have been applied to riding elements but it is felt that, inasmuch as was feasible, full advantage was taken of options to attend international training camps and Olympic performance was merited, particularly as the late qualification for the male competitor substantively affected his specific preparation. The focus building up to London, for the athletes concerned, was primarily on fencing and shooting.

Qualification for the London Games was achieved very late (middle of May 2012) and, given a more comprehensive and mature programme it is assumed that athletes, with the right support will achieve qualification earlier to aid specific Games preparation.

Management

Modern Pentathlon 'came up on the rails' in the context of London 2012. Four years prior to the Games there was no performance programme at all in the sport. Three years out, following the appointment of a PD it received a small budget from the ISC to support work in this area and the following year it received a slightly larger budget. One of its athletes also secured Carding Scheme support and it was provided with some OCI 'Solidarity funding'. This 2011 level of resource enabled the athlete to regularly attend specific camps and competitions. In this context, given the level of support received, MP has provided a good level of return on ISC investment.

MP draws a substantial proportion of its competitors from Tetrathlon. This is run under the auspices of the Irish Pony Club which is also part of HSI. In this athletes compete in each phase of events which incorporate running, riding, shooting and swimming. This would appear to be a currently and potentially productive source of talent albeit one to which MP is not directly linked in a strict governance context.

The PD is clearly influential and has, operating with limited funding, implemented changes to training cycles, periodic planning and specific work in the build-up to key tournaments and competitions. She has developed a good relationship with current elite athletes and, reportedly with the next level of performers and is a good communicator.

Athlete tracking *per se* is not used and the athlete numbers involved are sufficiently small to enable an effective overview of the competition to be retained. However, given recent success and the potential to develop a more structured 'feed' of athletes through from Tetrathlon, more sophisticated systems may need to be considered moving forward.

MP receives a significant service from the IIS and has been working with it for around 18 months. It also, in the run-up to the Games, received informal elite performer development support from triathlon and swimming and has collaborated effectively with colleagues in fencing. The sport is clearly trying to do things right but, perhaps inevitably at this stage, might occasionally be accused by some commentators of wishing to run before it can walk and overestimating its own current capabilities.

MP talented athletes are still somewhat distributed throughout the country and family support dependent. This means that, for example, most train for swimming at different clubs/venues. The sport would, ideally work out of a single venue (ideally the National Sports Campus) and it might, ultimately, be a relatively neat fit in this environment.

This is a sport in which Ireland may well have a realistic chance of high achievement with a decent underpinning flow of athletes from whom to identify the potentially talented. It would appear to validate more funding and designated IIS/SINI support to ensure that opportunities to develop elite performers and for them to deliver world class performances are optimised.

Governance

The HPP element of Modern Pentathlon is set up as an 'affiliate' of Horse Sport Ireland (HSI) and its performance support income is channelled via this body. The board of MPAI is visibly supportive of the programme although it has limited power, influence or financial clout. As a distinct sport it does not receive ISC funding to support governance and development.

It is important to ensure that HSI uses its governance and influence to ensure that structural links between MP and Tetrathlon are embedded and MP's function as a performance outlet for Tetrathlon will ensure a continued feed of young athletes into the discipline.

Although the level of funding was progressively cranked up in the two year run up to the Games, the PD still does a lot on a voluntary basis. With the exception of her (and her status has only changed recently). Modern Pentathlon is an NGB that is wholly dependent upon volunteer input. Some thought needs to be given to how, if an HPP is to be supported, the sport as a whole is to move forward.

Modern Pentathlon recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The ISC should:
 - i. Consider making greater investment in MP. Securing the role of the PD with a workable budget and options to nominate key athletes for individual athlete support under the successor process to the Carding Scheme.
 - ii. Assess how resource requirements for MP can be provided either directly or as part of some form of collaborative process with other NGBs building upon the effective links created by the sport over the last two years.
 - iii. Review whether and how it may support individual athletes plus, pending key international decisions, Ireland's options with regard to team-based competition in the sport.
 - iv. Consider how the relationship with HSI is to work to an optimum level on programme governance, ring fenced funding and professional management support for the HPP.
 - v. Take account of the need for specialist equipment (e.g., laser guns) when setting budgets.
 - vi. Evaluate how best to corporately support MP, alongside other equestrian disciplines, to work more closely with and gain access to the resources of the Irish Army.
2. Modern Pentathlon should:
 - i. Consider how it will find resource to support a PD (in terms of other management infrastructure and her own personal development).
 - ii. Consider how it will go about building underpinning youth and development structures to feed its HP programme.
 - iii. Work closely with HSI to evaluate the optimum professional support format for the sport while managed via this route.
 - iv. Continue to optimise the use made of IIS sports science and sports medicine support with greater emphasis on holistic wrap-around medical input for athletes to accompany strength and conditioning and sports psychology inputs (a similar approach should be adopted in most other sports).
 - v. Working closely with HSI, embed links to the Pony Club and Tetrathlon.
 - vi. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

Rowing

The Games

The target for Rowing Ireland (R.I.) was to get one rower to the Olympics. This was achieved with Sanita Puspure. She finished in 13th position; a creditable performance given that her side of the draw included two previous world champions.

Athlete performances at the 2012 Games (in alphabetic order and by event)

Athlete	Event	Performance
Sanita Puspure	Single Sculls	13 th

Note: All positions from BBC final Olympic tables, some positions taken from overall standings

On the whole the Games was a very positive experience for the athlete. She reported that IIS support services during the build-up to the Games were excellent and of real benefit. However, in a wider context and given the relatively high level of funding received by the sport its achievement at London 2012 could be argued to represent a low level of return on ISC investment. On this basis, it is considered that future levels of H.P. funding should be reviewed by the Irish Sports Council and be contingent on the capacity of Rowing Ireland to produce athletes of the requisite High Performance standard.

Management

Sanita (who is originally from Latvia) came to Ireland in 2006; she is the first woman to qualify and compete for Ireland in rowing at the Olympics since 1980. She understands profiling and personal development paths; appreciates the need to make small yet significant changes to the way things are done and at the same time is happy to work with Ireland's younger rowers - this helps to give them confidence moving forwards.

The system is currently vulnerable due to its scale, for example, one team member in the women's double failed to meet weight criteria and there was no reserve, it was thus critical. This appears to reflect upon the comprehensiveness of the contingency planning which underpins the sport.

Rowing is time consuming and requires good relationships with schools and universities as well as clubs. One way to improve underpinning elements would be to get coaches to focus on a more competitive level of rowing at universities. It is recognised that many of the leading University clubs, such as Belfast, Trinity, Dublin, Cork and Limerick, have appointed full-time professional rowing coaches. Nevertheless, it is recommended that its competitiveness needs to be raised to a higher plane across the board if the system is to generate a larger pool of elite level performers for World Championships and Olympics.

Furthermore, University coaches and R.I.'s high performance coaching team need to work more effectively and in a co-ordinated manner if talent is to be identified and developed accordingly. A key requirement is to retain rowers for long enough and within the right systems to enable them to excel. In common with a number of other sports, rugby and gaelic football are seen as the main threat to athlete retention.

The picture is, however, potentially more positive than might appear to be the case with only one 2012 Olympic qualifier. Four of its current senior team are continuing to develop and are targeting Rio qualification. Three of these were silver medallists at the 2010 U23 World Championships (lightweight men's quadruple sculls). There are also significant groups on their way through the system; RI has eight juniors competing at the World Championships and ten at the U23s including a Junior World Championship Silver medallist a World University Championships Silver medallist and others on Rowing Scholarships in US universities. While this implies a potentially positive outlook, there can be no guarantee that achievements at one level will translate to success at a higher level. Consequently the future is not assured and by RI's own admission, the programme is not there yet but is on its way.

The domestic side of the NGB works well with clubs and as HP athletes tend to emanate from only a few clubs the new PD will be able to concentrate on these routes first. The NGB has worked closely with the IIS, systems have been established and it has been good at taking advice and acting upon it as and when required.

One HPP resource drawback is that Ireland cannot afford telemetry equipment. The significance of such technology is illustrated by the fact that the German team managed to deal rapidly with a longstanding problem that has not been resolved in training with the aid of the visual feedback which telemetry provides

In overall terms the key features of/requirements for success in high performance were seen to be a clearly understood and supported by a transparent selection process; a national rowing centre in Cork for high performance; good club relationships; and initiating behaviour change – getting athletes to understand and align their habits to a performance culture.

Governance

The sport has been beset with organisational problems following earlier breakdowns in relations between key staff. According to the acting CEO (Frank Coghlan) and the outgoing Lead Coach (Adrian Cassidy¹⁰) the root problem appears largely to have been one of personalities. It is suggested that good systems were set up but relationships between the previous CEO, clubs and the Board are (or were) all poor. There are, as outlined above, understood to be several strong prospects for qualification for the next games; Rowing Ireland believes that, in addition to Sanita, at least one of these is a genuine medal prospect.

The Acting CEO sees clear differences between his role and that of the PD and a need for the two to work together. The CEO sees his role as an enabler to help and direct others to ask questions and set objectives. Other management roles (such as the Finance Officer) are reportedly now functioning as they should and talent identification in Belfast is improving. The sport's part-time performance coaches are well regarded and the system is supported by an effective volunteer structure.

The view of the Acting CEO was that the elected board has the necessary expertise to make a positive contribution. The key requirement is a shared agenda and not to over-manage or interfere. The governance structure of the sport is thus considered to be (potentially)

¹⁰ Adrian Cassidy recently notified Rowing Ireland that he will leave his position as Chief Coach on Feb 7th 2013

appropriate and (could) work well. Some work has been done over the past 18 months to ensure that its strategies are meaningful and will be implemented.

Communications

Positive steps have been taken with regard to communication. This has led to athletes being more directly involved in open discussion about trials, challenges, things that work/things that don't etc. In a similar vein, each now has a performance dashboard which highlights his percentage performance against a target; Sanita is the benchmark for women rowers.

Considerable store is set by performance plans, ergometer standards, performance standards for 2km etc. This allows the sport and individuals within it to understand the profile of and work to targets that will lead to them becoming successful rowers.

There was some concern that, while communication and engagement was good during the season it was not as positive during the winter. The athlete felt somewhat neglected, not fully supported and was (at times) left to do her own thing. However, when this was raised the NGB took action and things improved very quickly.

Rowing recommendations

It is recommended that ISC and Rowing Ireland should work out a process whereby:

1. An HPP is submitted which reflects the sport's current situation and in which future levels of funding are reviewed by the ISC and contingent upon the capacity of RI to produce athletes of the requisite High Performance standard. This situation should be reviewed on an agreed basis to ensure that improvements implemented are recognised and so as not to unduly impair the progression of younger squad members who may progress to perform at an elite level.
2. Assurances are given with regard to the governance and stability of the sport; in particular the role and function of the PD.
3. The NGB rebuilds HP relationships with clubs, in particular those feeding national squads
4. RI focuses on pathways for younger rowers to ensure the current success at junior and under 23s levels feeds into senior/elite performers for Rio and beyond.
5. Competitive rowing is improved at University level, as are relationships with RI to facilitate transition of appropriately talented University rowers into the sport at an elite level.
6. Investment is made in key equipment and technology such as telemetry (with ISC support) and/or an IT testing link is made to development companies/university research and technology/engineering departments etc.
7. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

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*Post script:*

At the time of our discussions RI was about to hold interviews for the position of High Performance Director and has since appointed Morten Espersen. Morton was high performance rowing director for Denmark from 1993 to 2001 and then went on to chair Denmark's executive board for elite rowing. In those two decades the Danes won medals in all five Olympic Games, culminating in gold, silver and bronze at London 2012, making it the top-performing sport at the Games for Denmark.



## Sailing

### *The Games*

Initial targets for London were a medal and a top ten finish. The outcomes were a fourth place in the laser radial (Analise Murphy) and tenth in the star class (David Burrows and Peter O'Leary). It was felt that 10<sup>th</sup> was a poor outcome relative to what had been anticipated and the athletes' capability. Conversely, the fourth place exceeded expectations and if her rapid progress continues she is considered to have the potential to be a world champion within the next four years. Both Analise Murphy and the 49ers (Matt McGovern and Ryan Seaton) are on a trajectory which suggests that prospects for Rio in 2016 are strong.

*Athlete performances at the 2012 Games (in alphabetic order and by event)*

| Athlete        | Event             | Performance      |
|----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Scott Flanigan | 470               | 23 <sup>rd</sup> |
| Ger Owens      | 470               | 23 <sup>rd</sup> |
| Matt McGovern  | 49er              | 14 <sup>th</sup> |
| Ryan Seaton    | 49er              | 14 <sup>th</sup> |
| James Espey    | Laser             | 36 <sup>th</sup> |
| Analise Murphy | Laser radial      | 4 <sup>th</sup>  |
| David Burrows  | Star (medal race) | 10 <sup>th</sup> |
| Peter O'Leary  | Star (medal race) | 10 <sup>th</sup> |

*Note: All positions from BBC final Olympic tables, some positions taken from overall standings*

Support staff and services were held in high regard, especially the sports psychologist and physiotherapist. One athlete in particular reported that it helped to have worked with them for the previous four years and thus had a very good relationship.

Athletes felt comfortable and relaxed with the venue there, had performed there before (Sail for Gold 2 months previous) and could spend time there before the Games. The NGB was flexible in its approach and one athlete was given the option of staying in the Olympic village in Weymouth but opted instead to rent a house in the area for 6 months and said that this definitely helped her relax and feel at ease.

Others reported that taking out long term leases on properties in Weymouth, improved preparations through familiarity, location, control of the environment etc. Similarly, one athlete sailed a light wind event prior to the Olympics which also helped to build confidence.

In the Star and 49er classes a considerable quantity of technical preparatory work was undertaken on the development of equipment, computer analysis of sails, masts etc. This helped to build trust in the equipment and is ultimately thought to have effectively transferred to athletes' confidence in their own potential.

The only negative comments were that there had been a minor logistical issue to do with the delivery of sails which was rapidly resolved. Secondly, one of the athletes felt somewhat neglected by competing in a venue so far away from the others and had little engagement



with the OCI. The view was that more could be done to make athletes at remote venues feel more part of the whole Irish team.

### ***Management***

The sport is (as are several others) in the throes of a culture shift from an approach based largely on innate ability, as applied in Beijing, to a process led model which can get more out of people, support them properly, do so consistently and gain the cumulative benefits of working as a group. Basic ingredients include the NGB ensuring there are the right conditions, coaches, physiotherapists etc., fostering a positive atmosphere in the team itself, holding fitness camps and encouraging team spirit by simple devices such as eating together and sharing accommodation on the road.

Whilst in some sports it might be seen as a negative to ask people to book their own flights, in sailing it is viewed as a positive step in building independence and personal responsibility as making one's own decisions is a critical part of the sport. Similarly, strength and conditioning, hitting targets, ability to take punishment, separation of emotion from logic when competing etc. are all key features in building a winning mentality. Consequently, in terms of the plans which led to this point substantial emphasis has been placed upon personal development templates linked to identified strengths and weaknesses.

The athletes increasingly see the relevance of sports psychology and other services provided by the IIS. To an extent the fact that they are provided by the IIS is almost an endorsement of the service. As with most sports there is a tendency to do less with and be less systematic in its use of sports medical services. The IIS view is that sailing is good with physiotherapy but less strong in terms of a full medical service to athletes. This will, arguably, be more important in both the build up to and attendance at Rio as the range of ailments to which sailors may be vulnerable is likely to increase.

Personal development is backed by technical support in the form of computer analysis for targeting of athletes with best opportunity to medal is used but has limitations. In sailing, the talent pool dictates the opportunity and thus the person determines the boat. Races are broken down into sections and analysis of each is conducted alongside video footage; this includes approach to, exit from markers, management of position relative to others etc.

Athletes work to a performance matrix to track their development and long term potential linking this to results, behaviour, attitude and good habits; all of which impact upon sustainable performance and results. This is used to build a model of continuity and trust. One example of the effective application of team support occurred in early 2012 when one athlete had a crisis of confidence and dropped to the back of the field in one race. Following this, a coach and a sports psychologist helped to get her back on track.

Chasing the talent in coaches is equally important, for example, bringing in skills from areas such as Germany, Croatia and Great Britain.

The three main judgement points for sailors are 'Worlds', 'Europeans' and 'Olympics'. Athletes now buy in to the not attending every regatta and not winning every race they take part in – as long as they are learning and progressing. They are happy with this selective model and understand how this prepares them best for the biggest events.

Sailing also appears to have effective systems in place to develop its academy based sub-elite athletes.

As with other sports, athlete support payments tend to be seen as critical to participation. There is also an on-going issue of losing talented sailors to universities. Many of those who grew up with current elite 'competitors' but went to university have stopped sailing (competitively). Consequently, even though the system brings through talented sailors many are lost when they decide to attend further education.

In short, sailing is a well-managed HPP and those leading it have clearly learnt lessons and improved their practice. In common with Ireland's other high performing HPP NGBs it might, nonetheless, benefit from some form of third party perspective on what it does at present; perhaps via some form of peer PD appraisal process.

In overall terms the key features of/requirements for success in high performance were seen to be the personnel involved (coaching, quality, relationships, support staff etc.); access to a capital equipment grant to buy new equipment; the venue (on this occasion, having raced in Weymouth for six years previously); making key decisions quickly when they are required; and securing sponsorship. This final point not only provided clothing, technical equipment etc. – it also gave the athletes a belief that others felt they were worth investing in.

### **Governance**

Very little was reported on governance; it is seen as a well-managed sport in which relations between CEO and PD are strong and supportive, the quality of the HPP is improving and there is no apparent dissonance between the Board of the NGB and its performance arm.

### **Communications**

A specific media problem manifested a weakness in internal and external communications and also undermined thorough preparations in all other respects in the run up to the Games.

Press coverage and a feeling of unfairness was the result of a team member being accused of gambling (dating back to Beijing but brought up the day before a race in London). Whether press allegations were fair or not was less important (in some respects) than the response to it and the whole affair clearly impacted adversely on the athlete's focus.

Sailing felt somewhat let down by the level of support it received around the issue in Weymouth; the OCI perspective, however, was that, although remote, sailing had everything that it needed.

In short, there are lessons to learn about the way that sports competing in 'remote' locations are supported, the level of communications, media support available and the need for better contingency strategies.

### ***Sailing recommendations***

It is recommended that:

1. The ISC, OCI and Irish Sailing Association: take necessary steps to ensure that in future Games, although remotely located, athletes associated with sailing feel part of Team Ireland.
2. The Irish Sailing Association should:
  - i. Carry the learning that it has applied in London 2012 in areas such as, familiarity breeding confidence, accommodation, sailing the courses/waters regularly before competition sponsorship, personal decision making etc. all (wherever realistic) be repeated for Rio.
  - ii. Continue to build upon its underpinning elite academy programme.
  - iii. Review sailing links with universities to improve competitive levels etc.
  - iv. Consider setting up a PD/HPP peer review process with other sports (eg Triathlon/Swimming)
  - v. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

## Swimming

### *The Games*

Swimming's performance at London did not match expectation. Notwithstanding the clear strides forward made by the sport over the last four years, a combination of slight mis-judgements in the pre-Games run in and athlete illness meant that the outcomes were not as might originally have been anticipated.

#### *Athlete performances at the 2012 Games (in alphabetic order and by event)*

| Athlete          | Event             | Performance                  |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Melanie Nocher   | 100m backstroke   | 33 <sup>rd</sup> (in heats)  |
| Melanie Nocher   | 200m backstroke   | 34 <sup>th</sup> (in heats)  |
| Sycerika McMahon | 100m breaststroke | 26 <sup>th</sup>             |
| Sycerika McMahon | 200m medley       | 22 <sup>nd</sup>             |
| Barry Murphy     | 50m freestyle     | 29 <sup>th</sup> (in heats)  |
| Barry Murphy     | 100m freestyle    | =29 <sup>th</sup> (in heats) |
| Grainne Murphy   | 400m freestyle    | 31 <sup>st</sup> (in heats)  |

*Note: All positions from BBC final Olympic tables, some positions taken from overall standings*

One of the athletes was on course to meet personal targets in March but experienced an illness in the run up to the Games. Medical advice to SI was that the swimmer would be able to compete, at a reasonable albeit lower than might have been expected level. However, with hindsight this did not prove to be the case.

The situation, and the failure to appreciate just how significant any degree of under-performance might be, appears to have, in part, been due to a specific coach having too much untrammelled influence over the training programme, and perhaps more importantly the post-illness recovery period of an athlete.

The positive aspect of this is the level of NGB reflection that occurs within the sport. It has, for example, already recognised and started to tackle some of the reasons why it went to the Games with an athlete who was not fully fit to compete at optimum level. In addition, steps have now been taken to ensure that HPP athlete management is set up to ensure that a much closer eye is kept on programme athletes by the PD and key staff so that such a situation should not recur.

Some of the issues raised by athletes focused upon the level of support received during difficult periods in competitions or preparation or when facing problems with illness, race decisions or exams. Some felt they were left to make these decisions and get through these periods on their own.

Some inferred that the lighter competition calendar in 2012 was different to previous years and there seemed to be fewer competitions, consequently the swimmers did not feel as prepared as they would have liked to going into the Games. Conversely, others suggested that athletes had to expend a lot of effort and focus to qualify and the fact that this was so close to the Games left them feeling slightly drained during competition.

In hindsight (and this was acknowledged by the sport) better 'fitness to perform' processes and greater expert medical input would be beneficial. Shortly prior to the Games, there had been a danger of one swimmer not being taken to London due to an instance (in our view) of the swimmer's fitness not being 'effectively managed' as opposed to an unavoidable injury. It is understood that addressing the recurrence of such risks is already a key feature of the swimming HPP moving forward; the sign of a responsive NGB.

Communication between athletes, the PD and the NGB was considered by athletes to have been limited in the run up to the Games. Athletes interviewed suggested that may have been because communication was largely managed via their coaches. There was a view that swimming is still a developing sport with a lot to learn so adverse experiences with athletes will, in the medium and long term lead to beneficial outcomes. They have also confirmed the importance of PD influence and control over programmes and support provided.

The support staff and services provided were considered to be 'excellent' and this accolade was directed particularly at the physiotherapy support. The OCI was considered to have been supportive to swimmers and ensured they had all they needed.

### ***Management***

As noted, the swimming HPP has made progress and its success transitioning junior champions into 'A' standard athletes is, arguably, as substantial a step forward as been achieved in performance in the sport in recent times. If swimming performance is to continue to progress effectively it may ultimately need greater co-ordination of effort and fewer centres. There is a specific logic to hot-housing under the eye of HPP staff and the PD plus associated specialist sports science and sports medicine support teams. This applies in particular to longer distance swimmers for whom performance analysis is a very significant factor in their development.

As noted above, key weaknesses have been acknowledged and proposals going forward are based upon thorough analysis which commenced prior to and has been concluded since the Games. The proposed structure of senior, junior and youth squads, overseen by the PD and working on a 4-8 year cycle is logical, reportedly working well and the sport has noted the need to make much greater use of IIS services. Levels of sports science and sports medicine support will then match other graduated inputs to the suggested structure.

The issue of coaches not conforming to the programmes and processes set out under the HPP should arguably, have already been dealt with. However, plans discussed incorporate tackling this via a combination of improved, more direct central control and a process of coach mentoring.

Even though the performance pathway has had a higher profile recently, improvements are still required to make it clearer and more easily understood. There is a need for consistent support *per se* and for coaches operating across all age groups and developmental stages. There was a feeling that this support is perhaps currently focused on one or two specific groups e.g., the very young or older HP athletes.

There are some similarities with boxing in that it is (justifiably) considered that, as the acting National Senior Squad Coach, the PD has a high poolside value. It is thus important that he is able to be on poolside when required and that a proportion of his time is spent there, with the right athletes, training at the right levels of intensity. This, however, also means that the requisite supplementary support mechanisms and logistical support are needed in the structure.

Key factors moving forward include:

- ✦ Clarity around performance standards at all levels of the pathway and what it takes to actually win at the highest levels.
- ✦ The way in which the PD is used, the level of direction imposed on the sport and the extent to which the HPP support structure enables these things to occur.
- ✦ Appointment and effective line management of 'on message' coaches; based upon clear and unambiguous contractual commitments.
- ✦ Ensuring that the detail encapsulated in the next performance plan fully covers key aspects of athlete SS/SM support.

This sport would benefit from the peer PD process review discussed as an option for NGBs such as sailing and triathlon where it is not about general programme principles and quality but is more to do with stimulating reflection and continuous process improvement.

### **Governance**

In swimming the CEO and PD work effectively together and the PD is actively involved in and consulted about other aspects of the sport. There is also now very good infrastructure in Ireland with 50m pools available in Limerick, North Down and two in Dublin. The PD is knowledgeable, is left to run the HPP and the requisite support from the board and CEO is in place. Both the CEO and the PD acknowledge the fact that there are areas for improvement that need to be addressed in the next HPP and that control over athletes (and vitally coaches working under its auspices) will need to be clearer in future.

#### ***Swimming recommendations***

It is recommended that SI:

1. Ensures that, within its HPP, the PD proactively manages all aspects of work in, and people working on elite performance.
2. Puts in place plans to ensure that the HPP team continue to build upon its progressively greater authority & control over the programmes and regimes employed by:
  - i. Swimmers – on the programme.
  - ii. Coaches – working with swimmers on the programme.
3. Installs a level of HPP support staffing that enables the PD to have the flexibility to operate on pool-side when required while retaining full leadership and management control over the wider performance programme.
4. Improves its protocols with regard to holistic SS & SM input, paying particular regard to the need to ensure that sport medicine is a 'custom and practice' feature of athlete management rather than an 'emergency service' to be utilised when others have run out of ideas.

### ***Swimming recommendations (continued)***

5. Implements an education programmes for HPP coaches with regard to their understanding, interpretation and use of SS/SM input – in particular preventative elements thereof.
6. Increases its focus on producing 'fit to compete' swimmers – swimmer supervision and coach understanding & use of SS/SM support is essential to this.
7. Considers how to ensure that the requisite, optimum quality, coaching/SS/SM and performance analysis can be most effectively offered to the sport's elite athletes.
8. Considers setting up a PD peer review process with other sports (e.g., Triathlon/Sailing).
9. Where appropriate, adopts the generic recommendations outlined earlier.



### Tennis

#### *The Games*

Tennis Ireland did not have a player at the 2012 Olympics. Its main hope had played in two Grand Slam events in 2011, however, chronic injury (hip) had led to retirement in February 2012 thus putting an end to Ireland's representation at the London Games. The picture for Rio and beyond, however, reportedly indicates some potential high level performers.

#### *Management*

The Olympic qualifying process for tennis reflects world ranking, which itself is based on the ATP and WTA rankings achieved through the annual calendar of events; this will continue to be the case for Rio 2016. The sport uses the national academy to support men's and women's tennis with the 'holy grail' being to get them into the top 100 as this will get them into Grand Slam and thus the Olympics.

Based on current stage of development and performances it might be anticipated that Ireland will be in a position to send two players to the Olympics in Rio (one male, one female). This could, however, increase to four players being in contention for places at the 2016 Games (3 singles, 1 doubles). Three of these prospects use the national academy while the fourth employs a private coach. Although the PD travels with academy players the NGB and players (generally) do not have sufficient finances to provide coaches throughout the year.

The National Tennis Centre has 40 players in full and part-time training, some of whom live *in situ*. At regional and provincial level, programmes are structured by age group - 12/14/16 year olds. The two current best prospects started at the academy aged 8 or 9 years. The reported impact of this process clearly augurs well for subsequent Olympic tournaments.

Video analysis is used for technical skills and match analysis, regular fitness testing takes place and age specific targets are set for European rankings. There is an extensive competition structure for each age group and Tennis Ireland hosts events and sends players out to attend them elsewhere.

Tennis Ireland recognises the importance of managing emotional peaks and troughs and thus employs a sports psychologist at certain points of the year. It also uses them to train coaches in techniques to adopt in handling the ups and downs of individuals whilst on the road.

The NGB has its own in-house strength and conditioning, medical services, physiotherapist, and nutritionist. All are seen as essential to development and work with the academy. Their input is directly aligned to tennis needs; they are on-site at Dublin City University and the faculty provides additional services. Consequently, there is little demand for IIS services.

The key features of/requirements for success in high performance were seen to be access to coaches (particularly whilst on the road/at tournaments); the competition structure and sports science/support – performance analysis, sports psychology etc.

The biggest challenges, at present, are:

- Coach time - a lack of resources required to put sufficient coach time on the road with players. Currently, only one of four players has a coach travelling with them, ideally they should all have physical trainers with them.
- Facilities – there is a need for different surfaces (indoor/outdoor, grass, clay, concrete) to be available to slam standard; there are, however, very few across the country.

Only limited consultation was held with Tennis Ireland but on the evidence provided, it is suggested that, for the time being and until some of the junior prospects emerge as proven high performers, it should be treated as a ‘bubble sport’ i.e., one in which ISC funded HPP support takes the form of generic athlete specific input until a sustainable programme with an outturn of several elite (as opposed to potentially elite) performers is in place.

### ***Governance and communications***

No specific issues were raised in respect of governance or communications

#### ***Tennis recommendations***

It is recommended that:

1. Consideration be given,
  - i. At present, to tennis becoming one of the sports where talented individual athletes are provided with generic support rather than via a sport-specific HPP.
  - ii. To an annual review of athlete/performance progress whereby future levels of funding are reviewed by the ISC and are contingent upon the capacity of Tennis Ireland to produce athletes of the requisite standard. The review process should ensure that improvements implemented are recognised and the situation does not unduly impair the progression of younger squad members who may progress to perform at an elite level.
2. The ISC in association with SINI and Tennis Ireland examine opportunities to develop additional facilities - indoor/outdoor, grass, clay, concrete – to slam standard.
3. Tennis Ireland should, if it continues to operate an ISC funded HPP:
  - i. Make greater use of IIS advice (if not its actual services).
  - ii. Consider making use of peer PD review to enhance the extent to which continuous improvements in its programmes can be achieved.
  - iii. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

### Triathlon

#### *The Games*

Three and a half years prior to London the target had been to get four participants to the Games, however, one was injured and one had to drop out due to allergies. Consequently, the target was revised to two; this was achieved and they finished in 23<sup>rd</sup> (Gavin) and 43<sup>rd</sup> (Aileen) positions. Triathlon Ireland's plans for Rio anticipate it having four, possibly six, athletes in a position to qualify.

#### *Athlete performances at the 2012 Games (in alphabetic order and by event)*

| Athlete         | Event     | Performance      |
|-----------------|-----------|------------------|
| Aileen Morrison | Triathlon | 43 <sup>rd</sup> |
| Gavin Noble     | Triathlon | 23 <sup>rd</sup> |

*Note: All positions from BBC final Olympic tables, some positions taken from overall standings*

In the run up to the Games each athlete faced different problems and consequently needed to be managed differently, as might be expected. In one instance it required a proof of fitness around eight weeks prior to the Games whilst for the other athlete there were personal confidence/emotional issues to tackle at a similar point.

As with other sports, Lensbury/St. Mary's University was highly thought of, facilities such as the 'pool in the park' at Richmond were good; being on-site early but not too early was helpful and familiarity with service providers all created a secure environment in which it was possible to perform. The key features were seen as taking control, being organised at all levels - from knowing the time for the bus to pick you up to having videoed and 'walked' the course, providing training partners and avoiding the dangers of boredom.

The physiotherapy support was excellent, especially as it was sport specific. However, while one athlete found it possible to access IIS services, due to location, the other did not.

Although the sport conveys many positives moving forwards in its set up and plans, there were suggestions that, for example, the PD had responsibilities to athletes in other sports and was not as focused on triathlon as he might have been; that the training programmes were not tailored to individual needs and that the focus seemed to be on one athlete more than the other. This viewpoint would clearly be contested by Triathlon Ireland.

Furthermore, it was suggested that while the holding camp has been applauded, the extended length of time that the team was there meant support staff seemed tired, drained and not solely focused on the athlete's needs. Finally, an athlete reported not being allowed to go onto the course in their preparation. However, while this had a negative impact it is appreciated that it was most probably out of the NGB's control.

## **Management**

Triathlon Ireland is thorough in its use of data which extends from profiling and analysis through to a detailed risk assessment to help determine the main issues which need to be resolved and/or avoided in order develop a successful and sustainable HPP.

Triathlon Ireland makes extensive use of analytical tools to develop a training and development regime in which athletes can see what is expected of them, where they should be on a continuum and what anticipated outcomes will be if they 'hit the mark'. This typically comprises:

- ✦ Individual athlete profiles – event, target, performance, reason for any shortfall etc.
- ✦ Senior international results graph – annual upwards trend for podium places.
- ✦ Junior training plan – intensity, weekly, status (pre-/ competition, transition etc.).
- ✦ Senior training plan – (as above).
- ✦ Age specific performance targets by discipline – age, gender, times, points.
- ✦ SINI provision per athlete - possibly better as median rather than average.

The PD and the coaching team also analyse athlete performances to determine the most effective places to make gains in personal performance, these may, for example, involve:

- ✦ Developing specific tactics with world class coaches for each of the three phases (swimming, cycling or running).
- ✦ Transition specialists - management of self and others in transition stages.
- ✦ Tactical awareness – improved understanding of positioning e.g. to the left/right when coming out of the water for the transition stage to cycling.

Some athletes and coaches, however, do not adapt well to this level of information and regards it as being 'coached by spreadsheet' rather than as a personal training plan. Similarly, while one of the main roles is to keep athletes fit, healthy, to recover and not over-train, use blood profiling etc. – it is, however, a concern that they appear not to always understand what the information means.

Once established, athletes race in the Grand Prix de Triathlon to expose them to regular, high level competition. The sport offers two large scale opportunities each year for athletes to test and score themselves competitively. Each of the three constituent disciplines has a different age profile for its peak; one tactic is for future triathletes to continue with competitive swimming as long as possible and transfer across.

The strategy is to get a world class pathway in place that is able to make the most of any resources it is able to garner. This ensures that Triathlon Ireland makes the best use of resources and a convincing case if any opportunities arise. Another sign of attention to detail is that athletes must sign a contract which commits them, for example, to seeing the physiotherapist twice a week, event attendances etc. Furthermore, coaching focuses on ensuring that athletes understand the key moments in a race, such as, when and when not to make a move.

As part of key event specific preparation, athletes are not always entered into races to win them, possibly even putting themselves into a bad place to learn how to manage their way

out. After events coaches provide feedback within 48 hours to ensure learning takes place whilst the memory is fresh.

The full term approach is a 5-10 year programme but should see younger athletes such as 17 year old Constantine Doherty (bronze at the 2012 World Junior Championships) make the transition to the next level in a sport which is getting a progressively younger age profile. It is critical, however, that coaches at this level buy into the need for performance markers and timed peaks in career rather than winning every event. This is seen as being a knowledge gap and not just an attitude problem; if correct it should be solvable.

Over recent years Ireland has moved from arguably being nondescript on the world circuit to having a chance of podium places – the step up has been significant but has the potential to continue further. There is a large recreational triathlon circuit to be served and to raise the profile of the sport it would be of value for the country to stage international events.

IIS and OCI are positive about the way that triathlon is approaching its HPP and, like sailing and swimming our main comment would be that peer PD review might be a good way of ensuring that an already generally well managed sport stays on top of its game.

As with most sports, resources are a major issue if Triathlon Ireland is to make the step up to the next level – to break away from the pack; for example, the cost of travelling the world to compete at events is inevitably an issue. Other challenges include the need to continue developing mental toughness to compete at the highest plane and also the relatively low number of talented coaches at the level required.

In overall terms the key features of/requirements for success were (rightly):

- ✦ Preparation - focus on the small things that will make big differences.
- ✦ Finance – required for support services and to attend international events.
- ✦ Growth – of the sport and resources to facilitate this.
- ✦ Personnel – the right people, good support staff build confident athletes.
- ✦ Media – careful management and working with the media.
- ✦ Logistics – free up coaches to focus on their own jobs.
- ✦ Refresh – keeping things lively, making sure athletes didn't get bored.
- ✦ Warm weather and altitude camps.

### **Governance**

A joint interview with the CEO<sup>11</sup> and PD indicated a team clearly on the same page and confident of each other's abilities and contribution. This provides the right balance for the sport's development. It was stated that, all of the main stakeholders need to have good relationships, ideally formally and informally. If this is not the case then work is needed, just as it is for more obvious performance factors, if the right environment is to be created.

The Board recognises its role in relation to high performance is to assist rather than to take direct involvement. Its main focus is on membership and clubs. Triathlon is an increasingly

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<sup>11</sup> Matt McKerrow CEO recently resigned and is to take up a senior management position with High Performance Sport New Zealand

popular sport with a relatively large participant base. The clubs and members side of the NGB services has grown significantly over the past two years rising from 5,500 to 7,500 by 2012 with 74 affiliated clubs and 170 sanctioned events per annum.

The PD reports-in periodically to the Board on progress but is not directly answerable to it. The Head of the Board likes to be kept up to speed but most concerns are likely to be alleviated by the PD shifting into a full time position. The term used to describe the relationship was '*set and forget*' – having agreed what is to be done, the PD is left to get on with it and support is provided if and when requested.

It is felt that some Board Members possibly still do not fully appreciate the gap between club and high performance. It will be important to help them understand how funds are allocated so that there is no danger of creating an 'us and them' situation. Similarly, the NGB does not have a written policy about HP but does have an understanding and acceptance – this is probably not an uncommon position within NGBs but may be one that (ideally) should be addressed.

### **Communications**

Although a number of learning issues were cited with regard to communication, no major points were mentioned. However, in an external context, handling of difficult media situations was an issue for one of the athletes who was subjected to a stressful media/photography legal issue in Hamburg which led to considerable pressure. The situation should ideally, one way or another, have been 'managed away' and not resulted in it becoming an issue for the athlete. As such, it is an example of the need for media training to prepare athletes, coaches and staff for the tripwires and pitfalls that await them and may be avoided or handled without creating additional stress.

#### **Triathlon recommendations**

It is recommended that:

1. The ISC in association with Triathlon Ireland seek to attract international level events to Ireland.
2. Triathlon Ireland should:
  - i. Continue on its current development path – carefully managing the growth of the sport and ensuring there is not a breakdown in relationships between club and elite level competition.
  - ii. Ensure that, without damaging levels of support for the most elite, the level of provision for second tier 'development' athletes is more comprehensively considered.
  - iii. Consider setting up some form of PD peer review process with another sport (e.g., Sailing/Swimming).
  - iv. Ensure that athlete support includes full sports medicine input at all times not just when problems arise.
  - v. Where appropriate, adopt the generic recommendations outlined earlier.

## Appendix 1: Key people and agencies interviewed

### **Athletics**

|                     |                                                             |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| John Foley          | - Chief Executive                                           |
| Kevin Ankrom        | - Performance Director                                      |
| Ciaran O' Cathain   | - President of Athletics Ireland                            |
| Ray Flynn           | - Chair of the High Performance Committee                   |
| Natalie Gabites     | - Athlete Services Co-ordinator                             |
| Patrick Ryan        | - Director of Development                                   |
| Patsy McGonagle     | - Team Manager                                              |
| Anne Keenan-Buckley | - Staff (endurance lead, holding camp – <i>since left</i> ) |
| Chris Jones         | - Staff (consultant/personal coach – also PD for Triathlon) |
| Liam O' Reilly      | - Staff                                                     |
| Stephen McGuire     | - Staff                                                     |
| Emma Gallivan       | - Physiotherapist (IIS but with AI for Games and in run up) |
| Paul O' Neill       | - Physiotherapist/Soft Tissue Masseur                       |
| Kyle Alexander      | - Soft Tissue Masseur                                       |
| Andrew Drake        | - Coach                                                     |
| Enda Fitzpatrick    | - Coach (marathon)                                          |
| Hayley Harrison     | - Coach (sprints and jumps)                                 |
| Jim Kidd            | - Coach                                                     |
| John Coghlan        | - Coach                                                     |
| Mark Rowland        | - Coach                                                     |
| Terrie Cahill       | - Coach                                                     |
| Sean Cahill         | - Coach                                                     |
| Tudor Bidder        | - Coach                                                     |
| Ava Hutchinson      | - Athlete, Marathon                                         |
| Brendan Boyce       | - Athlete, Walk                                             |
| Caitriona Jennings  | - Athlete, Marathon                                         |
| Catriona Cuddihy    | - Athlete, 400m relay                                       |
| Claire Bergin       | - Athlete, 400m relay                                       |
| Colin Griffin       | - Athlete, 50km walk                                        |
| Deirdre Ryan        | - Athlete, High Jump                                        |
| Derval O' Rourke    | - Athlete, 100m Hurdles                                     |
| Fionnuala Britton   | - Athlete, 5,000 & 10,000m                                  |
| Jessie Barr         | - Athlete, 4 x 400m relay                                   |
| Joanne Cuddihy      | - Athlete, 400m                                             |
| Laura Reynolds      | - Athlete, 20km walk                                        |
| Linda Byrne         | - Athlete, Marathon                                         |
| Marian Heffernan    | - Athlete, 400m relay                                       |
| Mark Kenneally      | - Athlete, Marathon                                         |
| Michelle Carey      | - Athlete, 400m relay                                       |
| Olive Loughnane     | - Athlete, 20km walk                                        |
| Paul Hession        | - Athlete, 200m                                             |
| Stephanie Reilly    | - Athlete, 3,000m Steeplechase                              |
| Victoria Pena       | - Athlete, Pole Vault                                       |



## IRISH SPORTS COUNCIL: NGB DEBRIEF - 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES

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### ***Badminton:***

|                 |                        |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| Richard Vaughan | - Chief Executive      |
| Michael Watt    | - Performance Director |
| Chloe Magee     | - Athlete              |
| Scott Evans     | - Athlete              |

### ***Boxing:***

|                |                                 |
|----------------|---------------------------------|
| Don Stewart    | - Chief Executive               |
| Billy Walsh    | - Head Coach                    |
| Zaur Antia     | - Coach                         |
| Peter Taylor   | - Coach                         |
| John Cleary    | - Strength & Conditioning Coach |
| Adam Nolan     | - Athlete                       |
| Darren O'Neill | - Athlete                       |
| John Joe Nevin | - Athlete                       |
| Michael Conlon | - Athlete                       |
| Paddy Barnes   | - Athlete                       |

### ***Canoeing:***

|                |                                        |
|----------------|----------------------------------------|
| Karl Dunne     | - Chief Executive/Performance Director |
| Eoin Rheinisch | - Athlete                              |
| Hannah Craig   | - Athlete                              |

### ***Clay Pigeon Shooting:***

|               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| Kevin Kilty   | - Technical Director |
| Derek Burnett | - Athlete, Trap      |

### ***Cycling:***

|                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Geoff Liffey   | - Chief Executive |
| Dan Martin     | - Athlete         |
| David McCann   | - Athlete         |
| Martyn Irvine  | - Athlete         |
| Nicholas Roche | - Athlete         |

### ***Horse Sport:***

|                 |                                   |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Damian McDonald | - Chief Executive                 |
| Ginny Elliott   | - Performance Director (Eventing) |
| Robert Splaine  | - Chef d'Equipe                   |
| Triona Connors  | - Co-ordinator                    |
| Marcus Swail    | - Team Veterinarian               |
| Anna Merveldt   | - Athlete                         |
| Aoife Clarke    | - Athlete                         |
| Billy Twomey    | - Athlete                         |
| Camilla Speirs  | - Athlete                         |
| Cian O'Connor   | - Athlete                         |
| Joseph Murphy   | - Athlete                         |
| Mark Kyle       | - Athlete                         |
| Michael Ryan    | - Athlete                         |

### **Hockey:**

|                |                               |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Mike Heskin    | - Incoming Chief Executive    |
| Angus Kirkland | - Former Chief Executive      |
| Dave Passmore  | - Former Performance Director |

### **Judo:**

|                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Ciaran Ward        | - Technical Director |
| Antoinette McMahon | - General Secretary  |
| Lisa Kearney       | - Athlete            |

### **Modern Pentathlon:**

|                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Brendan Walsh           | - Chair                |
| Lindsay Weedon          | - Performance Director |
| Arthur Lanigan-O'Keeffe | - Athlete              |
| Natalya Coyle           | - Athlete              |

### **Rowing:**

|                |                           |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| Frank Coghlan  | - Acting Chief Executive  |
| Adrian Cassidy | - Chief Coach (former PD) |
| Sanita Puspure | - Athlete                 |

### **Sailing:**

|                   |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Harry Hermon      | - Chief Executive      |
| James O'Callaghan | - Performance Director |
| Annalise Murphy   | - Athlete              |
| Rory Fitzpatrick  | - Athlete              |

### **Swimming:**

|                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| Sarah Keane      | - Chief Executive      |
| Peter Banks      | - Performance Director |
| Grainne Murphy   | - Athlete              |
| Sycerika McMahon | - Athlete              |

### **Tennis:**

|              |                      |
|--------------|----------------------|
| Des Allen    | - Chief Executive    |
| Garry Cahill | - Technical Director |

### **Triathlon:**

|                 |                                             |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Matt McKerrow   | - Chief Executive                           |
| Chris Jones     | - Performance Director (see also athletics) |
| Tommy Evans     | - Lead Coach                                |
| Declan Gamble   | - SINI Physiologist                         |
| Aileen Morrison | - Athlete                                   |
| Gavin Noble     | - Athlete                                   |

### ***Other:***

#### *Irish Sports Council*

|                 |                                         |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------|
| John Treacy     | - ISC Chief Executive                   |
| Finbarr Kirwan  | - Director of High Performance          |
| Austin Mallon   | - High Performance Executive            |
| Tony Cunningham | - ISC Head of High Performance Planning |
| Paul McDermott  | - Director of Communications            |

#### *Olympic Council of Ireland*

|                   |                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Sonia O' Sullivan | - Chef de Mission (team leader) |
| Steve Martin      | - OCI Chief Executive           |
| Martin Burke      | - OCI Sports Director           |

#### *Irish Institute of Sport*

|                |                            |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| Gary Keegan    | - Director IIS             |
| Rod McLoughlin | - Irish Institute of Sport |

#### *Sports Institute Northern Ireland*

|                   |                                    |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Peter McCabe      | - SINI (Performance Planning Unit) |
| Richard Archibald | - SINI (Performance Planning Unit) |

## Appendix 2: Pro-forma for Chief Executive/Performance Director interviews

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### Athlete & sport – medal potential

- 1. Did you meet your qualification targets for the London Games?**
  - ... what were the targets, were they attainable/too easy/too difficult?*
  - ... were there any specific issues and if so how did you manage them – short term/long term in the run up to the Games?*
  - ... what specific learning would you take into future Games?*
- 2. How well was the plan executed?**
  - ... how did the athletes focus on targets, do you use metrics to assess performance/build confidence, focus on issues etc.?*
  - ... are there specifics that work well or could be improved – if so how?*
- 3. Do you use competitor analysis/statistics to determine those athletes/ disciplines with best chance of competing for medals?**
  - ... where does your main competition come from (countries/individuals)?*
  - ... is there transferable learning, can you catch up with other nations/stay ahead etc.?*
  - ... how vulnerable are you to coaches leaving etc.?*
- 4. Did your programme operate to a defined ‘performance pathway in the run up’ to the Games?**
  - ... were your athletes ready for 2012, will they peak in 2014/16 etc?*
  - ... is there a constant talent stream or peaks and troughs?*
  - ... do athletes ‘buy in’ to not peaking for every competition – podium is not always the main objective?*
  - ... how useful is competition exposure as a personal development tool?*
  - ... what is most/least effective technique?*
  - ... how do you manage emotional peaks/troughs?*
- 5. How well did your talent ID perform against its objectives over the London cycle?**
  - ... how well does your talent ID programme work – is it producing/not producing?*
  - ... do your coaches look for people to win at all ages/stages or do they accept longer term objectives which mean that they personally may not win at a given point?*
  - ... how do you feel the system contributes to/impacts on athlete’s confidence/insecurity, performance up/down, their effect on others +ive/-ive?*
  - ... how much was good/bad luck: and if ‘bad luck’ was this systemic failure: PD analysis*

### Drivers of performance

- 1. Of the core objectives set in your London high performance strategy which ones were or were not delivered and what were the key factors?**
  - ... what were the main drivers of success for athletes/coaches?*
  - ... how did your systems help/hinder delivery - with hindsight) what would you repeat/do differently?*
  - ... to what extent did the delivery of these objectives impact on the performance of athletes, coaches, the system/programme, the positive and/or negative impact factors?*

**2. In what ways does the performance environment affect preparation and outcomes?**

*... in essence, what is the NGB doing well? what could it be doing better? what needs a complete overhaul?*

*... how much emphasis and resource do you place on the balance between communication, culture/behaviour and performance monitoring*

**3. How significant are staff working on sport science, medicine, sports psychology and lifestyle on performance?**

*Please give examples including good/bad experiences*

**4. Coaches, support team and athlete performance?**

*... did you inherit, revise or appoint the coaches and systems?*

*... how critical are systems to performance?*

*... how will your learning in this area/from these experiences affect your approach to the next four years planning cycle/run up to the Games in Rio/Commonwealth games etc.?*

### Organisational enablers

**1. How have Governance structures within your NGB impacted on the effective management of your high performance programme?**

*... please go through the positive and/or negative factors?*

*for example the Board, 'old'/new members, perspectives of other staff*

*... would you say there is too much red tape/processes or is it balanced effectively?*

**2. What is your NGB's policy with regard to your high performance programme?**

*... is there a clear/stated policy or does it (to a large extent) just happen?*

*... how is the need/value of performance by elite athletes put across to clubs, members etc. and by whom, when, what for, how forcefully?*

*... is high performance promoted/embraced/central to the way things are done or apart, peripheral?*

**3. Describing the performance management system and how it ensures the effective management of athlete, coach, support staff and PD performance?**

Can the PD describe:

*... how they identify/track what is working/ not..*

*... things that worked/should have worked*

*... how to change things/win people over..?*

*... how lessons related to success/ failure have been absorbed...*

*...how s/he (and team) reacted to things that were not working*

Can CEO adequately summarise NGB HPP process & system

*Does s/he know what s/he doesn't know...what are the 'known unknowns'?*

**4. Most / least effective aspects of your HP strategy?**

*...based on your own feel for things, where did your investment strategy have most impact/least impact in the context of achieving high performance objectives?*

*... what was done well/correctly?*

*... what could you say the NGB 'got away with'?*

*... where did it over-perform? .... under-perform?*

*... what are your main concerns / expectations for coming Olympic cycle?*

**5. What were the five most important critical processes employed in your high performance programme through the London cycle?**

*... how did that work?*

*... how effective was it?*

# IRISH SPORTS COUNCIL: NGB DEBRIEF - 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES

## Appendix 3: Athlete performance by sport: 2012 Olympic Games

| Sport            | Athlete                  | Event               | Performance                    |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Athletics</b> | Jessie Barr              | 4 x 400             | 13 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Athletics        | Claire Bergin            | 4 x 400             | 13 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Athletics        | Michelle Carey           | 4 x 400             | 13 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Athletics        | Marian Andrews Heffernan | 4 x 400             | 13 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Athletics        | Catriona Cuddihy         | 4 x 400             | 13 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Athletics        | Joanne Cuddihy           | 4 x 400             | 13 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Athletics        | Joanne Cuddihy           | 400m                | Semi final (5 <sup>th</sup> )  |
| Athletics        | Derval O'Rourke          | 100m hurdles        | 15 <sup>th</sup> (semi finals) |
| Athletics        | Paul Hession             | 200m                | 27 <sup>th</sup> (round 1)     |
| Athletics        | Ciaran O'Lionaird        | 1,500m              | 39 <sup>th</sup> (round 1)     |
| Athletics        | Stephanie Reilly         | 3,000m steeplechase | 27 <sup>th</sup> (in heats)    |
| Athletics        | Alistair Ian Cragg       | 5,000m              | 17 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Athletics        | Fionnuala Britton        | 5,000m              | 10 <sup>th</sup> (heat)        |
| Athletics        | Fionnuala Britton        | 10,000m             | 15 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Athletics        | Olive Loughnane          | 20km walk           | 13 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Athletics        | Laura Reynolds           | 20km walk           | 20 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Athletics        | Robert Heffernan         | 20km walk           | 9 <sup>th</sup>                |
| Athletics        | Robert Heffernan         | 50km walk           | 4 <sup>th</sup>                |
| Athletics        | Brendan Boyce            | 50km walk           | 29 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Athletics        | Colin Griffin            | 50km walk           | Did not finish                 |
| Athletics        | Linda Byrne              | Marathon            | 66 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Athletics        | Ava Hutchinson           | Marathon            | 68 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Athletics        | Catriona Jennings        | Marathon            | 107 <sup>th</sup>              |
| Athletics        | Mark Keneally            | Marathon            | 57 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Athletics        | Tori Pena                | Pole vault          | No height                      |
| Athletics        | Deidre Ryan              | High jump           | 27 <sup>th</sup> (qualifying)  |
| <b>Badminton</b> | Scott Evans              | Singles             | First round                    |
| Badminton        | Chloe Magee              | Singles             | First round                    |
| <b>Boxing</b>    | Paddy Barnes             | Light Flyweight     | Bronze                         |
| Boxing           | Michael Conlan           | Flyweight           | Bronze                         |
| Boxing           | John Joe Nevin           | Bantamweight        | Silver                         |
| Boxing           | Adam Nolan               | Welterweight        | Round of 16                    |
| Boxing           | Darren O'Neill           | Middleweight        | Round of 16                    |
| Boxing           | Katie Taylor             | Lightweight         | Gold                           |
| <b>Canoeing</b>  | Hannah Craig             | Kayak single slalom | 10 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Canoeing         | Eoin Rheinisch           | Kayak single slalom | 14 <sup>th</sup> (semi finals) |
| Canoeing         | Andrzej Jezierski        | Sprint 200m         | 9 <sup>th</sup>                |
| <b>Cycling</b>   | Martyn Irvine            | Omnium              | 13 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Cycling          | David McCann             | Time trial          | 27 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Cycling          | David McCann             | Road race           | 55 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Cycling          | Daniel Martin            | Road race           | 90 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Cycling          | Nicholas Roche           | Road race           | 89 <sup>th</sup>               |

## IRISH SPORTS COUNCIL: NGB DEBRIEF - 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES

| Sport                    | Athlete                | Event                 | Performance                   |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Equestrian</b>        | Aoife Clark            | Eventing - individual | 7 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Equestrian               | Mark Kyle              | Eventing - individual | 21 <sup>st</sup>              |
| Equestrian               | Joseph Murphy          | Eventing - individual | 14 <sup>th</sup>              |
| Equestrian               | Michael Ryan           | Eventing - individual | No ranking                    |
| Equestrian               | Camilla Spiers         | Eventing - individual | No ranking                    |
| Equestrian               | Aoife Clark            | Eventing - team       | 5 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Equestrian               | Mark Kyle              | Eventing - team       | 5 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Equestrian               | Joseph Murphy          | Eventing - team       | 5 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Equestrian               | Michael Ryan           | Eventing - team       | 5 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Equestrian               | Camilla Spiers         | Eventing - team       | 5 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Equestrian               | Anna Merveldt          | Dressage              | 33 <sup>rd</sup> (grand prix) |
| Equestrian               | Cian O'Connor          | Individual jumping    | Bronze                        |
| Equestrian               | Billy Twomey           | Individual jumping    | 56 <sup>th</sup>              |
| <b>Gymnastics</b>        | Keiran Behan           | ... artistic          | Qualifying round              |
| <b>Judo</b>              | Lisa Kearney           | 48kg                  | Last 16 stage                 |
| <b>Modern pentathlon</b> | Natalya Coyle          | Pentathlon            | 9 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Modern pentathlon        | Arthur Lanigan O'Keefe | Pentathlon            | 25 <sup>th</sup>              |
| <b>Rowing</b>            | Sanita Puspure         | Single Sculls         | 13 <sup>th</sup>              |
| <b>Sailing</b>           | David Burrows          | Star (medal race)     | 10 <sup>th</sup>              |
| Sailing                  | Peter O'Leary          | Star                  | 10 <sup>th</sup>              |
| Sailing                  | James Espey            | Laser                 | 36 <sup>th</sup>              |
| Sailing                  | Analise Murphy         | Laser radial          | 4 <sup>th</sup>               |
| Sailing                  | Scott Flanigan         | 470                   | 23 <sup>rd</sup>              |
| Sailing                  | Ger Owens              | 470                   | 23 <sup>rd</sup>              |
| Sailing                  | Matt McGovern          | 49er                  | 14 <sup>th</sup>              |
| Sailing                  | Ryan Seaton            | 49er                  | 14 <sup>th</sup>              |
| <b>Shooting</b>          | Derek Burnett          | Trap qualification    | 27 <sup>th</sup>              |
| <b>Swimming</b>          | Sycerika McMahon       | 100m breaststroke     | 26 <sup>th</sup>              |
| Swimming                 | Sycerika McMahon       | 200m medley           | 22 <sup>nd</sup>              |
| Swimming                 | Barry Murphy           | 50m freestyle         | 29 <sup>th</sup> (in heats)   |
| Swimming                 | Barry Murphy           | 100m freestyle        | =29 <sup>th</sup> (in heats)  |
| Swimming                 | Grainne Murphy         | 400m freestyle        | 31 <sup>st</sup> (in heats)   |
| Swimming                 | Melanie Nocher         | 100m backstroke       | 33 <sup>rd</sup> (in heats)   |
| Swimming                 | Melanie Nocher         | 200m backstroke       | 34 <sup>th</sup> (in heats)   |
| <b>Triathlon</b>         | Aileen Morrison        | Triathlon             | 43 <sup>rd</sup>              |
| Triathlon                | Gavin Noble            | Triathlon             | 23 <sup>rd</sup>              |

*Note: All positions from BBC final Olympic tables, some positions taken from overall standings*



## Appendix 4: Weak and strong HPP systems

*Weak system - Poor alignment, breaks in connectivity, event peaks, occasional success*



| Role    | Positives                                                                                                                    | Negatives                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| NGB/HPC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strong interest in high performance</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- often little understanding of HP</li> <li>- tendency to confuse profile and relationships with performance</li> <li>- undermines / goes round CEO and PD</li> </ul>             |
| CEO     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- interest in / commitment to HP</li> </ul>                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- poor links to PD</li> <li>- confused demarcation between roles</li> <li>- failure to control board</li> </ul>                                                                   |
| PD      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understanding of/commitment to major event/career path high performance</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- poor links to the coach(es)</li> <li>- failure to gain buy in to career peaks</li> <li>- weak links to athletes</li> <li>- fail to develop sustainable success</li> </ul>       |
| Coaches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strong links to athletes</li> <li>- commitment to high level performance</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- operate independently from NGB,</li> <li>- personal goals for event / own reputation</li> <li>- feel threatened by role of PD</li> <li>- discourage athlete/PD links</li> </ul> |
| Athlete | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strong links to coach</li> <li>- commitment to peak performance</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- doesn't understand HP plan or role of PD</li> <li>- trusts the coach implicitly</li> <li>- peaks too frequently</li> <li>- doesn't learn enough</li> </ul>                      |

*Strong system – Good alignment, role connectivity, career peaks, sustained success*



| Role    | Positives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Negatives                          |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| NGB/HPC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strong interest in and appreciation of high performance requirements</li> <li>- clear understanding of performance targets and commitment to process</li> <li>- supports CEO, PD through to athletes</li> <li>- has clearly defined role</li> </ul> | Minimal / no systematic weaknesses |
| CEO     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strong links to PD and back to NGB/HPC</li> <li>- clear responsibilities, strong leadership, strategic focus</li> </ul>                                                                                                                             | Minimal / no systematic weaknesses |
| PD      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- commitment to career path high HP</li> <li>- good communications – appreciation of need to gain buy in from others</li> <li>- strong links to athletes but does not smother coaches</li> <li>- sustainable success</li> </ul>                       | Minimal / no systematic weaknesses |
| Coaches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strong links to athletes</li> <li>- commitment to high level performance, working to deliver career peaks</li> <li>- given credit for talent development</li> <li>- good relationship with PD</li> </ul>                                            | Minimal / no systematic weaknesses |
| Athlete | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strong links to coach and through to PD</li> <li>- commitment to and understanding of career peaks, HP and PD role</li> <li>- event based learning</li> </ul>                                                                                       | Minimal / no systematic weaknesses |