



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027

Sports Action Plan 2024 – 2027



Department of Tourism, Culture,
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

Foreword by Ministers Catherine Martin and Thomas Byrne

An ambitious vision for Irish sport is set out under the National Sports Policy, centred on getting more people participating in sport as active and social participants.

Much progress has been made in making that vision a reality and the publication of the Sports Action Plan 2024-2027 both illustrates the significant progress made in sport since 2018 and sets out a detailed plan of action points up to 2027 with a view to making further progress.

As a Government, we are committed to providing everyone, of every age and ability, with the opportunity to participate in sport and physical activity. For example, we know that there is a participation drop-off in later adolescent years and the Sports Action Plan sets out actions to address this problem.

We also want to reach a point in Ireland where a person's disability presents no obstacle to being physically active.

Other areas addressed in this plan include planning for our future facilities' needs, where to locate them and what type will be needed given the changing population dynamics; deepening cooperation between schools and sports clubs; and how best to prepare for the climate driven environmental sustainability issues that will increasingly impact on the operation of the sports sector here in Ireland and overseas.

As a nation, we watched with pride and awe at the performance of Team Ireland at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris. We know what is possible to achieve with determination, commitment and dedication.

An accelerated implementation of our High Performance Strategy is firmly on our agenda. Enhanced support will be needed in the coming years to enable National Governing Bodies of Sport to carry through well-funded, stable high performance programmes as we look ahead to the Los Angeles Games in 2028.

Since the launch of the National Sports Policy in 2018, most of its 57 Actions have since been completed. Some actions, by their nature, will never truly be completed and merit attention on an ongoing basis.

In publishing the Sports Action Plan 2024-2027, we are setting out a roadmap for the continued advancement of Irish sport and look forward to seeing the ambitions of the plan realised.



Minister for Tourism, Culture,
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport
and Media
Catherine Martin TD



Minister of State for Sport,
Physical Education and the
Gaeltacht
Thomas Byrne TD

Sports Leadership Group Members 2024

Nina Arwitz	Volunteer Ireland
Karl Dunne	Ireland Active
Sarah Keane	Olympic Federation of Ireland
Paula Keatley	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
Deirdre Lavin	Sligo Local Sports Partnership
Dr. Una May	Sport Ireland
Stephen McNamara	Paralympics Ireland
Ciara Molloy	Department of Education
John Mullholland	Laois County Council (CCMA Rep)
Mary O'Connor	Federation of Irish Sport
Shane O'Connor	OFI Athletes Commission
Brenda O'Donnell	Active Disability Ireland
Colin O'Hehir	Department of Health
Cian Ó Lionáin	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media
Alan Quinlan	Broadcaster & Former Ireland Rugby international

Glossary

CSPPA	Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study
DAF	Dormant Accounts Fund
DoE	Department of Education
DRCD	Department of Rural and Community Development
DTCAGSM	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
EU	European Union
FAI	Football Association of Ireland
GIA	Get Ireland Active
I-PARC	Irish Physical Activity Research Collaboration
ISM	Irish Sports Monitor
LGBTI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex+
LSP	Local Sports Partnership
LSSIF	Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund
NGB	National Governing Body
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSP	National Sports Policy
PE	Physical Education
SAP	Sports Action Plan
SCEP	Sports Capital and Equipment Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
SHARE	SportHub: Alliance for Regional development in Europe
SITE	Sport Ireland Targeted Equipment
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UN	United Nations
VAT	Value Added Tax
VI	Volunteer Ireland

1

Investment in Sport

The level of Government investment in sport has never been higher and the headline target of doubling the annual sports budget allocation to €220 million during the term of the National Sports Policy has been achieved ahead of schedule. With a projected continuing stability in the public finances, combined with an ongoing demonstration of sporting success and the broader wellbeing benefits accruing to individuals and communities countrywide from this investment, we can be confident of continued Government support for sport.



Notwithstanding the positive impacts and benefits resulting from the aggregate increases that have been delivered in consecutive years, we believe that those impacts and benefits can be magnified still further by the implementation of a multi-annual approach to the hitherto annual core grant allocations to our sporting bodies. From 2025 onwards, we intend to move to a three-year budget allocation system to facilitate greater planning certainty by our sporting bodies and affording them enhanced opportunities to recruit and retain the required staffing levels.

Longer-term, investment planning considerations will feature prominently in the period ahead. Positioning the sector to avail of new and emerging funding opportunities at EU level especially, allied to expanding the potential contribution of philanthropy, will also be important actions to be pursued. Through the means of Sport Satellite Accounts, an instrument that is being increasingly deployed across the European Union, the potential policy-making benefit accruing from a robust statistical framework for measuring the economic importance of the Irish sport industry will also be explored.

Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
1	To enhance planning capability and operational stability of our sporting bodies, we will implement a multi-annual approach to core funding allocations to sporting bodies, subject to budget availability and ongoing adherence by the sporting bodies to the prevailing governance requirements.	DTCAGSM/ Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
2	To drive increased collaboration between a range of different sports, investigate the potential role and shared benefits that would accrue from the establishment of a dedicated joint fund, including a potential involvement by business or individual donors or philanthropy generally.	Federation of Irish Sport	All Relevant Stakeholders
3	Promote the development of sectoral knowledge and capability to avail of sport funding opportunities in EU programmes (ERDF, ESF+, Erasmus+, SHARE).	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
4	Explore the potential benefit of developing Satellite Accounts for the sports sector in order to increase understanding of its value to the Irish economy.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders

2

Active and Social Participation

Although the pandemic disrupted our participation plans for a time, spanning the period 2020 to 2022, the resilience of the sports sector shone throughout. Even though the damage inflicted on the sector has not yet been completely reversed, most notably in relation to volunteering levels, active participation in sport has again returned to the pre-pandemic (2019) level of 46%. By the end of 2023, the active participation position showed a slight increase to 47%, which represents a most positive and welcome development.

An ongoing commitment to the 2027 participation targets, supported by a number of key measures and initiatives as are outlined in this Action Plan, are required to move progressively forward towards the overall targets – 60% for active participation and 55% for social participation. These targets are undoubtedly highly stretched, challenging and perhaps only fully achievable outside the timeframe identified a number of years ago. It is however the case that their centrality as a sports policy objective remains wholly justified and laudable for a wide range of societal benefits, both for individual wellbeing and more broadly for Irish society, socially and economically.

Several of the important actions planned for the next few years are aimed at addressing the sports volunteering situation, building on the pivotal role to be played by Sport Ireland's new Policy on Volunteering in Sport. On the active participation side, we will develop Local Sports Plans in each Local Authority area, to aim in particular for an improved level of participation in sport amongst children and young adults. We will also implement our new National Swimming Strategy, a priority sport identified in the National Sports Policy 2018-2027. Implementation of Embracing Ireland's Outdoors: National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027 will also be prioritised.



More broadly, achieving a more active population across the entire life-cycle from children to the elderly requires a role for all of the sports in which people engage, embracing the wide range of individual sports as well as team based sports. Showcasing, through sports reporting and broadcasting, the wide range of sports on offer to the entire population is an important factor for driving increased participation and the sustainability of sporting organisations, aims which will be assisted by the successful implementation of Recommendation 7-9 of the Future of Media Commission Report (2023): Implementation Strategy and Action Plan.

Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
5	Support the roll-out of Local Sports Plans in each Local Authority area, aligning with the consultative approach, vision and objectives set down in the National Sports Policy 2018-2027.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
6	Facilitate and drive increased levels of volunteering opportunities and sports club social and playing memberships through supporting increased collaboration between NGBs, LSPs and community-based sports organisations such as the community sports hubs, local volunteer centres and youth services.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
7	Prioritise reducing participation drop-off among adolescents and young adults through a cross-sport collaborative project with selected NGBs (indoor/outdoor/team/individual) and LSPs to explore ways of promoting sustained youth participation across a diverse mix of sports in both community and educational settings.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
8	Develop a Physical Literacy Plan 2024-2028 to advise on the roll-out of physical literacy programmes for adolescent children and young adults in both community and educational settings.	Sport Ireland/ DoE	All Relevant Stakeholders
9	In pursuit of the strategic objectives of Sport Ireland's Policy of Volunteering in Sport, explore the potential to develop an accredited, optional volunteer management training programme for inclusion and validation on the National Framework of Qualifications.	Volunteer Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
10	Implement measures and initiatives to address the significant participation gradients persisting amongst those from disadvantaged backgrounds, persons with a disability, the LGBTI+ community, the Traveller community and other ethnic minorities. Leveraging the opportunities presented by the new ESF+ programme, 'Sport 4 Empowerment', will be a key part of our implementation strategy.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
11	Provide guidance and support to sporting organisations to increase the involvement of people with disabilities in volunteer roles in sport. Enhance the visibility of these volunteering opportunities.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
12	Implement the National Swimming Strategy.	DTCAGSM/ Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders

3

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Promoting greater equality, diversity and inclusion in sport, throughout all parts of the sector, remains an over-arching priority that will guide the implementation of this plan. This imperative is especially applicable to disability sport where there is an enduring participation gradient existing between those persons with either a long-term illness or a disability and those without such illness or disability. It is to be understood that the term disability sport is not confined to sporting activity in a formal or competitive setting but instead encompasses sport and physical activity in its broadest meaning that includes movement and activity that contributes positively to a person's physical and mental wellbeing. Addressing this gradient is a matter of the utmost concern to the Government.

Research undertaken by Sport Ireland indicates that the gradient currently stands at 20% (2023), compared to a pre-pandemic (2019) level of 17%. It is abundantly clear that the position for those with a long-term illness or disability remains substantially more acute and challenging than for others. Given the persistence of the current gradient, despite record funding supports, the task of achieving the established 40% participation target by 2027 is becoming ever more challenging and requires an additional impetus and focus across the entire sporting landscape, involving shorter and longer term approaches.



Shorter-term, in line with the Government's heightened emphasis on delivering meaningful and active participation of disabled persons in society, we will seek to promote greater awareness of available participation opportunities locally, both existing and those to be developed in the period ahead. We will also work closely with the sporting bodies with a view to ensuring that the evident necessity to achieve greater inclusivity in sport across a wider range of individual sports especially becomes an intrinsic part of the design and practical delivery of the sport offering. Longer-term, we consider it timely to review the current approach to disability sport in order to determine the possibilities of introducing additional measures and targeted incentives to accelerate awareness and cultural change and also to address any gaps identified in the current approach.

In the period ahead, to provide an immediate and additional momentum we intend to appoint a specific Disability in Sport Lead within Sport Ireland and we plan to leverage maximum benefit from the Get Ireland Active database of sporting and recreational facilities and amenities.

The challenge of securing greater inclusivity in sport extends beyond disability sport. In particular, Sport Ireland's Policy on Women in Sport outlines the Government's and Sport Ireland's commitment to women in sport to ensure women and girls have an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential, while enjoying lifelong participation and involvement in sport. Other societal groups, for example ethnic minorities, LGBTI+, the Traveller community, the elderly and those of disadvantaged status, must also be afforded the opportunity to participate in sport and enjoy the resultant benefits.

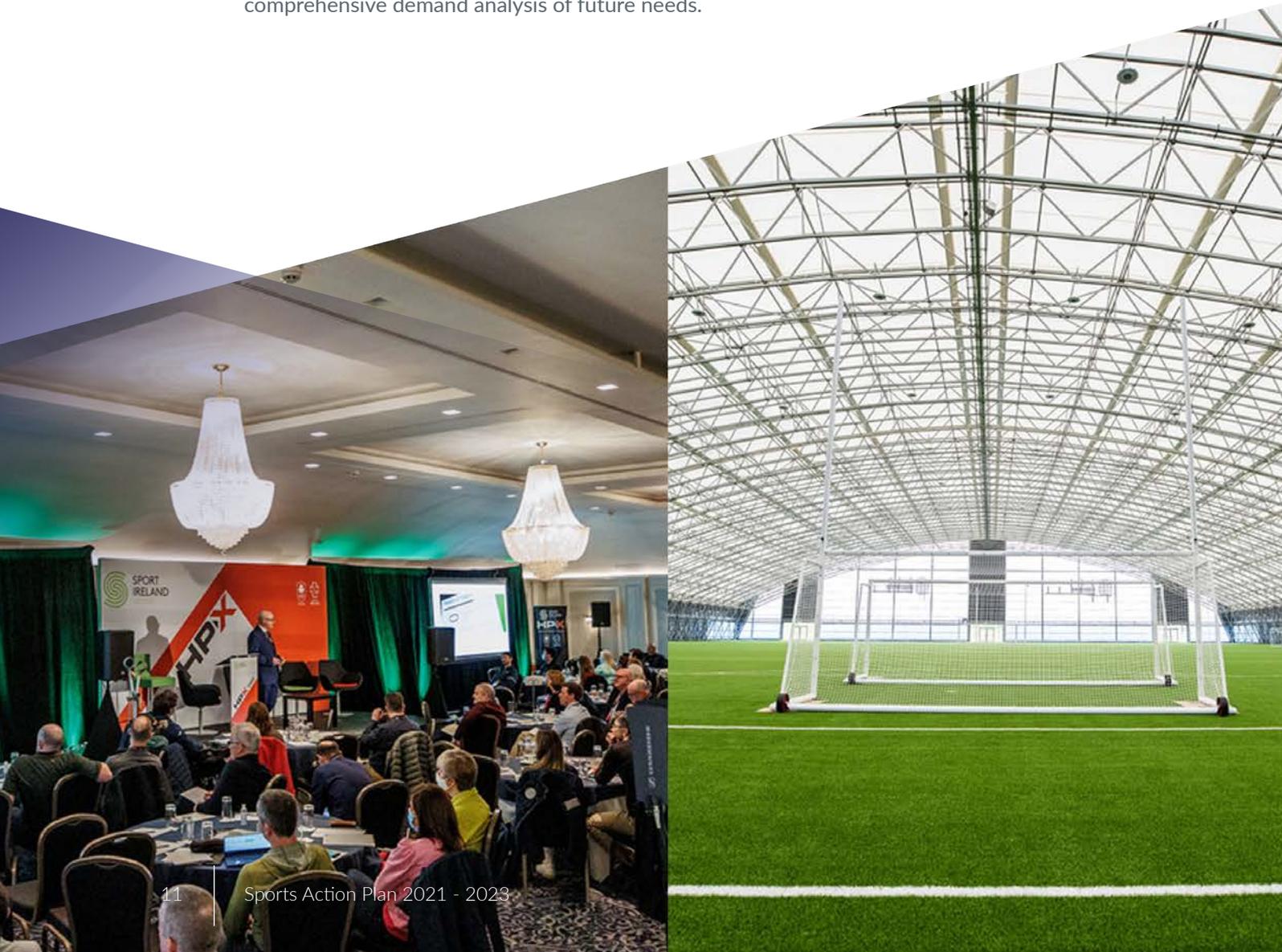
Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
13	Appoint a Disability in Sport Lead within Sport Ireland to provide focused leadership and directed investment to address the NSP targets for increased participation among those with a long-term illness or disability.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
14	Review the current approach to the provision of disability sport to develop enhanced measures and incentives to promote more local participation opportunities.	DTCAGSM/ Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
15	Develop and strengthen the uptake by NGBs and LSPs of the Get Ireland Active Database and promote a cross-sectoral approach to information-sharing, for the benefit of all with an interest to participate in sport and physical activity.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
16	Deploy, through multiple communication platforms tailored for ethnic groups and communities, the Get Ireland Active Database of sporting and recreational facilities and amenities to increase the profile and visibility of inclusive participation opportunities. The successful integration of people new to a community into their local sporting communities will be prioritised in this context.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
17	Implement Sport Ireland's Policies and Action Plans on Diversity and Inclusion, Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities, and Women in Sport.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
18	Ensure that 40% gender representation on the boards of national sports organisations is both achieved and maintained with 50% of State funding (excluding Women in Sport funding) to be withheld from National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships until such a time as 40% gender representation is achieved.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders

4

Facilities and Events

Proximity of sports facilities, whether located in a formal club setting or located in a local public park or other amenity area, is undoubtedly conducive to attracting prospective participants to sport. There is an increasing level of participation in so-called self-organised sport and physical activity in community and public amenity settings. The Irish Sports Monitor demonstrates that personal exercise is consistently the most commonly engaged form of sport and physical activity. We will therefore invest in the provision of publicly accessible, low-cost permanent sport equipment.

A changing demographic profile and personal sporting preferences will inevitably require periodic adjustments in the policy response to supports for facilities provision, such as the need to respond effectively to the differing female/male needs in facility layout and equipment. Similar considerations will arise in relation to disability/accessibility. Moreover, the need to adopt an ever more strategic approach in the location of facilities will become more pronounced. The development of new clubs and addressing capacity issues in existing clubs to boost club membership levels will also need to be considered. It is intended therefore to complete a comprehensive demand analysis of future needs.



The continued development of the Sport Ireland Campus will remain a high priority. Several important projects are already in the development pipeline and others will be progressed in accordance with the Campus Masterplan Vision as funding becomes available.

The holding of small-scale international sporting events at both the Sport Ireland Campus and in other locations countrywide can contribute significantly to the development of the Irish sport sector. Considerable opportunities exist in this regard with consequential tourism and associated benefits to local communities and we will financially support the holding of such events in the coming years.

Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
19	Invest in low cost sport capital and equipment grants for the purchase and installation of permanent sport equipment that can be placed on land which will be available for community use. In tandem with this investment, funding to be made available to promote nature connectedness with a specific focus on supporting the biodiversity of the environments on such land.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
20	To better understand the specific needs and requirements of women and girls in sporting facilities and spaces, undertake research on the scope for introducing design enhancements.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
21	Undertake a demand analysis of existing capital support schemes to ascertain the level of funding required to meet current and future levels of demand from sporting organisations, sport types and cohorts of the population that have traditionally been under-represented in sport. The data content and role of the Get Ireland Active database will form part of this analysis.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
22	Implement a sustained, multi-annual capital development programme to secure the progressive realisation of the Sport Ireland Campus Masterplan Vision, prioritised in accordance with the needs of the athletes and the growth of sport in Ireland.	DTCAGSM/ Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
23	Following on from the publication of the Major International Sports Events Policy and Strategy, explore options for specific legacy criteria in the assessment process and delivery of events in order to maximise enduring participation benefits.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
24	Establish a funding scheme to support the hosting of smaller scale international sporting events.	DTCAGSM/ Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders

5

Sport and Education

There is a strong linkage and many common areas of interest between sport and education. As a Government, we are intent on working to promote life-long participation in physical activity and sport, for all sectors of society, and communities. Encouraging and promoting the personal health, wellbeing, and physical activity of our young people is a key component of the overall strategy, which has a particular relevance and importance to those in the educational setting.



During the period of this Action Plan, we will strive to maximise the level of physical activity in our schools. A number of specific initiatives will be pursued in this regard, including in particular the further development of the Active School Flag initiative, at both primary and at post-primary level especially.

We will also seek to support engagement between sports clubs and schools as well as supporting greater collaboration between schools and Local Sports Partnerships. Greater sharing of sports facilities between sports clubs and schools will be prioritised for attention, including the need to secure an increased use of school facilities outside of school hours.

Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
25	Support the growth and development of the Active School Flag programme at primary and post-primary levels.	DoE	All Relevant Stakeholders
26	Encourage LSPs and NGBs to work collaboratively with all schools, including those engaging with the Active School Flag programme.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
27	Increase use of school sports facilities through the promotion of the Procedures on the use of School Buildings and School Sports Facilities outside of School Hours document, broadening awareness and improving access for local communities.	DoE	All Relevant Stakeholders
28	Identify a lead co-ordinator within Sport Ireland who can engage with, and assist, LSPs and NGBs in their communications with schools regarding physical activity initiatives, to include communication with Active School Flag and schools engaging with that programme.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
29	Consult with schools and relevant stakeholders, to assess the need for guidance on primary and post-primary school uniforms to better enable learners' engagement in physical activity throughout the school day.	DoE	All Relevant Stakeholders
30	Produce a report and consider recommendations arising from the National Forum on Physical Education.	DoE	All Relevant Stakeholders

6

Sport and Sustainability

The goal of carbon neutrality by 2050 demands collective action by all sectors. Sport must, as with other sectors, progressively move ever closer towards carbon neutrality in the years ahead. It will be challenging and will pose issues and difficulties, many of which will likely require changes in the way things have always been done or organised. There is however no reason to believe that the sector cannot rise to the challenge and deliver the required outcome. The European Commission's 2023 report 'Sport's contribution to the European Green Deal: a sport sector playbook' highlights a range of key initiatives and steps for consideration in this context.



Effective planning and close consultation will be essential. These twin requirements will underpin the actions that we intend to pursue in this area in the coming period. We must also recognise that sport, through its wide audience reach across its participants, its fan base and its media followers, is uniquely well placed to drive environmental improvements and inspire sustainability action generally. We will seek to ensure that this potential is kept to the forefront in delivering our planned actions.

The provision of practical supports and guidance to the sector will be of paramount importance. Sporting organisations will need to implement a variety of sustainability measures that reduce energy and water use and prevent wasteful consumption of plastics, textiles and other resources. Expert support from such entities as the SEAI and the EPA will be enlisted in this context.

Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
31	Building on work already undertaken on the mapping of the NSP to the UN SDGs, establish a cross-sectoral Sport and Environmental Sustainability Working Group to assist, guide and optimise the sector's development and contribution to reducing the climate impact of active sport participation and fan travel.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
32	Convene a Sport and Environmental Sustainability Conference to identify and consider key challenges arising for sport in order to inform the Sport and Environmental Sustainability Working Group of the main tasks to be addressed in developing effective guidance material.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
33	Establish methodologies to promote environmental sustainability within the sport sector in line with EU best practices, utilising existing networks to leverage, monitor, report, and exchange good practices.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
34	Assist sporting organisations, including National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships, to develop sustainability plans for reducing the carbon footprint associated with their activities, including participation and attendance at their sporting events.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
35	Review effectiveness of existing sustainability provisions in Departmental sports capital funding schemes and implement necessary adjustments in succeeding rounds to ensure best practice relating to environmental sustainability.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
36	In line with the Major International Sports Events Policy and Strategy Framework, implement an approach to the attraction and holding of such events in Ireland that enhances the sustainability and legacy benefits for sport and related sectors such as tourism whilst minimising associated climate impacts such as transport emissions, waste generation and the construction of new sports facilities.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
37	Develop guidance on climate adaptation for infrastructure development and for sporting activity addressing changes in temperature, precipitation, and flood risk.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders

7

Governance and Capacity-Building

Effective governance and robust capacity-building are foundational to the successful implementation of the National Sports Policy 2018-2027. Strong governance ensures that our actions are guided by principles of transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership, while capacity-building empowers the sport sector, including institutions, communities, and individuals to deliver on our goals with confidence and competence.



Sport sends a very positive message to its stakeholders on implementing good governance when the majority of the sector have self-declared compliance with the Governance Code for Sport. However, good governance is not a destination in itself but is a continuous journey and a means towards ensuring long-term success, facilitating organisational performance and the achievement of agreed objectives and an overall mission. Good governance is crucially important for the effective and efficient running of sport, providing assurance to stakeholders that sport is in safe hands.

The development of stronger governance in sport is therefore essential at both an organisation and system level to ensure public trust and confidence for the sports system. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement, embracing digital transformation, and adhering to best practices in governance, we can create a resilient and dynamic sport sector capable of responding to emerging challenges and opportunities. The following actions reinforce our commitment to enhancing governance frameworks and building the necessary capacities to support sustainable development and success in the sport sector.

Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
38	Continuously review and update the Governance Code for Sport to incorporate new governance trends.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
39	Develop a comprehensive sport sector workforce strategy aimed at enhancing education, learning and development opportunities to support structural stability and resilience.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
40	Implement measures to promote and build sectoral capacity and capability, in areas such as digital transformation, marketing and communications, sponsorship, governance, event and programme management and modernising NGB member and volunteer experiences and services.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
41	Support sectoral efforts to increase the number of women officiating and coaching (particularly in high performance sport), including female teachers in schools.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
42	Continue to prioritise the provision of training and resources to support the development of research and evaluation frameworks and tools.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
43	Promote and monitor the adoption of the National Code of Conduct Template to foster a culture of respect, integrity and fairness, including the establishment of a representative Respect Officials Working Group to enhance respect across all sports.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders

8

International

The international dimension to sport continues to exert a strong influence on our sporting sector. A wide variety of issues and challenges, for example gender equality, human rights in and through sport, doping in sport, integrity in sport, racism in sport, transgender participation, abuse of officials, violence against women, and governance, all have an international aspect and are frequently the subject of ongoing consideration and debate in a range of international arenas. Such debates invariably have implications for the Irish sporting context, making it essential that Ireland's voice is heard in those settings. Over the course of this plan, there will be many opportunities each year to express that voice in a variety of international fora. Ireland will assume responsibility for the Presidency of the European Union in 2026, an important role that will require detailed planning and sectoral consultation.



Many of our sporting bodies are affiliated to international federations and are already making effective contributions to decision-making within their own sports. Subject always to full respect for the independence and autonomy of the sports movement, there is a compelling case for continued encouragement and support for an ever stronger Irish voice in decision-making at the international level.

Even our traditional sports, such as the Gaelic Games, have an international perspective. The special designation granted by UNESCO to camogie and hurling is an important and valuable international recognition of their unique cultural heritage for Ireland, and indeed overseas. We share the view of UNESCO that these two games merit particular safeguarding and development and to that end we plan to work with the key stakeholders concerned in developing a range of initiatives and supports to deliver that outcome.

More broadly, given the key role of sports diplomacy in building bridges, promoting dialogue, and fostering cooperation among different countries, cultures, and communities, we intend to play a more active role in the various institutions concerned and will in particular become a member of the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport. Delivering, in collaboration with the sector, an innovative EU Presidency Programme in 2026 will also be prioritised.

Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
44	Building on the designation by UNESCO of Hurling and Camogie on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, promote the safeguarding and development of these games domestically and internationally, especially in schools, clubs and areas where the games are not very strong or not currently played.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
45	Ireland will become a member of the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport in order to contribute to, and benefit from, multi-lateral dialogue between public authorities, sports federations and NGOs. This will contribute to better governance, with the aim of making sport more ethical, more inclusive and safer.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
46	Encourage and support national sporting organisations to seek and attain, where appropriate, representation in their international sporting federations.	DTCAGSM/ Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
47	Examine the merit and feasibility of establishing an independent anti-doping agency and progress consideration of Ireland's signature and ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders

Annex 1

Key Performance Indicators and Targets

Key Performance Indicators and Targets – Active Participation				
Key Performance Indicators	Baseline 2017	Targets 2023	Outcome 2023	Targets 2027
Increased number of adults regularly playing sport	43%	47%	47%	60%
Elimination of active sport participation gradient between men and women	4.50%	2.50%	2.90%	0%
Reduced levels of adult sedentarism	22%	18%	19%	15%
Increased number of children regularly playing sport in the community				
Primary	74% (2018)	-	76% (2022)	78%
Post-Primary	58% (2018)	-	74% (2022)	76%
Increased number of adults from the lowest income quartile regularly participating in sport	27%	-	29%	33%
Increased participation in sport among those with a long term illness or disability	29%	34%	32%	40%

Key Performance Indicators and Targets - Social Participation				
Key Performance Indicators	Baseline 2017	Targets 2023	Outcome 2023	Targets 2027
Increased number of adults regularly involved socially in sport through volunteering, club membership and/or attendance	45%	50%	45%	55%
Increased club membership	34%	36%	35%	40%
Increased attendance at sporting events	19%	22%	20%	25%
Increased number of people regularly volunteering in sport	11%	13%	11%	15%

Key Performance Indicators and Targets - Governance				
Key Performance Indicators	Baseline 2017	Targets 2023	Outcome 2023	Targets 2027
Increase in number of NGBs and LSPs adopting the Governance Code for Sport	12%	100%	95%	100%
NGBs and LSPs achieving Gender Balance in Board membership.*	Not Set	100%	77%	100%

* Gender Balance defined as a minimum 40% representation of women and men on the Board.

Key Performance Indicators and Targets – High Performance				
Key Performance Indicators	Baseline 2017	Targets 2024	Outcome 2024	Targets 2028
Increase in number of medals at successive Olympics and Paralympics	13	17-23	13	20-60
Number of Olympics and Paralympics events with Irish in Top 10 positions/Finals	49	45-55	85	49-60
Country ranking in Olympics Medal Table	62	55	19	Top 50
Country ranking in Paralympics Medal Table	28	25	55	Top 20
Increase in number of medals at junior & senior European and World level	225	270	361 (As of Sept 2024)	290

Annex 2

Progress Report 2021-2023

Implementation of the National Sports Policy 2018-2027 (NSP) and the Sports Action Plan 2021-2023 (SAP)

Introduction

In November 2021 the Sports Action Plan 2021-2023 (SAP) was published outlining key actions to be implemented over the period to end 2023. That plan aimed to advance the ambitious 10-year policy objectives set out in the 2018 National Sports Policy (NSP), which was subsequently expanded on in the Programme for Government published in mid-2020. The SAP was based around seven thematic areas and this progress report is similarly structured.

The COVID-19 pandemic straddled a large part of the three-year duration of the SAP and impacted deeply and adversely on the capacity of the sports sector. Those unprecedented circumstances dictated the necessity for a priority focus to be put on ensuring the sector's stability and gradual recovery. Resources had to be allocated to pandemic management activities, both internally within the Department and Sport Ireland as well as externally across all of the national sporting organisations. This shift inevitably had a detrimental effect on other planned actions.

Notwithstanding that detrimental impact, significant progress was made on the three high-level NSP goals, namely:

Participation: by the end of 2023, Sport Ireland's Irish Sports Monitor report showed nearly two million adults in Ireland participate in sport every week - more than ever before. Regular participation rates have grown from a low of 40% at the peak of the pandemic in 2021 to 47%, while the difference in sports participation rates between men and women in 2023 is the narrowest on record, at just under 3%. This is largely due to women's sports participation increasing by 6% between 2022 and 2023 - 46% for women compared to 49% for men.

High Performance: by the end of 2023, a new High Performance Strategy 2021-2032 was in place with record levels of funding being allocated to our athletes and being delivered on a multi-annual basis to enhance their preparations for major international sporting events such as the Olympics/Paralympics in Paris 2024, Los Angeles 2028 and Brisbane in 2032.

Capacity: by the end of 2023, the vast majority (95%) of Ireland's national sporting organisations had self-declared compliance with the Governance Code for Sport compared to 52% at end 2020. At year-end 2023, significant milestones were achieved, including female representation on the board of every funded sporting organisation in the country and an overall increase of women on boards in the sport sector in Ireland to 44%. Considerable progress has been made since 2019, when females made up an average of only 24% of boards in the sector.

These improvements are a testament to the resilience, passion and commitment of all who work in Irish sport. They were also facilitated by increased Government funding for the sector. Ensuring the ongoing demonstration of the benefits associated with sport remained at the top of the delivery agenda. Throughout the period of the SAP, the upward funding trend was consistently maintained with an eye towards achieving the overarching goal of doubling overall investment in sport over the 10-year lifespan of the National Sports Policy to the end of 2027. By the end of 2023, a total allocation of €209 million had been secured for sport in 2024, compared to €110 million at the start of the NSP in 2018.

While substantial progress has been made in completing much of what the SAP set out to do, it remains the case that further progress must still be made across a number of areas, especially in relation to participation levels amongst a range of key target groups such as people with disabilities. Other groups such as the elderly, the disadvantaged, the LGBTI+ community and migrants must also be prioritised for funding and other supports in the coming years. The positive mental and physical wellbeing benefits to be gained from sport should be available to all.

Continuing to support high performance sport in Ireland will also need to receive priority attention, focused around delivery of the Sport Ireland High Performance Strategy 2021-2032. The importance of Government funding was apparent in Team Ireland's performance in Paris 2024, an event that inspired national pride across every section of Irish society and which illustrated once more the value and esteem in which Irish people hold their athletes to whom ultimate credit is deserved.

Thematic Area Overview

The following overview gives a summary flavour of the work undertaken in the period concerned although it is to be noted that the nature of many of the actions are inherently of an ongoing nature rather than projects with defined start and end points.

1. COVID-19 Recovery Priorities 2021

From the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, sporting activities were significantly disrupted by a series of restrictions aimed at controlling the spread of the virus. Indoor sports, in particular, faced prolonged closures and greater challenges compared to outdoor activities. Managing these varied impacts was a complex and extended task, with the sector's viability consistently at the forefront of our efforts.

Despite these challenges, the government provided substantial financial support to the sport sector, with €85 million invested as COVID supports over the period 2020-2022. This investment was vital in ensuring that the sport sector survived and were in a position to continue in operation after the pandemic. All of the national sporting organisations came through the pandemic, certainly damaged from the experience but happily still operating for the benefit of their membership and supporters.

Ref.	Action
1.1	<p>Continue to work closely with the sporting bodies and provide support, financial and otherwise, for the continued delivery of their sports.</p> <p>€85 million in COVID-19 Resilience Funding was delivered to support the existential threat to National Governing Bodies and their club networks, allowing sports organisations to offset significant losses and plan the return of their sport post-COVID. Additionally, Sport Ireland delivered a range of organisational development support services and education/training to the sport sector during this time.</p> <p>Full engagement was maintained throughout the period of the pandemic, particularly via a representative Expert Group on Return to Sport which was established to facilitate the safe return of sporting activity on a gradual basis in accordance with the prevailing public health situation.</p>

Ref.	Action
1.2	<p>Engage with the sporting bodies for the purposes of informing the development of tailored proposals and approaches for future COVID-19 mitigation measures for both indoor and outdoor sports.</p> <p>See 1.1. In addition, the Expert Group developed extensive guidance for the sport sector on assessing and mitigating the risk of infection at sports training and competitive events. The Expert Group also developed a range of operational protocols that enabled the gradual return of sporting activity within the context of the Government's overall pandemic management approach. The Expert Group met on over 50 occasions during the pandemic. Sport Ireland successfully worked closely with the sector to ensure proposals and protocols for pausing sport involvement and the safe return to sport were in place, should the need arise in the future.</p>
1.3	<p>Identify means of supporting NGBs in promoting the growth and recovery of club memberships.</p> <p>Grant assistance of €85 million was provided to NGBs to support their continued operation. Financial support was provided via specific COVID Funds, Dormant Accounts funding, Core funding and indeed, Capital Funding (SITE). In addition, Sport Ireland supported the promotion of National Governing Bodies and Clubs through campaigns such as "Let's get Back", European Week of Sport and the Winter Initiative.</p>
1.4	<p>Establish a Disability Sport Fund to support local disability initiatives.</p> <p>A Disability Sport Fund was established to support local disability initiatives. The fund provided a total of €4 million over 2022 and 2023 to a variety of disability projects across more than 1,000 sports clubs countrywide.</p>
1.5	<p>Develop and implement a National Swimming Strategy to provide additional swimming opportunities indoors and outdoors.</p> <p>National Swimming Strategy completed and officially launched in 2024.</p>
1.6	<p>Continue to work with the sporting bodies to facilitate the safe return of spectators at sporting events, for the benefit of fans, clubs and sporting bodies.</p> <p>The safe and effective return of spectators was achieved on a gradual basis throughout 2021 especially. Some outdoor sporting activities were amongst the earliest to return.</p>
1.7	<p>Deliver an inaugural Winter Initiative for Sport in 2021 to encourage and support enhanced membership and participation in sports clubs, which will aid the recovery of the sector.</p> <p>Winter Initiatives were delivered via the National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships across 2021, 2022 and 2023, providing increased participation opportunities for the public. The most recent 2023-24 Winter Initiative included over 400 events or programmes across the NGB and LSP network.</p>
1.8	<p>Work with NGBs to promote the recovery and safe return of indoor sporting activities.</p> <p>The Department and Sport Ireland worked collaboratively with the relevant NGBs on a range of operational protocols which facilitated their gradual, ultimately complete, operational return in 2022. All sports concerned successfully recovered and returned.</p> <p>Sport Ireland successfully worked closely with the sector to ensure proposals and protocols for pausing sport involvement and the safe return to sport were in place, should the need arise in the future.</p>

2. Communications and Information

In December 2022, the Government's decision to establish a Ministerial position with responsibility for both Sport and Physical Education across two separate Departments, marked a significant step towards enhancing cross-departmental collaboration. This collaboration helped to progress a number of shared interests, notably a physical literacy consensus statement, promoting ways to maximise children's physical activity throughout the school day and to encourage greater engagement between sports clubs and schools.

The all-Ireland physical literacy consensus statement was developed and launched in October 2022, to foster lifelong participation in physical activity and sport for all.

Additionally, a national code of conduct template was introduced in 2023 to promote respect, integrity, and fairness within the sporting community, addressing and eliminating abuse towards referees, officials, coaches, players, and participants.

Furthermore, a National Geodatabase of Sport and Recreation Facilities and Amenities (Get Ireland Active) was launched in October 2023. The database contained over 10,000 opportunities to be active at the time of its launch with additional opportunities being added on an ongoing basis.

Ref.	Action
2.1	<p>Undertake a multi-annual, nationwide communications campaign to support the delivery of the National Sports Policy, fostering lifelong involvement in lifetime-friendly sport and fitness and highlighting awareness of the NSP's core values, rationales and messages about the importance of sport – recreational and competitive – to a healthy population. This campaign will focus especially on women, minority communities, people with disabilities and communities with lower levels of participation.</p> <p>Sport Ireland has developed an array of communications campaigns across the timeframe of the SAP to target specific population groups. Most recently "Her Moves" was launched in 2023, designed to inspire and support more teenage girls to be active. In November 2022, Sport Ireland launched "It's My Time", a campaign to encourage activity levels in women over 40. In September 2022, Sport Ireland also launched our "Changing the Game" campaign to communicate and encourage the "sport for all ethos". Of note in 2021, was the "Let's Get Back" campaign. Campaigns such as these and others (Women in Sport Week, Pride Month, HerOutdoors Week, European Week of Sport) maintain population awareness about the importance of sport.</p>
2.2	<p>Develop a physical literacy consensus statement and promote the adoption of physical literacy in sport and PE. Introduce a means to regularly assess and drive the adoption and implementation of this statement.</p> <p>Sport Ireland, in collaboration with Sport Northern Ireland, developed and launched an All-Island Physical Literacy Consensus Statement in October 2022. This statement aims to promote a culture of lifelong participation in physical activity and sport for all. Training for the sector was piloted for delivery in 2023 and its ongoing implementation continues to be a priority action.</p>

Ref.	Action
2.3	<p>In line with relevant national strategies of both the Department of Justice and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth undertake an information campaign highlighting the unacceptability of prejudice, racism, homophobia and all forms of discrimination in sport, supported by the ethical practice in sport programme / values based sport.</p> <p>A National Code of Conduct template was completed and launched in 2023. Its application is being promoted across all NGBs on an ongoing basis. This initiative aims to foster a culture of respect, integrity, and fairness within the sporting community by addressing and eliminating abuse towards referees, officials, coaches, players, and all participants involved. The newly created code of conduct template sets forth a set of guidelines and principles that promotes the behaviour and conduct expected from athletes, coaches, parents/guardians, supporters, referees/officials, and club members, regardless of the sporting environment.</p> <p>As outlined in 2.1, Sport Ireland also launched the “Changing the Game” campaign in September 2022 to communicate and encourage the “Sport for All” ethos. Additionally, Sport Ireland developed two diversity and inclusion ethical decision-making videos.</p>
2.4	<p>Develop and promote a publicly accessible National Geodatabase of Recreation Amenities, which will include the mapping of indoor and outdoor sports facilities. This Database will enable local communities to drive participation in local sporting organisations through schools, local authorities and community organisations.</p> <p>Sport Ireland developed a National Digital Database for Sport & Recreation Amenities - Get Ireland Active (GIA) – which was launched in October 2023.</p> <p>It is Ireland’s most comprehensive activity, sport and recreation website, including every type of activity, recreational, and sporting facility. The database includes sports and recreation facilities; public places such as playgrounds; and trails for walking, running, and biking. Each search can be filtered to check accessibility as well as amenities such as parking and changing facilities. At the end of 2023, there were 11,350 opportunities to be active in the database, including 6,217 clubs, 4,095 locations and 1,038 trails. Data has come from over 60 authoritative sources, with more regularly coming on board. GIA continues to be developed and rolled-out across multiple sectors by Sport Ireland.</p>
2.5	<p>Building on the proven success of existing fitness media campaigns, deliver a new seasonal campaign promoting active and social participation in sport during the winter months, to be launched during the European Week of Sport each September.</p> <p>Facilitated by Sport Ireland, an extensive participation programme was delivered as part of the European Week of Sport in each of the years 2021, 2022 and 2023. This included flagship events from the Be Active Festival held on the Sport Ireland Campus with 1000+ in attendance. A National Walking Day was also held in September 2023. As outlined in 1.7 above, the 2023-24 Winter Initiative provided over 700 events and activities across the country with a specific focus on encouraging people to try their hand at a new sport they may not have experienced.</p>
2.6	<p>Identify and promote ways to maximise physical activity throughout the school day including outside of PE settings.</p> <p>Increased funding and resources are being allocated to the Active School Flag initiative, which is driving an increased take-up of the initiative by schools in both the primary and post-primary settings.</p>

Ref.	Action
2.7	<p>Support engagement between sports clubs and schools with a view to increasing physical activity and increasing participation.</p> <p>Updated Procedures on the use of School Buildings and School Sports Facilities outside of School Hours was announced in 2024. The updated procedures highlight the value and importance of school buildings and school sports facilities being used outside of school hours. To encourage the greater use of such facilities, the Department of Education provides schools with a guarantee that any income from after-school use of their facilities will not affect their state grants, capitation fees or any other form of departmental funding.</p> <p>The provision in the Department's Sports Capital and Equipment Programme (SCEP) that enables schools to apply jointly with local sports clubs for sports capital projects continued to be made available. SCEP 2023 consequently included a number of applications under this accommodation.</p>

3. Funding

Achieving the ambitious goal of doubling investment in sport to over €220 million annually by 2027 has been a central funding priority. By the end of 2023, the Government had allocated €209 million for 2024, bringing the target within striking distance and may possibly be exceeded in the final analysis. The steady increase in funding has enabled the establishment of new streams focused on women in sport, disability, elderly participation, equality, diversity and inclusion. These investments are crucial for ensuring that the benefits of sport are accessible to all, supporting a more inclusive and active society.

Ref.	Action
3.1	<p>Establish an Innovation Fund to promote innovative collaborative projects aimed at increasing sustainable participation in sport.</p> <p>Sport Ireland provided an Innovation Fund during the period of this plan. A variety of projects were delivered on the back of this funding. Additionally, a European Social Funding Programme team was established within Sport Ireland in 2023 piloting a range of new, targeted and innovative programmes aiming to improve sport participation among youths at risk, persons with disability, disadvantaged women, ethnic minorities and migrants.</p>
3.2	<p>Applying a 'Sport for all' ethos, establish an Inclusion, Diversity and Equality Fund to promote increased and sustainable participation in sport among children, adolescents and young adults, those from lower socio-economic groups, persons with a disability, the LGBTI+ community, the Traveller community and other ethnic minorities.</p> <p>A targeted €2 million "Sport for All" fund was established for all NGB clubs aimed at increasing participation opportunities for people with disabilities. Dormant Account Funding was also allocated for various programmes and initiatives aimed at addressing disadvantaged communities and people with a disability. The 2023 Programme delivered funding of €1.7 million as part of the NGB Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Fund.</p>
3.3	<p>Deliver and advance all successful projects under the Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF). In relation to the Sports Capital and Equipment Programme (SCEP), ensure that an appropriate level of funding is ring-fenced for National Governing Bodies of Sport to include allocations for high performance equipment. Ensure that funding is also available under the SCEP for appropriate renewal/maintenance of sports facilities where this work is deemed necessary to keep the facilities in operation.</p> <p>Projects under the first round of the Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF) continue to be delivered with a number due for completion by end 2024. A new round of LSSIF closed for applications on 1 July 2024. In relation to the Sports Capital and Equipment Programme (SCEP), a record funding allocation of €250 million has been earmarked for the 2023 round, which will ensure that an appropriate level of funding for high performance equipment and for appropriate renewal/maintenance of sports facilities where this work is deemed necessary to keep the facilities in operation.</p>
3.4	<p>Modelled on the "Black Gold" programme in New Zealand, introduce a scheme for the attraction of corporate and philanthropic finance to support Ireland's high-performance programme.</p> <p>The question of introducing such a scheme remains under consideration with particular regard to the potential opportunities presented by the new National Philanthropy Policy launched by Government in 2023.</p>

Ref.	Action
3.5	<p>In support of the national coaching plan, establish a dedicated, collaborative Coaching Fund for NGBs.</p> <p>In line with Sport Ireland's ongoing implementation of its National Coaching Plan 2020-2025, Sport Ireland is providing a targeted phased approach to developing NGB Coaching Pathways with a planned roll-out in 2024. A budget of €150,000 was also agreed to fund 3-4 NGBs in 2024 to advance the development of their Coaching Pathways.</p>
3.6	<p>Develop a common funding framework to guide the allocation of State funding for Gaelic Games across all codes.</p> <p>The single funding model for intercounty funding came into effect in 2022 which provided for the allocation of State funding support on a common basis. In addition, a joint application process has been implemented for other Sport Ireland funding, such as Women in Sport and Dormant Account Funding.</p>
3.7	<p>Prepare business cases for possible taxation reform for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the granting of charitable status for NGBs; (b) the lowering of the €250 eligibility threshold for capital reliefs on individual donations to sports capital projects; (c) the extension of the zero-rated VAT regime; (d) the extension of taxation reliefs on capital donations to include donations for sports participation/coaching programmes; and (e) the incentivisation of personal exercise opportunities. <p>Business cases prepared for consideration in the context of the overall budgetary process. Under ongoing consideration.</p>
3.8	<p>Promote the provision of defibrillator machines throughout the sporting network.</p> <p>Sport Ireland supported small scale capital grant funding (€395,000) to the FAI as part of the 2021 SITE grant, in collaboration with the Department.</p>

4. Training / Resources

Addressing participation disparities or gradients across different groups in society requires targeted training and resources. This is essential to ensure that the benefits of being involved in sport can be enjoyed equally across Irish society.

Under the lifespan of the Sports Action Plan 2021-2023 significant progress was made in this area, including the development of Sport Ireland's Policy on Volunteering in Sport, published in January 2024. This policy builds on the National Volunteering Strategy (2021-2025) and underscores the importance and value of volunteers in the delivery of sport in Ireland. Good governance has been prioritised as a key action for NGBs and LSPs, with sport demonstrating its commitment in this area by the widespread adoption (95%) of the Governance Code for Sport. In addition, Sport Ireland's Gov-Enhance Programme, which is focused on supporting good governance across the sector, has also been instrumental in providing guidance, training and networking opportunities for embedding good governance practices at an organisational level. Efforts to mitigate the impact of rising insurance costs on the sector were initiated, with further reviews planned to assess the ongoing effectiveness of legislative changes.

Ref.	Action
4.1	<p>Develop tailored resources to assist the key networks of Sports Inclusion Disability Officers, Local Sports Partnerships and National Governing Bodies of Sport.</p> <p>Sport Ireland continued its support for its national network of 29 Sport Inclusion Disability Officers across the country. In 2023, there was an investment of €910,000 to encourage and facilitate more people with disabilities to participate in sport and physical activity. Significant progress has also been made in the development of Local Sports Plans, with plans beginning to roll out. Sport Ireland also continues to facilitate and provide a range of programmes, networks, events and resources to address specific development and support needs in the sector.</p>
4.2	<p>Aligned with national volunteering policy, develop resources to support volunteer management within NGBs and LSPs.</p> <p>Following an extensive development phase across the SAP timeframe, Sport Ireland launched its policy for Volunteering in January 2024. This builds on the National Volunteering Strategy (2021-2025) by the Department of Rural and Community Development with the main priority being to focus on the recognition and value of the volunteer pillar to the sport sector. It is planned that working groups and implementation groups will be set up to establish key best practices across the sector and increase the volunteer base.</p>
4.3	<p>All NGBs and LSPs to adopt the Governance Code for Sport by end 2021. As part of this process Sport Ireland will identify and put in place the training and supports needed by the different organisations to assist with the adoption process.</p> <p>By the end of 2023, 95% of NGBs and LSPs had adopted the Governance Code for Sport. The Gov-Enhance Governance Development programme launched in mid-2020 has run consistently and includes elements such as role specific networks, seminars, consultancy advice, IPA Level 9 Certificate in Governance etc. A suite of supports and resources are available on Sport Ireland's website. The register of organisations that are self-declared as compliant with the Code is also publicly available on Sport Ireland's website.</p>

Ref.	Action
4.4	<p>Support NGBs, LSPs and other sports bodies to develop evaluation tools for their programmes and initiatives. Develop evaluation frameworks which will allow for the robust assessment of (a) the impact of publicly funded facilities, programmes and interventions and (b) the degree to which durable linkages are created with local clubs.</p> <p>Sport Ireland developed a range of Evaluation Frameworks for programmes and initiatives which use digital dashboards to track policy progress. An Event Evaluation Framework was developed and piloted at the Cyclo-Cross World Cup. The 2024 Evaluation Grant scheme criteria were also developed. Sport Ireland also conducted an evaluation of the Dormant Account Funded Active Cities and Sport Innovation Funds.</p> <p>I-PARC developed three toolkits: evaluation, implementation and systems approach, for delivery in the form of capacity building workshops.</p>
4.5	<p>Convene regular sport sector stakeholder forums to facilitate collation of insurance pricing data to inform six-monthly Ministerial presentations to the Cabinet Committee on Insurance Reform.</p> <p>A stakeholder forum was held which delivered important sectoral pricing insights. More fora are planned.</p>

5. Programmes and Events

Public consultations highlighted the particular urgency of addressing physical inactivity levels among children and young people and the need for stronger cooperation between the educational and sporting sectors. Greater engagement with local communities has also been highlighted.

A key initiative within the Sports Action Plan was the convening of a youth-centred stakeholder event. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this stakeholder event was delayed until May 2022 however two smaller online events preceded the in-person event. The in-person event was ultimately hosted at the Sport Ireland Campus, at which some 100 young people from across the island provided their views and insights in relation to sport and physical activity participation. A report on the event was published in December 2022.

Ref.	Action
5.1	<p>Convene a youth-centred stakeholder forum to guide the adoption of the strategic framework recommended in the Children’s Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study 2018 (CSPPA 2018).</p> <p>This event was held in May 2022 and a report published in December 2022.</p>
5.2	<p>Recognising the pivotal role and influence of parents and guardians on children and young people, LSPs and NGBs will promote the greater availability of local community events, particularly in rural communities, accessible to all, family-friendly recreational sports opportunities. An increased number of community sport hubs will be established countrywide.</p> <p>Sport Ireland, through Dormant Accounts Funding, enabled the launch of ten new community sports hubs in 2021, eleven in 2022 and five in 2023. This brings the total number of community hubs countrywide to 76 since the start of the community sports hub model in 2015.</p>
5.3	<p>Reflecting the life course perspective, inherent in the NSP prioritised participation sports, expand the coverage of the Get Ireland Walking, Cycling, Swimming and Running programmes for all ages, with a particular emphasis on the needs of the elderly.</p> <p>Significant funding of over €1.5 million was provided for these prioritised sports across the three years. The funding of these initiatives recognise their importance in getting people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to take part in these key lifelong activities. For example, the 2023 – 2027 Get Ireland Walking Strategy was launched in 2023. Get Ireland Walking is an initiative of Sport Ireland, supported by Healthy Ireland and delivered by Mountaineering Ireland. Together, Get Ireland Walking and partners aim to get more people walking more often for recreation, active transport and health, embracing walking as part of our daily activity. In addition, Athletics Ireland continues to deliver consistently for Get Ireland Running in their participation programmes especially in schools.</p>
5.4	<p>Implement and invest in an Outdoor Recreation Policy to increase participation in sport and physical activity in the outdoors for all ages.</p> <p>The National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027 was launched in November 2022 and provides a strategic, collaborative framework to facilitate the sustainable growth of outdoor recreation in Ireland. Actions are being delivered by Sport Ireland in cooperation with DRCD under the Embracing Ireland’s Outdoors Strategy. These include a review of the training and education options in the outdoor recreation sector, chairing the cross sectoral responsible behaviour subgroup, facilitating the rollout of Outdoor Recreation Officers in six LSPs and the development of best practice guidelines. As outlined in 2.4 above, Sport Ireland also launched Get Ireland Active in late 2023.</p>

6. Plans and Strategies

The approach taken has been based on the need for transformative, operationally focused plans and strategies to guide the development of sport in Ireland. There has been a particular focus on key topics such as sustainability and governance.

At year-end 2023, there has been a significant and welcome increase (to 44%) in the level of female representation on the boards of funded sporting organisations. The corresponding figure for 2019 was 24%. There has also been satisfactory progress in the rollout of Local Sports Plans. Sport Ireland has also completed and published (November 2022) a long-term masterplan for the development of the Sport Ireland Campus. A Major Events Policy has also been published.

Ref.	Action
6.1	<p>In addition to the development of equality action plans, NGBs will be asked to achieve, by end 2023, the Government's target for State Boards of a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in the membership of their Boards. Support will be provided for dedicated leadership training programmes for women including governance-related and technical training (coaching, refereeing and team management). Sport Ireland will monitor NGB progress against targets and report annually on whether additional measures such as gender quotas are warranted.</p> <p>€2 million in funding was allocated to the NGBs in 2023 to support the four key target areas of the Women in Sport Policy, i.e., Leadership & Governance, Active Participation, Visibility, Coaching and Officiating. This funding was used by NGBs to provide dedicated leadership training programmes for women including governance-related and technical training (coaching, refereeing and team management). At year-end 2023, approximately 76% of NGBs had obtained the 40% gender balance targets at board level. As of December 2023, women made up 44% of board members across NGBs/LSPs/funded bodies. Sport Ireland continues to work with organisations who have yet to obtain the required level of 40%.</p>
6.2	<p>Sport Ireland will work with Local Authorities nationally to develop a framework to support the development and implementation of Local Sports Plans, ensuring in particular collaboration with LSPs and NGBs.</p> <p>Significant progress has been made in the development of Local Sports Plans, with plans beginning to roll out and to be fully in place over 2024 and 2025. In 2023, Sport Ireland worked with Local Authorities to develop a national framework to support the development and implementation of these Local Sports Plans, ensuring collaboration with LSPs and NGBs in the process.</p>
6.3	<p>Implement Sport Ireland's High Performance Strategy 2021-2032 involving revised approaches on focused performance investment, coaching development and retention.</p> <p>Sport Ireland revised its investment approach in high performance sport to provide multi-annual funding to NGBs and prioritised investment to those with the highest potential. Sport Ireland also appointed a Head of High-Performance Coaching in 2023. A record level of funding (€89 million) was provided to Team Ireland in respect of the Paris Games cycle.</p>
6.4	<p>Complete a new 15-year Masterplan for the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus, to include projects already underway and in the pipeline, such as athlete accommodation and a velodrome.</p> <p>A 15-year Masterplan for the Sport Ireland Campus was approved by Government and launched in November 2022.</p>

Ref.	Action
6.5	<p>Sport Ireland will lead by example and will demonstrate sport's commitment to sustainability in the development of infrastructure projects at the Campus through the development and implementation of a new sustainability strategy for the Campus. The new Strategy will seek to embed sustainability in the planning, design, construction and operation of all new infrastructure projects at the Campus.</p> <p>The Campus Masterplan referenced above in 6.4, launched in November 2022, includes a strong commitment to sustainability with the masterplan vision aiming to embed sustainability and climate resilience into every aspect of the planning, design, construction and operation of the Sport Ireland Campus. Work is ongoing on the use of passive design strategies and energy-efficient buildings throughout the Campus, supported by the implementation and integration of renewable and recoverable energy on site which will see Sport Ireland play its part in Ireland's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. In addition, Sport Ireland's Climate Action Roadmap was completed in 2023.</p>
6.6	<p>Develop a policy on the hosting of international sports events that will align the efforts of state bodies, national governing bodies, local authorities and all other relevant stakeholders, to ensure Ireland can compete with the best in the world when bidding for major events.</p> <p>In October the Major International Sports Events Policy and Framework was published following Government approval.</p>
6.7	<p>Continue to engage positively on a North-South basis, to facilitate the delivery of sport and physical activity to all on the island, and to enable the sharing of best practice and access to facilities. Sport Ireland to explore potential areas of greater strategic alignment on the further development of sport on an all-island basis, including the potential for new all-island competitions at elite and recreational levels, and opportunities to make joint North/South bids in the future for international tournaments.</p> <p>Sport Ireland, working closely with Sport Northern Ireland, continued to support the various all-island NGBs. Additionally, Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland collaborated on the development of an All-Island Physical Consensus Statement, which was launched in 2022.</p>

7. Research and Evaluation

In late 2021, Sport Ireland published its Research Strategy for the period 2021-2027, outlining five strategic goals: Focused Research, Purposeful Collaboration, Collective Capability, Applied Knowledge and Research Excellence. This strategy positions Sport Ireland at the forefront of knowledge generation and application, driving evidence-based policy and practice across the sport sector.

Research and evaluation efforts have provided critical insights into participation challenges and the effectiveness of interventions. The thematic area contains 4 actions in relation to research and evaluation priorities.

In 2022, a Spending Review of the Sports Capital Equipment Programme confirmed the program's efficiency and transparency. Additionally, significant progress was made in aligning the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to the National Sports Policy during the lifespan of the Sports Action Plan, culminating in a comprehensive mapping report launched by Sport Ireland in May 2024.

Ref.	Action
7.1	<p>Develop a research strategy for sport, including an online sports research and data repository.</p> <p>In December 2021 the Sport Ireland Research Strategy 2021-2027 was launched. It is based on five strategic goals including focused research and purposeful collaboration and identifies how, as a sector, we can generate, capture and share insights to better understand the key policy questions around sport in order to develop better solutions to the challenges we seek to address.</p>
7.2	<p>In line with the National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy and in order to better understand the barriers for LGBTI+ people in sport, expand the reach of national research tools such as the Irish Sports Monitor and other sources to refine our understanding of the issues around participation / non-participation in sport among marginalised groups such as persons with a disability, ethnic minorities, members of the LGBTI+ community, etc.</p> <p>Sport Ireland expanded the reach of national research tools to refine our understanding of the issues around participation / non-participation in sport among marginalised groups such as persons with a disability, ethnic minorities, members of the LGBTI+ community, etc. For example, in 2021 additional research was undertaken as part of the ISM in relation to the participation in sport and club membership among the LGBTI+ community. Also measured was the perception of inclusivity in sports clubs among different minority groups, including LGBTI+. In addition, the 2022 ISM and the Children's Sports Participation and Physical Activity Study (CSPPA) now include demographic measures to capture data on disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and socio-economic status.</p>
7.3	<p>Undertake a Value for Money Review of the Sports Capital and Equipment Programme and ensure that any recommendations arising are incorporated into future annual rounds of the programme.</p> <p>A Spending Review of the SCEP was undertaken and published in 2022.</p>
7.4	<p>Reflecting the importance of international work in measuring the contribution of sport, physical education and physical activity to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and keeping the human rights dimension of sport to the forefront, map the NSP with the SDGs.</p> <p>Sport Ireland completed an extensive piece of research and report mapping of the National Sports Policy to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This reflects the importance of international work in measuring the contribution of sport, physical education and physical activity to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and keeping the human rights dimension of sport to the forefront.</p>

Annex 3

Actions

1 Investment in Sport			
Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
1.	To enhance planning capability and operational stability of our sporting bodies, we will implement a multi-annual approach to core funding allocations to sporting bodies, subject to budget availability and ongoing adherence by the sporting bodies to the prevailing governance requirements.	DTCAGSM/ Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
2.	To drive increased collaboration between a range of different sports, investigate the potential role and shared benefits that would accrue from the establishment of a dedicated joint fund, including a potential involvement by business or individual donors or philanthropy generally.	Federation of Irish Sport	All Relevant Stakeholders
3.	Promote the development of sectoral knowledge and capability to avail of sport funding opportunities in EU programmes (ERDF, ESF+, Erasmus+, SHARE).	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
4.	Explore the potential benefit of developing Satellite Accounts for the sports sector in order to increase understanding of its value to the Irish economy.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
2 Active and Social Participation			
Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
5.	Support the roll-out of Local Sports Plans in each Local Authority area, aligning with the consultative approach, vision and objectives set down in the National Sports Policy 2018-2027.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
6.	Facilitate and drive increased levels of volunteering opportunities and sports club social and playing memberships through supporting increased collaboration between NGBs, LSPs and community-based sports organisations such as the community sports hubs, local volunteer centres and youth services.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
7.	Prioritise reducing participation drop-off among adolescents and young adults through a cross-sport collaborative project with selected NGBs (indoor/outdoor/team/individual) and LSPs to explore ways of promoting sustained youth participation across a diverse mix of sports in both community and educational settings.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
8.	Develop a Physical Literacy Plan 2024-2028 to advise on the roll-out of physical literacy programmes for adolescent children and young adults in both community and educational settings.	Sport Ireland/ DoE	All Relevant Stakeholders
9.	In pursuit of the strategic objectives of Sport Ireland's Policy of Volunteering in Sport, explore the potential to develop an accredited, optional volunteer management training programme for inclusion and validation on the National Framework of Qualifications.	DoE	All Relevant Stakeholders
10.	Implement measures and initiatives to address the significant participation gradients persisting amongst those from disadvantaged backgrounds, persons with a disability, the LGBTI+ community, the Traveller community and other ethnic minorities. Leveraging the opportunities presented by the new ESF+ programme, 'Sport 4 Empowerment', will be a key part of our implementation strategy.	Volunteer Ireland	
11.	Provide guidance and support to sporting organisations to increase the involvement of people with disabilities in volunteer roles in sport. Enhance the visibility of these volunteering opportunities.	Sport Ireland	
12.	Implement the National Swimming Strategy.	DTCAGSM/ Sport Ireland	

3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion			
Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
13.	Appoint a Disability in Sport Lead within Sport Ireland to provide focused leadership and directed investment to address the NSP targets for increased participation among those with a long-term illness or disability.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
14.	Review the current approach to the provision of disability sport to develop enhanced measures and incentives to promote more local participation opportunities.	DTCAGSM/ Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
15.	Develop and strengthen the uptake by NGBs and LSPs of the Get Ireland Active Database and promote a cross-sectoral approach to information-sharing, for the benefit of all with an interest to participate in sport and physical activity.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
16.	Deploy, through multiple communication platforms tailored for ethnic groups and communities, the Get Ireland Active Database of sporting and recreational facilities and amenities to increase the profile and visibility of inclusive participation opportunities. The successful integration of people new to a community into their local sporting communities will be prioritised in this context.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
17.	Implement Sport Ireland's Policies and Action Plans on Diversity and Inclusion, Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities, and Women in Sport.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
18.	Ensure that 40% gender representation on the boards of national sports organisations is both achieved and maintained with 50% of State funding (excluding Women in Sport funding) to be withheld from National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships until such a time as 40% gender representation is achieved.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders

4 Facilities and Events			
Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
19.	Invest in low cost sport capital and equipment grants for the purchase and installation of permanent sport equipment that can be placed on land which will be available for community use. In tandem with this investment, funding to be made available to promote nature connectedness with a specific focus on supporting the biodiversity of the environments on such land.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
20.	To better understand the specific needs and requirements of women and girls in sporting facilities and spaces, undertake research on the scope for introducing design enhancements.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
21.	Undertake a demand analysis of existing capital support schemes to ascertain the level of funding required to meet current and future levels of demand from sporting organisations, sport types and cohorts of the population that have traditionally been under-represented in sport. The data content and role of the Get Ireland Active database will form part of this analysis.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
22.	Implement a sustained, multi-annual capital development programme to secure the progressive realisation of the Sport Ireland Campus Masterplan Vision, prioritised in accordance with the needs of the athletes and the growth of sport in Ireland.	DTCAGSM/ Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
23.	Following on from the publication of the Major International Sports Events Policy and Strategy, explore options for specific legacy criteria in the assessment process and delivery of events in order to maximise enduring participation benefits.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
24.	Establish a funding scheme to support the hosting of smaller scale international sporting events.	DTCAGSM/ Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
5 Sport and Education			
Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
25.	Support the growth and development of the Active School Flag programme at primary and post-primary levels.	DoE	All Relevant Stakeholders
26.	Encourage LSPs and NGBs to work collaboratively with all schools, including those engaging with the Active School Flag programme.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
27.	Increase use of school sports facilities through the promotion of the Procedures on the use of School Buildings and School Sports Facilities outside of School Hours document, broadening awareness and improving access for local communities.	DoE	All Relevant Stakeholders
28.	Identify a lead co-ordinator within Sport Ireland who can engage with, and assist, LSPs and NGBs in their communications with schools regarding physical activity initiatives, to include communication with Active School Flag and schools engaging with that programme.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
29.	Consult with schools and relevant stakeholders, to assess the need for guidance on primary and post-primary school uniforms to better enable learners' engagement in physical activity throughout the school day.	DoE	All Relevant Stakeholders
30.	Produce a report and consider recommendations arising from the National Forum on Physical Education.	DoE	All Relevant Stakeholders

6 Sport and Sustainability			
Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
31.	Building on work already undertaken on the mapping of the NSP to the UN SDGs, establish a cross-sectoral Sport and Environmental Sustainability Working Group to assist, guide and optimise the sector's development and contribution to reducing the climate impact of active sport participation and fan travel.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
32.	Convene a Sport and Environmental Sustainability Conference to identify and consider key challenges arising for sport in order to inform the Sport and Environmental Sustainability Working Group of the main tasks to be addressed in developing effective guidance material.	DTCAGSM	All relevant stakeholders
33.	Establish methodologies to promote environmental sustainability within the sport sector in line with EU best practices, utilising existing networks to leverage, monitor, report, and exchange good practices.	Sport Ireland	All relevant stakeholders
34.	Assist sporting organisations, including National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships, to develop sustainability plans for reducing the carbon footprint associated with their activities, including participation and attendance at their sporting events.	DTCAGSM	All relevant stakeholders
35.	Review effectiveness of existing sustainability provisions in Departmental sports capital funding schemes and implement necessary adjustments in succeeding rounds to ensure best practice relating to environmental sustainability.	DTCAGSM	All relevant stakeholders
36.	In line with the Major International Sports Events Policy and Strategy Framework, implement an approach to the attraction and holding of such events in Ireland that enhances the sustainability and legacy benefits for sport and related sectors such as tourism whilst minimising associated climate impacts such as transport emissions, waste generation and the construction of new sports facilities.	DTCAGSM	All relevant stakeholders
37.	Develop guidance on climate adaptation for infrastructure development and for sporting activity addressing changes in temperature, precipitation, and flood risk.	DTCAGSM	All relevant stakeholders

7 Governance and Capacity-Building			
Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
38.	Continuously review and update the Governance Code for Sport to incorporate new governance trends.	Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
39.	Develop a comprehensive sport sector workforce strategy aimed at enhancing education, learning and development opportunities to support structural stability and resilience.	Sport Ireland	All relevant stakeholders
40.	Implement measures to promote and build sectoral capacity and capability, in areas such as digital transformation, marketing and communications, sponsorship, governance, event and programme management and modernising NGB member and volunteer experiences and services.	Sport Ireland	All relevant stakeholders
41.	Support sectoral efforts to increase the number of women officiating and coaching (particularly in high performance sport), including female teachers in schools.	Sport Ireland	All relevant stakeholders
42.	Continue to prioritise the provision of training and resources to support the development of research and evaluation frameworks and tools.	Sport Ireland	All relevant stakeholders
43.	Promote and monitor the adoption of the National Code of Conduct Template to foster a culture of respect, integrity and fairness, including the establishment of a representative Respect Officials Working Group to enhance respect across all sports.	Sport Ireland	All relevant stakeholders
8 International			
Ref.	Action	Lead	Stakeholders
44.	Building on the designation by UNESCO of Hurling and Camogie on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, promote the safeguarding and development of these games domestically and internationally, especially in schools, clubs and areas where the games are not very strong or not currently played.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
45.	Ireland will become a member of the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport in order to contribute to, and benefit from, multi-lateral dialogue between public authorities, sports federations and NGOs. This will contribute to better governance, with the aim of making sport more ethical, more inclusive and safer.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders
46.	Encourage and support national sporting organisations to seek and attain, where appropriate, representation in their international sporting federations.	DTCAGSM/ Sport Ireland	All Relevant Stakeholders
47.	Examine the merit and feasibility of establishing an independent anti-doping agency and progress consideration of Ireland's signature and ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions.	DTCAGSM	All Relevant Stakeholders