



# Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>AIMS AND OBJECTIVES .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>KEY RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>15</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	15
REVIEW OF CURRENT KNOWLEDGE .....	16
REVIEW OF CURRENT PLANS AND STRATEGIES.....	16
THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THESE REVIEWS .....	17
DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND CURRENT FACILITIES.....	19
OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATIONS .....	19
REVIEW OF GAPS AND OVER-PROVISION .....	21
STRATEGIC APPROACH .....	22
IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY.....	22
IMPACT OF THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND THE HABITATS DIRECTIVE ASSESSMENT SCREENING .....	24
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>28</b>
1.1 OBJECTIVES OF STRATEGY .....	30
1.2 AREA UNDER CONSIDERATION.....	31
1.3 ACTIVITIES THAT HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED.....	33
1.4 METHODOLOGY .....	33
1.5 THE STRATEGY AND THE LAND-USE PLANNING PROCESS.....	41
1.6 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS.....	42
1.7 HABITATS DIRECTIVE ASSESSMENT SCREENING PROCESS.....	42
<b>2. REVIEW OF CURRENT KNOWLEDGE .....</b>	<b>44</b>
2.1 PARTICIPATION RATES.....	44
2.2 POPULATION REQUIRED FOR SUSTAINABLE FACILITY.....	50
<b>3. REVIEW OF CURRENT PLANS AND STRATEGIES.....</b>	<b>53</b>
3.1 NATIONAL PLANS.....	53
3.2. REGIONAL PLANS .....	55
3.3. COUNTY AND CITY DEVELOPMENT PLANS .....	59
3.4. CITY AND COUNTY SPORTS STRATEGIES .....	71
3.5. MAJOR SPORTING BODY STRATEGIES .....	77
3.6 TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES .....	81
3.7 IMPLICATION OF REVIEWS OF CURRENT KNOWLEDGE, INFORMATION AND STRATEGIES.....	83
<b>4. SPATIAL DATA ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>88</b>
4.1 RESIDENT POPULATION DISTRIBUTION .....	88
4.2 VISITOR POPULATION DISTRIBUTION .....	88
4.3 DISTRIBUTION OF CURRENT MAJOR FACILITIES.....	91
4.5 REVIEW OF GAPS AND OVER-PROVISION .....	105
<b>5. STRATEGY.....</b>	<b>107</b>
5.1 KEY PRINCIPLES .....	107
5.1.1. THRESHOLD AND RANGE REFER TO THE FOLLOWING –.....	107

5.1.2.	<i>DISTRIBUTION OF FACILITIES.....</i>	108
5.1.3.	<i>PROVISION FOR THE NEEDS OF TOURISTS AND OTHER VISITORS TO THE AREA .....</i>	108
5.1.4.	<i>IMPORTANCE OF ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES.....</i>	108
5.1.5.	<i>OPPORTUNITY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL SCALE CENTRE IN THE AREA .....</i>	108
5.2	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES .....	108
5.3	STRATEGIC POLICIES .....	110
<b>6.</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY.....</b>	<b>118</b>
6.1	IMPLEMENTATION ELEMENTS .....	118
6.2	FIRST IMPLEMENTATION STEPS .....	124
<b>7.</b>	<b>IMPACT OF STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND HABITATS DIRECTIVE ASSESSMENT SCREENING .....</b>	<b>127</b>
7.1	CONDITIONS ARISING FROM THE SEA .....	127
<b>8.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>130</b>

## **AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

## Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy is to develop a framework to coordinate the objectives and targets of key stakeholders in a cohesive and integrated plan for the area and to work together in ensuring the provision, management and use of quality facilities and services for everyone, including future generations. Through the strategy, county and city councils and other key stakeholders can work together to determine key recreational priorities for the region and to demonstrate commitment, cooperation and shared vision in developing sport and physical recreational opportunities for all, with an improvement in the health and overall quality of life of those who live and work in the area as well as those who visit it as the ultimate aim.

The objectives which are addressed in this strategy are as follows -

- The development of a set of goals and objectives for the provision of sporting and physical recreation facilities in the area
- The preparation of an analysis of the existing provision within the focus area and adjacent areas
- A review of the population necessary to support different types of facilities
- A review of current and projected future population within the relevant areas
- The identification of any gaps or excess in the provision of larger-scale facilities
- The identification of the resources available and gaps in provision for those with disabilities who wish to participate in sports and active recreation
- The identification of any opportunities for the provision of facilities that address a new sporting or active recreation area
- The development of a set of policies that will guide Local Authorities in their land-use management and development functions and provide information to others including other public and publicly-funded bodies who may wish to undertake the development of sports or physical recreation projects
- The carrying out of a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Directive Screening as part of the process of carrying out the strategy development.

Even where a need or opportunity for the provision of new facilities has been identified, specific sites are not specified for such developments. However, general areas have been identified for some such developments while the criteria that should be used to identify specific sites are included for all such developments.

The strategy does not focus on community-based or community level facilities though it does recognise their importance and does refer to them. These facilities are primarily aimed at the needs of local communities and perform an important function in that role. While not analysing this provision in any depth, however, the strategy does provide some guidance on best practice in the

governance and management of such facilities and the criteria that might be used in deciding whether or not such facilities should receive public funding support.

It should also be noted that the strategy does not focus on non-active recreation such as provided for by cultural facilities. While this is another important area of provision it is beyond the scope of this project.

## **Key Recommendations**

The following are the key recommendations of this strategy. They are based on the analysis of current and future needs and activities, the need to maximise the use of scarce resources and to promote collaboration between different types of providers, the need to address access issues for all citizens in the area and the need to provide for the many visitors who come to use the area's facilities. The recommendations also recognise that co-operation will be needed between public and publicly funded bodies, voluntary sporting organisations, community organisations, the education sector and private facility providers if an efficient and integrated framework is to be available to the citizens and visitors in Limerick and Clare. It should be noted that though this strategy has regard to other areas, the strategy itself applies only to the administrative areas of County Clare and Limerick City and County and that, in particular, it specifically does not apply to the administrative area of North Tipperary.

### **Strategic Approach to Facility Distribution**

- 1 That a hierarchy of facility provision will be adopted as follows –
  - Large scale stadia and facilities
  - Multi-sport facilities at key locations
  - Smaller scale multi-sport facilities
  - Community-level facilities for sports and physical recreation at a level smaller than the multi-sport facilities referred to above
  - Specific facilities provided by individual sports and recreation clubs and organisations to meet their own needs
- 2 That larger-scale sports and physical recreation stadia and facilities be located within the areas of Limerick Metropolitan Area, Shannon and Ennis in order to maximise accessibility of larger populations, to maximise the viability of the facilities and to maximise the potential use of public transport facilities for providing access to these facilities. In particular, where significant areas have been developed or are planned for development provision should be made for the establishment of multi-sports facilities in accordance with the recommendations of the Draft National Sports Facilities Strategy 2012 - 2016.
- 3 That new stadia for team games will generally not be permitted within the area other than

- the provision within Limerick Metropolitan Area of one medium-sized stadium not exceeding a capacity of 7,500 with a primary focus on the accommodation of League of Ireland soccer matches and
  - the provision of a new stadium at an appropriate location and which replaces an existing stadium.
- 4 That the provision of facilities which have specific needs which require them to be located outside the Limerick Metropolitan Area/Shannon/Ennis area will be accommodated subject to addressing the environmental considerations outlined below.
- 5 That key sub-regional locations be identified for the provision of all-weather sports facilities to accommodate a wide range of sports and physical recreation activities and such that, no person is significantly more than 20 kilometres from such a facility. These locations will relate to the regional structure outlined in the Regional Planning Guidelines and should include -
- Provision of facilities in the Limerick Metropolitan Area in accordance with the considerations outlined at section 4.3.2 of this strategy including the provision of at least one area to serve the North side of Limerick Metropolitan Area and one area to serve the South side of Limerick Metropolitan Area. These facilities should incorporate the facilities set out in the following two paragraphs and which should not be in addition to the facilities referred to in this paragraph.
  - One area to provide an integrated training facility for soccer within the Limerick Metropolitan Area.
  - One area to provide a multi-sports facility for Limerick Institute of Technology.
  - One multi-sports all-weather facility in Shannon.
  - The enhancement of the Lee's Road Regional Sports Facility in Ennis and the provision of a substantial indoor sports facility in the town of Ennis that will be managed as part of the overall Lee's Road facility.
  - The provision and/or upgrading of one integrated all-weather multi-sports facility in key settlements within Limerick and Clare but outside the Limerick Metropolitan Area/Ennis/Shannon area. The precise distribution of these locations should be decided by the Planning Authorities acting in consultation but should reflect the sub-regional centres identified in the Regional Planning Guidelines and should also have regard to the locations where substantial sports facility development has taken place or is under way. In that context the following locations should be included for consideration -
    - Kilrush
    - Killaloe/Ballina
    - Lisdoonvarna
    - Lahinch/Ennistymon
    - Tulla

- Scarrif
- Newcastlewest
- Kilmallock
- Rathkeale

Over time the facilities at these locations should include the following as a minimum –

- One full-size, floodlit all-weather playing pitch capable of accommodating those games that require the largest playing area
- Grass pitches for a variety of sports
- A floodlit walking/running track incorporating outdoor gym facilities
- An indoor facility capable of accommodating full basketball games
- Facilities for other sports such as tennis and bowls
- A play area
- Training areas

All these facilities may not be on the one site but, where they are on a number of sites, they should be managed and maintained by a single entity.

- 6 That smaller-scale facilities be provided at other intermediate locations such that no person is generally more than 10 kilometres from such a facility. These facilities should include a floodlit all-weather playing area that is not of full size, a walking track, a playground, an outdoor gym and an indoor games hall. In these locations attempts should be made to maximise the use of existing facilities and to upgrade them where necessary, developing new facilities only where unavoidable. Particular attention should be paid to the provision of training facilities at these locations as the absence of such facilities can prove a significant barrier to participation in sports.
- 7 That the provision of facilities that allow the better use and enjoyment of sporting and physical recreation facilities which make use of natural resources will generally be permitted provided that they are of an appropriate scale and address the environmental conditions as set out below. Where possible this should be achieved by the enhancement of existing facilities rather than the provision of new facilities. In addition, areas may be identified as hubs for particular forms of sporting and physical recreation activities related to their natural amenities and/or geographic location and development plans prepared to facilitate the development of such hubs.
- 8 That the provision of smaller-scale community-based facilities will continue to be supported subject to the requirements as set out above and the meeting of environmental considerations as set out below. Such facilities might include a children's playground, a safe walking/cycling route and a community hall used for non-competitive physical recreation.



## Social and Physical Access to Facilities

- 9 That the needs of all age-groups are considered when facilities are being developed and that, in particular, the needs of the young and of older people are given particular attention. With regard to the former this should relate to the incorporation of age-appropriate green spaces into all developments in accordance with the provisions of the document 'Play Space Guidelines 2007 (DDDA 2006). With regard to the latter it should include the provision of separate cycle paths, the provision of level, well-maintained, non-slip walkways and convenient access to parks and green spaces as recommended by the WHO Age-Friendly Cities Programme. This policy will be implemented through the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine which proposals to other funders should receive the backing of public bodies in the area; and through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate.
- 10 That new facilities will be provided in a manner that will seek to encourage physical activity amongst different age groups in a single location by, for example, providing a children's playground and an adult outdoor gym or walking area in close proximity. In addition, that where significant facilities are planned, these should be located, where possible, close to schools and public open space.
- 11 That particular consideration be given to the provision within publicly-funded facilities, of the spaces and equipment necessary to accommodate those activities that have been identified as being most likely to encourage additional participation in sports or physical activities amongst the resident population.
- 12 That the needs of those with a disability are provided for in the design and development of facilities for sports and physical recreation. Such an approach should include the following –
  - The incorporation of provision for those with a disability in the design of new facilities
  - The making of special provision for those with a disability in certain circumstances e.g. the provision of boardwalk areas on walking routes
  - The development and implementation of a programme of upgrading of those facilities that cannot currently adequately accommodate those with disabilities

This policy will be implemented through the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine which proposals to other funders should receive the backing of public bodies in the area; and through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate.

- 13 That the needs of those who cannot afford to pay for the use of facilities be taken into account when new facilities or the integration of existing facilities are being proposed and that mechanisms are incorporated into the project proposal which will help to address this issue. In addition and in order to facilitate access by those with limited resources, that the pricing policies of facilities be such as to require a reasonable level of payment by those that can afford to do so.

In addition that the needs of the working population be taken into account when new facilities or the integration of existing facilities are being proposed and that mechanisms are incorporated into the project proposal which will help to address this issue with particular regard to the provision of opening hours that are convenient for this population.

Also, that the provision of public transport to proposed facilities and to existing facilities not currently served by such transport will be examined as part of the objective of maximising access to sports and physical recreation opportunities for all, with the intention of arranging for the establishment of such services where possible.

This policy will be implemented through the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine which proposals to other funders should receive the backing of public bodies in the area; and through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate.

### **The Need for New Facilities**

14 That new developments of the following types of facility will generally not be supported within the area unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there is a need for the facility and that its provision will not impact on the viability of other existing facilities either within the strategy area or in areas that border it –

- Golf Course
- Private swimming pool other than in an education context
- Racecourse
- Greyhound Stadium

15 That facilities and resources associated with the following sports and activities will generally be permitted subject to meeting environmental protection requirements and the identification of a market need that will not give rise to deadweight or displacement; and that proactive actions will be taken to enhance access to such facilities particularly through the provision of year-round parking, pathway and storage facilities where required.

- Walking trails both urban (Sli na Slainte) and rural and associated amenities such as sculpture trails or nature walks. The provision of walking trails in urban environments is of specific benefit as it provides for the most common form of physical activity undertaken by the urban population, it requires little investment or maintenance as most of the facilities are in place and it offers an opportunity to link sports and recreation provision with the objectives of the Smarter Travel agenda.
- Dedicated cycle routes. In this regard particular attention should be paid to the potential to use abandoned routes such as the Abbeyfeale railway line and the West Clare railway line for the provision of new facilities.

- Mountain-bike trails. In this regard, in particular, the Ballyhoura bike trail system should be developed and enhanced with the provision of additional facilities to accommodate a wide range of users including families.
- Other trails including long-distance walking and cycling routes which should be developed in accordance with the principles set out in the publication 'Creating Green Infrastructure in Ireland' (Comhar, 2010).
- Water-based activities on the Shannon, the Shannon Estuary, the Fergus and the Fergus Estuary including sailing, marine sailing, canoeing and kayaking, rowing, surfing, wind-surfing, and fishing. In this regard, specific provision should be made for rowing within the Limerick Metropolitan Area in order to benefit from one of the best stretches of rowing water in the country by, amongst other things, the holding of regattas in the area.
- Equestrian Activities. In this regard specific provision should be made for indoor facilities for equestrian activities in Limerick and within the Ennis Area.
- Children's playgrounds and adult outdoor gyms particularly in areas where the level of provision is less than the national average. Such provision should be made in accordance with the standards set out in the document 'Play Space Guidelines 2007' (DDDA 2006).
- Other outdoor activities such as mountain climbing, orienteering and rock-climbing.

### **Integration of the Use of Facilities**

- 16 That where public access to a particular type of facility is not available but a private facility is available in the area, to seek to make arrangements with the private facility owner for the provision of public access.
- 17 That the adoption of integrated multi-sport models of facility provision be promoted and supported where possible and appropriate. Such multi-sport models will promote the inclusion of public, voluntary, school-based and privately-owned facilities in a particular area under a joint management body in order to maximise the use of existing facilities, to ensure that facilities do not lie idle more than is necessary and to ensure that where new facilities are proposed they will be provided only where there is a clear lack of capacity in the area. The promotion of such a model will be carried out through the nature of the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine when proposals to other funders should receive the endorsement of public bodies in the area; through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate; and through the promotion of the adoption of this policy by funders at national and regional level.
- 18 That it will be a policy of all those engaged in the development and management of sports and physical recreation in the area to promote the adoption of the concept of Healthy Stadia.

A Healthy Stadium is, one that promotes the health of visitors, fans and the local community – and one that provides a place where people can go and have a positive, healthy experience playing or watching sport.

The Healthy Stadia concept is firmly based on a commitment to partnership and requires a multi-stakeholder approach comprising three elements; creating supportive and healthy working and living environments, integrating health promotion into the daily activities of the setting and developing links with other settings and with the wider community.

- 19 That where a new sports or community hall is being provided it is designed to be of a size that will accommodate those sports that require the greatest floor area and that the granting of permission for the provision of such a development be dependent on its being designed to such a standard.
- 20 That where new all-weather pitches are being provided they should be designed to accommodate those sports that require the largest playing area and that provision be made for the installation of flood-lighting when possible.
- 21 That the provision of sports hall and pitch facilities be based on an integrated multi-sport model and that the promoters of any such facility be required to indicate how such integration will be implemented and that undertakings be given with regard to the on-going provision of coaching and other supports.
- 22 That different models for the integration of sports facility provision at community level be supported. These models include a single-site model in which all facilities both indoor and outdoor are accommodated on the one site and a multi-site model in which both new and existing facilities located on one or more sites are managed in an integrated way through the use of mechanisms that have a legal status and that can ensure the on-going participation of facility owners and the overall community.
- 23 That where integrated facilities are being provided a floodlit walking route is incorporated as part of the overall development.
- 24 That the local community served by a particular facility be involved in the design, development and management of such facility.

### **Development and Management of Sports Clubs**

- 25 That collaborative mechanisms for the establishment of new sports clubs at key locations be examined to facilitate the taking up of a range of individual non-invasive sports by all age groups. Such collaborative mechanisms should include community and voluntary organisations, national governing bodies, local development organisations, public bodies and educational bodies and would be appropriately promoted and supported by the Local Sports Partnerships. The types of sports that might be considered under this heading include gymnastics, martial arts, racquet sports, aerobics, dance, athletics, sulky-racing and cycling as well as team sports. Sports that have a specific historic and cultural value should be particularly considered for support under this heading.

- 26 That the enhancement of the Governance of individual organisations that own and manage facilities that are or that might be used for sports and physical recreation activities be supported in order to provide the management bodies of such organisations with the confidence and the capacity to engage in the collaborative and integrated models and processes outlined in this document. Mechanisms for the implementation of this objective will include the application of a Club Mentoring Programme and the provision of coordinated support to voluntary organisations.
- 27 That the tenure of sporting organisations with regard to land they hold from public authorities will be examined and amended where necessary and possible with the purpose of facilitating the achievement of the community-based, multi-sport integrated approaches referred to in this strategy.
- 28 That with regard to a small number of community and voluntary organisations which provide substantial sports and physical recreation facilities that are open to the general public and which face on-going uncertainties and funding challenges arising from their public service role, a long-term and sustainable funding system be identified and developed for such organisations and that the barriers to such organisations accessing funding are addressed. Such funding mechanisms should provide for on-going maintenance and development as well as providing support for normal operational costs.

### **Economic Potential of Sport and Physical Recreation**

- 29 That the needs of the tourism sector are taken into account when proposals for new development or activities are being considered and that the proposers of facilities which will be reliant on visitors for their viability be requested to provide evidence of the likely use of the facility by visitors to the area and that the proposed facility will not undermine the viability of existing facilities in the area.
- 30 That pro-active steps be taken to promote international, national and regional sporting events within the area, particularly those such as the Great Limerick Run that involve mass participation and that the benefits of the designation of Limerick as Ireland's European City of Sport be built on in this context. In addition, the development of Limerick as a centre for Sports Medicine should be pursued through the collaboration of sporting organisations, Higher Education Institutes and other relevant organisations.

### **Environmental Considerations**

- 31 That where existing facilities are being upgraded the opportunity will be taken to upgrade those aspects of the facility that have an impact on the environment including the reduction in the use of energy, the improvement in the systems used for the treatment and disposal of waste-water and the management of associated activities to address any negative environmental impacts arising from them.
- 32 That where infrastructure developments are being undertaken, consideration will be given to whether and to what extent facilities for sport and physical recreation can be incorporated in the design and that where such provision is possible it will be made.

- 33 That when open space is being provided in association with other developments or as stand-alone amenities the quality of the open space as well as its quantity will be assessed with particular regard to its role in promoting sports and physical recreation either in itself or through the added value it provides for existing facilities. A matrix for the provision of open space such as that contained in the Limerick City Development Plan should be adopted.
- 34 That nothing in this strategy should be interpreted so as to prevent the implementation of the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary when it is adopted insofar as it applies to Sport and Physical Recreation.
- 35 That actions be taken to implement a 'Leave No Trace' approach to the use of the natural environment for sports and physical recreation so that the any natural amenity used by the public should not be impacted upon by that use and anything taken into the natural environment will be taken out again by the user.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

International research has established the importance of recreational and physical activities in combating and mitigating a range of serious health and socio-economic issues from tackling the growing obesity epidemic, improving mental health, promoting the inclusion of marginalised or disenfranchised groups in society to boosting local economic development and enhancing participation and engagement among the elderly and people with disabilities.

The main aim of the Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy, therefore, is to develop a framework to coordinate the objectives and targets of key stakeholders in a cohesive and integrated plan for the area and to work together in ensuring the provision, management and use of quality facilities and services for everyone, including future generations. Through the strategy, county and city councils and other key stakeholders can work together to determine key recreational priorities for the region and to demonstrate commitment, cooperation and shared vision in developing sport and physical recreational opportunities for all, with an improvement in the health and overall quality of life of those who live and work in the area as well as those who visit it. The following is stated in the brief for the preparation of a Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy for County Clare, County Limerick and Limerick Metropolitan Area.

Recreational facilities and amenities exist at regional, county and local levels and perform a number of inter-related functions. They are an integral part of the quality-of-life infrastructure and contribute significantly to the physical, mental and social health of the population; they contribute significantly to the attractiveness of an area as a location for inward investment and as a desirable destination for a mobile labour market; and they add to the tourism and visitor infrastructure particularly in the context of activity and adventure holidays.

Over recent years the significant improvements in the traffic and transport infrastructure of the Mid-West region has resulted in substantial increases in both intra and inter-regional accessibility. This means that facilities and other recreation resources that may not have been accessible in a meaningful way have now become more accessible to the population of the region and visitors alike.

Sports and recreational infrastructure has, historically, been largely provided by local communities in towns, rural areas and counties. With some notable exceptions (major sporting facilities for example), facilities and infrastructure has often been put in place with the intention of providing for a local population and its visitors alone. Often, little thought has been given to the potential of the facility to serve a wider population outside the community or the applicable administrative area as a whole. This has sometimes resulted in the wasteful duplication of facilities, difficulties being experienced by the owners and management of the facilities in ensuring their on-going viability and under-utilisation of expensive infrastructure.

*(Delaney, Liam and Tony Fahey, Social and economic value of sport in Ireland, ESRI, 2005)*



It is to address these issues that it has been agreed between the relevant Local Authorities that a Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy be developed. . It should be noted that though this strategy has regard to other areas, the strategy itself applies only to the administrative areas of County Clare and Limerick City and County and that, in particular, it specifically does not apply to the administrative area of North Tipperary.

The strategy is sub-regional and high-level in its approach, and does not, therefore, focus on community-based or community level facilities though it does recognise their importance and does refer to them. These facilities are primarily aimed at the needs of local communities rather than regional populations and perform an important function in that role. While not analysing this provision in any depth, however, the strategy does provide some guidance on best practice in the governance and management of such facilities and the criteria that might be used in deciding whether or not such facilities should receive public funding support.

It should also be noted that the strategy does not focus on non-active recreation such as provided for by cultural facilities. While this is another important area of provision it is beyond the scope of this project.

### **Review of Current Knowledge**

The strategy examines current knowledge with regards to sport and physical recreation within the area under consideration (though some account is also taken of the areas beyond the boundaries of Limerick and Clare). This review examines, amongst other things, levels of participation in sports and physical recreation by the people of Limerick and Clare with particular regard to the nature of the activities undertaken as well as the reasons for non-participation.

In addition, the review examines the impact of travel times and facility quality on the distances that people are willing to travel to make use of a facility. It suggests that travel distance has a significant effect though no clear appropriate distances are identified as being desirable. A review of data from England and Australia suggests very short travel distances of between 3 km and 6 km being desirable but it is considered that these are unrealistic for many kinds of facilities in Ireland.

### **Review of Current Plans and Strategies**

A review was also carried out of current plans and strategies with regard to sport and physical recreation, including those of –

- The Planning Authorities
- The Regional Authority
- The former Limerick City Regeneration Agency
- Local Sports Partnerships
- National Sporting Bodies including the GAA, the FAI and the IRFU
- Tourism Development Strategies

## Themes that emerged from these reviews

The themes that emerged from a review of the data and strategies were as follows –

### *1. Role of Sports and Physical Recreation*

Sports and Physical Recreation is seen as an important element in all aspects of life and for all ages. It is common knowledge by now that sport and physical recreation have important health benefits both physical and psychological. However, sport and recreation are also seen as having important social and economic impacts both direct and indirect. Indeed one strategy suggested that the development of sporting and recreational facilities could have a major impact on social behavior as much by the social significance that would be associated with such development as by the physical activity to which it would give rise.

### *2. The range of sports and recreation facilities that are already available in the region and in close proximity thereto*

The Limerick/Clare area already has a wide range of facilities both natural and built available to it. For an area of its size it is well provided with large stadia that can accommodate mass sporting events. The area also has newly-developed specialist sporting facilities as well as training and physical conditioning facilities of national standard.

This does not mean that all sports are well catered for but it does mean that the facilities that remain to be developed are less numerous than might be the case in other regions.

### *3. The extent to which the Limerick/Clare area reflects national trends with respect to sports and physical recreation participation*

The studies carried out in the Mid-West Region and in the Limerick and Clare areas in particular suggest that the trends in the region mirror national trends very closely. These trends relate to levels of participation and inactivity, to the age and social profiles of participants and to the most popular physical and sporting activities. This means that national data can reasonably be applied to the Limerick and Clare population with regard to these topics.

### *4. The nature of the activities that are of greatest interest to the local and visitor populations*

There is a clear trend as to the most popular sporting and physical recreation activities amongst the various populations. The positive aspect of this data is that much of the facilities that need to be provided in order to facilitate enhanced activity is not very costly. Much attention is paid to mass sporting occasions and to team games. However, the percentage of the population that participates actively in team sports after school leaving age is small. However, the activities that people do participate in are more individual pursuits that are generally well provided for and that can be easily enhanced by low-cost provision of facilities. The one exception in this regard is swimming. In general, swimming facilities are mentioned as an important resource though the level of usage by the public in general is such that most public facilities require public subvention and most private facilities require a variety of other associated activities to remain viable.

#### *5. The perceived importance of water-sport development*

This is seen by virtually all plans and strategies as being of significant importance in the area both for visitors and the local population. Given the wealth of water resources in the area this is not surprising.

#### *6. The need to provide for those who are in danger of being marginalized and excluded*

This is reflected in the 'whole-of-life' or 'lifecycle' approach taken by most organisations when developing their strategies. This approach adopts the broadest possible view when considering recreation needs and is typically targeted at the following groups: children, young adults, elderly, people with disabilities and people experiencing social exclusion. This also needs to be reflected in the way facilities are designed and operated so that those with most barriers to participation are most facilitated.

An interesting point in this context, however, is that lack of access, transport or cost was not mentioned as prohibitive factors for the inactive population in the Mid-West. On the other hand, however, disability or illness and age were mentioned by significant numbers.

#### *7. The need to find a balance between the over-provision of expensive facilities that require larger populations and the provision of reasonable access to a wide range of the most-used facilities*

In studies such as this a lot of attention tends to be focused on the development of facilities for team and specialist sports. However, the evidence clearly suggests that activities such as walking and hiking, cycling, gyms and similar individual, non-invasive activities are those most likely to give rise to additional physical and sporting activity. It is important, therefore, that access to the lower impact but high-demand facilities is maximized and that a more strategic approach be taken to the provision of the more specialized facilities.

#### *8. The importance of the development of sports clubs for particular sports as well as the development of the facilities to sustain them*

While the development of facilities for sport and physical recreation is extremely important, the development and support of clubs to facilitate the taking up of activities that are less high-profile and less wide-spread is also important. Thus, there are few clubs for many forms of sport such as gymnastics, badminton, tennis and so on as well as other outdoor team sports such as cricket. The need to provide some focus on the development of the soft infrastructure for sport development as well as the hard infrastructure is another emerging theme.

#### *9. The need to maximize the use of the facilities that already exist in the community, to upgrade and to enhance them where necessary as well as to provide new facilities*

Many communities already have a significant range of existing and potential facilities within them. As resources for the provision of facilities become more and more constrained it is important that the use of existing facilities is maximized. This may require some upgrading of facilities but it will also mean changes in governance, changes in the way in which access is provided to facilities and the management of the total community resource in an integrated way by the community with external advice and guidance where necessary.

#### *10. The need to ensure that new investment in facilities allows for maximum access*

The need to maximize the return on public investment in sports and recreation facilities, particularly at community level, will require that where new investments are being made, the making available of the facilities being funded to a wide range of users will need to be ensured. This has been recently emphasised by Government Ministers and it is important that such an approach be reflected in this strategy.

These themes formed the basis of the strategic approach that was developed in the document.

### **Distribution of Population and Current Facilities**

The review of the location of facilities concluded that some facilities, such as walking routes and fishing locations for example, were very widely distributed, while others, such as swimming pools, golf courses and multi-sports facilities, were less well distributed. In this regard Clare and the area in the vicinity of Limerick Metropolitan Area were reasonably well served. However, the West Limerick area is less well served with facilities. When considering the West Limerick area, however, regard must also be had to facilities in other counties as parts of West Limerick can be serviced by facilities in North Kerry, North Cork and West Tipperary. It is also noted that a wide range of facilities are available within individual communities.

### **Outcomes of Consultations**

Consultations were held with a wide range of organisations as part of the process. These consultations had a general impact on the proposed policies but, in particular, their outcomes can be classified as follows –

#### *Plans for the provision of additional facilities*

A number of organisations have plans or intentions to provide or facilitate the provision of additional substantial facilities. These include –

- Limerick City Regeneration in respect of Multi-Sport Facilities in the Moyross and Southhill areas
- The University of Limerick with regard to the provision of additional facilities at the UL Arena
- Limerick Institute of Technology which has intentions of providing additional facilities to serve its Limerick City Campuses
- Limerick FC which has plans to provide a large-scale training facility for underage players and the re-development of Market's Field as a small-scale stadium

Others envisaged the provision of additional facilities to serve a wide population including the Clare FA which envisages the provision of all-weather facilities in Shannon.

Other organisations indicated that there was a possibility that new developments might take place but that there were no specific plans with respect to such developments.

Other organisations did not envisage any further development of a substantial nature in the short-to-medium term.

### *Adequacy of existing provision*

A number of organisations considered that the existing provision within the area and the surrounding counties was adequate for current purposes. This related, in particular, to horse-racing and greyhound racing provision. Both organisations indicated that there was adequate spare capacity within the current facilities and that any growth in demand could be adequately addressed by the existing facilities.

No organisation which was consulted suggested that there was over-provision of facilities though it was acknowledged that with respect to some facilities such as public swimming pools, their survival was dependent on continued public subvention.

Some organisations that were responsible for multi-sport facilities also indicated that maintaining the viability of such facilities required considerable management flexibility and the use of the facilities for non-sporting but profitable purposes

### *Organisational Issues*

Organisational issues arose regularly in the course of consultations. These related to a wide range of issues but amongst those that arose on more than one occasion were those set out below. It became clear during the course of the discussion that organisational and operational issues were as important as the question of the provision of the facilities themselves.

- The importance of the provision of access to facilities as well as the provision of the facilities themselves
- The need to provide for all age-groups from the young to the older populations
- The need to make specific provision for those that have particular needs including those with disabilities
- The importance of including local communities in the design and operation of facilities so that there is local ownership and buy-in and so that local communities feel a responsibility in the provision of facilities
- The importance of the use of multi-sport models for the provision of facilities at a community level which also reflects current Government policy
- The importance of good governance and the enhancement of the capacity of local organisations that own facilities and potential facilities in order to ensure that they are in a position to maximise the manner in which the facilities are used
- The importance of the provision of facilities for non-team and non-invasive sports as well as those for team sports

- The importance of the establishment of community-based, inter-organisational structures to manage facilities in a particular area in a co-ordinated and integrated way.

### *Economic and social role of sport and physical recreation*

It was noted by a number of those consulted that sport and physical recreation had a significant role to play in enhancing social life and in providing opportunities for economic activity within the area. This was particularly related to the role of sport in physical recreation in attracting tourists and other visitors to the area and in encouraging them to make use of the various facilities, both natural and built, that the area has to offer.

The contribution that sports and recreation facilities make to employment in the study area was also recognised.

### **Review of Gaps and Over-Provision**

It was one of the objectives of the strategy that a review would be carried out of gaps and over-provision. However, in many cases it is difficult to be precise about those facilities that are adequate, overly-provided or under-provided. Adequacy of provision is also related to accessibility as well as to location; in some cases certain sectors of the population are excluded from participation, in some cases physical access or the facilities to accommodate such access is the issue, while in other cases geographic distance is the issue.

The strategic approach considers the extent of provision of certain large-scale facilities and identifies those that are adequate for present purposes. In this regard, when account is taken of the availability of many types of facility the study area seems well provided for.

However, the adequacy of provision at a more local or community level is more difficult to assess. The strategy suggests that this will need to be done on a case by case basis and in the context of the tiered approach to facility provision that is identified in the strategy.

The extent of gaps and over-provision is complicated in the context of Limerick and Clare by the nature of the mechanisms through which facilities in Ireland have tended to be provided in the past and by the additional demand for certain facilities that come from the significant foreign and domestic tourism activity in the area.

With regard to the Irish mechanisms for the provision of facilities, a significantly higher proportion of this has been done through individual sporting organisations than has tended to be the case in other countries. Reports on the European and UK models of provision suggest that a far higher proportion of these facilities are provided by public bodies and by education institutions than is the norm in Ireland. In Ireland many facilities have been provided for the exclusive use of individual clubs and other organisations even if the facility is not fully utilised by that organisation. In addition, a substantial amount of voluntary effort is used in running and managing such facilities, so it is difficult to be certain as to the population required in order to make them viable.

With regard to visitors to the area, they are particularly interested in using specific types of facilities and, while many of the activities favoured by visitors such as walking, hiking and cycling do not require the provision of major, capital-intensive facilities, some activities such as golf do require such

facilities. It is likely that there is an over-provision of such facilities in Limerick and Clare based on the needs of the local population alone but that these facilities remain viable based on their use by visitors to the area.

## **Strategic Approach**

The strategic approach was developed taking into account the following –

- The information gathered and evaluated
- The outcomes of the consultations
- Existing plans and strategies

## **Implementing the Strategy**

It is recognised that the strategy will be of no significance if it is not implemented. A number of key implementation steps are identified. While public and publicly funded bodies are seen as the key partners in this exercise, the implementation of the strategy is to some extent the responsibility of all stake holders.

Amongst the initial implementation steps identified are the following –

1. Each Planning Authority should decide how to adopt and implement the policies contained in the strategy and carry out the steps necessary to implement that decision. Consideration should be given as to how the Strategy can be used as a guidance document by the Planning Authority in the context of other Regional Strategies such as the Retail and Housing Strategies.
2. The Regional Authority should consider the extent to which the policies contained in this strategy should be reflected in the Regional Planning Guidelines and should take steps to accommodate them if necessary in those Guidelines.
3. The public bodies responsible for the local development of sports and physical recreation, and in particular the Local Authorities, Local Development Companies and Local Sports Partnerships should establish local forums to consider how the policies contained in this strategy should be implemented. The initial tasks of these local forums should include the following where relevant –
  - a. To identify the most appropriate locations for the major multi-sport facilities identified as being required in the Limerick Metropolitan Area
  - b. To identify the centres which should form the basis of the 20 km and 10 km catchment structure
  - c. To identify the facilities that should be included at the three levels of centre (20 km, 10 km and community) referred to in the strategy
  - d. To develop guidelines for the establishment of collaborative community structures for the integrated provision and management of facilities as referred to at (b)

- e. To develop and promote guidelines for the provision of facilities in a manner that will facilitate use by all members of the community including the young, older people, people with disabilities and those without the financial resources to access pay facilities
  - f. To develop a good practice guideline for the structure and management of those organisations that are involved in these collaborative community processes
  - g. To engage with the providers of private facilities and to examine ways in which such facilities could be made more available to the community in general
- 4. Each Local Authority should develop a protocol regarding the provision of funding by it to sports and physical recreation development proposals and the conditions under which such provision should be made.
  - 5. Each Local Authority should develop a protocol regarding the provision of endorsement by it to sports and physical recreation development proposals seeking funding from others and the conditions under which such provision should be made.
  - 6. Each Local Authority should carry out a review of the tenure and usage of land under its control that has been assigned to bodies responsible for the provision of sports and physical recreation facilities in the context of the policies contained in this strategy and the good practice guidelines referred to at 3 above, and should consider amending the nature and conditions of the tenure depending on the outcome of that review.
  - 7. Each other public and publicly funded body with a funding remit should develop a protocol regarding the provision of funding by it to sports and physical recreation development proposals and the conditions under which such provision should be made.
  - 8. Each public and publicly-funded body should develop a protocol regarding the provision of endorsement by it to sports and physical recreation development proposals seeking funding from others and the conditions under which such provision should be made.
  - 9. Each Local Authority and other provider of infrastructure should develop a mechanism to ensure that the potential of infrastructure projects to deliver sports and physical recreation facilities is considered as part of the design process.



## **Impact of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Habitats Directive Assessment Screening**

As noted earlier, an SEA and HDA Screening were carried out by Limerick Institute of Technology for Clare County Council, Limerick City Council and Limerick County Council as part of the development of this strategy. The outcome of the SEA was to suggest that all of the policies were appropriate provided certain conditions are complied with. The following conditions are also part of the policy, therefore, and must be taken into account when specific actions are being considered in the context of the strategy.

1. The major centres identified for sport and recreation growth have or will require waste-water treatment systems that discharge to river systems. Many of these systems contain Natura 2000 Sites that would be vulnerable to inadequately treated waste-water discharges. Therefore, policies for the development of sport and recreation in such areas must be contingent on the provision of waste-water treatment systems with a capacity to produce waste water discharges of a standard that will not impact negatively on downstream Natura 2000 Sites. Where a development cannot be shown not to have a negative impact even with mitigation measures being adopted, then the development cannot be permitted except in the very unusual circumstances of an Imperative Reason of Overriding Public Interest being involved.
2. In addition to the impact from waste-water sport and recreation developments may have other negative implications for Natura 2000 Sites. These implications may be related to the physical destruction of a habitat, the impact of air emissions, the impact of traffic, noise and other general activities and light pollution. No sport and recreation policy shall be adopted or development permitted unless it can be demonstrated through the carrying out of an EHDA that the development will not impact negatively on a Natura 2000 Site or that where such an impact is likely it can be mitigated satisfactorily. Where a development cannot be shown not to have a negative impact even with mitigation measures being adopted, then the development cannot be permitted except in the very unusual circumstances of an Imperative Reason of Overriding Public Interest being involved.
3. Developments associated with rural sport and recreation may have implications for Natura 2000 Sites either because of the activity, footfall and general habitat disturbance associated with their development or due to ancillary services such as water abstraction, waste-water discharge or traffic associated with them. In the case of Natura 2000 Sites no permission should be granted for any specific development unless and until an adequate assessment, including, where necessary an Extended HDA has been carried out and such assessment has concluded that the policy or project will have no detrimental impact on the site in question or that adequate mitigating measures are possible. Where a development cannot be shown not to have a negative impact even with mitigation measures being adopted, then the development cannot be permitted except in the very unusual circumstances of an Imperative Reason of Overriding Public Interest being involved.
4. Even where Natura 2000 Sites are not impacted on, any development of sport and recreation should be contingent on the effluent arising from it being such that it will not

impact on any waste-water treatment system whether private or public, that will prevent that system discharging a final effluent that meets the requirements of the appropriate River Basin District Management Plans.

5. Even where Natura 2000 Sites are not impacted on, any development or activity associated with sport and recreation, should be contingent upon its not impacting negatively on the natural environment, as defined in Section 3.1.3 above, and no such development or activity should be permitted until it has been demonstrated that such is the case or that mitigation measures adequate to address the impacts can be implemented.
6. Rural sport and recreation developments may be proposed in areas without a piped waste-water collection and treatment system and this has implications for the quality of groundwater in the region. The RBD analyses have identified areas within the region where the quality of the ground-water is not adequate. Any development that requires the provision of a private treatment system should be considered in the context of the following:
  - The quality of the groundwater into which the effluent will discharge and the need to preserve or improve that quality;
  - The quality of the effluent proposed to be discharged from the waste-water treatment process;
  - The quantity of the effluent proposed to be discharged;
  - The capacity of the ground to enhance the quality of the final effluent;
  - Proposals for the management and maintenance of the treatment system;
  - The capacity of the Local Authority to monitor the quality of the discharge.

No development should take place until it has been demonstrated that the quality of the groundwater will not be impaired as a result of the development.

7. Areas that contain or are designated as Natura 2000 sites are also liable to exhibit some of the technical characteristics that would facilitate the development of high-quality facilities particularly associated with activities such as cycling, walking, hiking or mountain-biking. No policies should be adopted or permission granted for developments liable to impact on a Natura 2000 Site unless and until an Extended HDA has concluded that the proposed development would not have a negative impact on such a site or that mitigation measures which would eliminate such impacts can be identified and applied.
8. As noted above, in implementing this strategy, full regard must be had to the requirements of the Habitats Directive including the carrying out of an assessment of the implications for any Natura 2000 Site that might be at risk from any proposed development. While all Natura 2000 Sites are of key importance, a number have particular importance as they contain species that are of particular relevance as indicators of environmental quality.

A key species in this regard is the Fresh Water Pearl Mussel and particular care must be taken that activities do not pose a threat to species such as this, whether they lie within or without the area of the strategy. Where such an impact is identified the development must be mitigated or, where that is not possible must not be implemented unless the procedure relating to developments of Overriding National Importance has been completed.

This consideration applies to developments in the following areas –

- Those that involve discharges to the Cloon River;
  - Those that involve discharge to the Blackwater River or its tributaries;
9. In considering the management of flood risk regard should be to current flooding risks and the impact of climate change on existing defences and on the flood risk of any proposed development.
  10. In addition, in considering the impact of any proposed policy or project that is liable to give rise to a waste-water treatment demand, the likely cumulative impact of such demands that are liable to arise from any source shall be considered and no policy shall be adopted or development permitted that would result in the capacity of the area's waste water treatment system to be exceeded by the cumulative demands of successive developments.
  11. Finally, in considering the impact of any proposed policy or project that is liable to give rise to impacts on a Natura 2000 Site, the likely cumulative effect of such impacts that are liable to arise from any source shall be considered and no policy shall be adopted or development permitted that would result in the deterioration of the site's habitat status either by itself or cumulatively with other developments or activities.

The Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy, does not identify areas or sites for development that are sufficiently specific to permit or require a detailed assessment of their impact on any Natura 2000 site. Such assessments, where necessary, should be carried out when a specific project is being considered. However, the general environmental conditions incorporated in the strategy provide adequate protection to Natural 2000 sites.

## **MAIN REPORT**

## 1. Introduction

International research has established the importance of recreational and physical activities in combating and mitigating a range of serious health and socio-economic issues from tackling the growing obesity epidemic, improving mental health, promoting the inclusion of marginalised or disenfranchised groups in society to boosting local economic development and enhancing participation and engagement among the elderly and people with disabilities.

In relation to health for instance, two European studies have shown that the trend towards a more sedentary lifestyle and physical inactivity can cost about €150 – €300 per citizen per year (Martin et al, 2001 and UK Department of Health, 2001). Increasing current levels of physical activity could significantly reduce the costs to society, but even maintaining them can result in savings (Cavill et al, 2006). Given the recent economic downturn, participation in recreational and physical activities seems even more important now as a means of promoting physical, mental and emotional well-being and as a means of enhancing social inclusion and engagement.

With growing awareness of the importance of recreational engagement in international, EU and national policy making, policy makers, local government, healthcare professionals and educators need to better understand the wide ranging impacts of recreational and leisure participation as a means of improving the overall health and well-being of society as a whole.

Sport and physical recreation had a significant role to play in providing opportunities for economic activity within the area. This is particularly related to the role of sport and physical recreation in attracting tourists and other visitors to the area and in encouraging them to make use of the various facilities, both natural and built, that the area has to offer.

The contribution that sports and recreation facilities make to employment in the study area was also of significant importance.

As well as the health and economic benefits of sport and physical recreation, they also have important social benefits. With the decline of many traditional forms of community structures, sport and physical recreation has the capacity to provide a basis for the development of social cohesion. In an ESRI Report published in 2005, for example, Delaney and Fahey state that

‘The social capital literature has heavily stressed the role of activities such as sport in bringing people together, counteracting loneliness and social isolation, forming networks and strengthening communities. In this regard, many activities connected with sport, such as playing in team games, volunteering for sports or taking part in club activities, are highly social in that the activities themselves bring people into social contact with each other.’

*(Delaney, Liam and Tony Fahey, Social and economic value of sport in Ireland, ESRI, 2005)*

While written policy in Ireland has focused mainly on young people (Teenspace, Ready, Steady, Play!), the importance of participation in recreational activities and leisure pursuits is just as important for adults, elderly persons, people with disabilities ethnic minorities and groups vulnerable to social exclusion and marginalisation.

Sports and physical recreation can also make a significant cultural statement and can contribute to a sense of community and a sense of place in this context. Within the area sports and recreational activities such as road bowling, horse riding, hunting, pony trekking, drag hunting, coursing, angling (fly, course, shore & sea), currach racing, rowing, surfing, hill walking, sailing, surfing, kite-surfing, parachuting, sea-kayaking, rock-climbing, set dancing and so on have either long histories, association with the physical and social environment or both. The facilitation of the continuation and development of these activities is important from a cultural perspective.

The main aim of the Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy, therefore, is to develop a framework to coordinate the objectives and targets of key stakeholders in a cohesive and integrated plan for the area and to work together in ensuring the provision, management and use of quality facilities and services for everyone, including future generations. Through the strategy, county and city councils and other key stakeholders can work together to determine key recreational priorities for the region and to demonstrate commitment, cooperation and shared vision in developing sport and physical recreational opportunities for all, with an improvement in the health and overall quality of life of those who live and work in the area as well as those who visit it as the ultimate aim.

The Mid-West Region is already well supplied with sporting facilities. Ranging from the large facilities for field games in Limerick Metropolitan Area, Thurles and Ennis, through facilities for specialised sports such as horse and greyhound-racing, the facilities for sports that are provided in its third-level institutes, the privately owned but publicly accessible facilities such as golf courses and forest parks, the publicly provided and managed sports and recreation areas, the publicly accessible beaches and water courses to the facilities provided by community-based organisations in almost every parish, the region provides a comprehensive set of facilities for residents and visitors alike.

This is not to say that new facilities are not needed or that opportunities exist to provide substantial facilities to add to the quality of life of the residents of the region and its attractiveness to visitors. What is clear, however, is that any such new provision should be properly managed in a way which ensures the maximum benefit from such provision, which ensures its viability and which does not compromise the viability of similar existing facilities.

The following is stated in the brief for the preparation of a Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy for County Clare, County Limerick and Limerick Metropolitan Area.

Recreational facilities and amenities exist at regional, county and local levels and perform a number of inter-related functions. They are an integral part of the quality-of-life infrastructure and contribute significantly to the physical, mental

and social health of the population; they contribute significantly to the attractiveness of an area as a location for inward investment and as a desirable destination for a mobile labour market; and they add to the tourism and visitor infrastructure particularly in the context of activity and adventure holidays.

Over recent years the significant improvements in the traffic and transport infrastructure of the Mid-West region has resulted in substantial increases in both intra and inter-regional accessibility. This means that facilities and other recreation resources that may not have been accessible in a meaningful way have now become more accessible to the population of the region and visitors alike.

Sports and recreational infrastructure has, historically, been largely provided by local communities in towns, rural areas and counties. With some notable exceptions (major sporting facilities for example), facilities and infrastructure has often been put in place with the intention of providing for a local population and its visitors alone. Often, little thought has been given to the potential of the facility to serve a wider population outside the community or the applicable administrative area as a whole. This has sometimes resulted in the wasteful duplication of facilities, difficulties being experienced by the owners and management of the facilities in ensuring their on-going viability and under-utilisation of expensive infrastructure.

It is to address these issues that it has been agreed between the relevant Local Authorities that a Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy be developed. It should be noted that though this strategy has regard to other areas, the strategy itself applies only to the administrative areas of County Clare and Limerick City and County and that, in particular, it specifically does not apply to the administrative area of North Tipperary.

## **1.1 Objectives of Strategy**

The objectives which are addressed in this strategy are as follows -

- The development of a set of goals and objectives for the provision of sporting and physical recreation facilities in the area
- The preparation of an analysis of the existing provision within the focus area and adjacent areas
- A review of the population necessary to support different types of facility
- A review of current and projected future population within the relevant areas
- The identification of any gaps or excess in the provision of larger-scale facilities
- The identification of the resources available and gaps in provision for those with disabilities who wish to participate in sports and active recreation

- The identification of any opportunities for the provision of facilities that address a new sporting or active recreation area
- The development of a set of policies that will guide Local Authorities in their land-use management and development functions and provide information to others including other public and publicly-funded bodies who may wish to undertake the development of sports or physical recreation projects
- The carrying out of a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Directive Screening as part of the process of carrying out the strategy development.

Even where a need or opportunity for the provision of new facilities has been identified, specific sites are not specified for such developments. However, general areas have been identified for some such developments while the criteria that should be used to identify specific sites are included for all such developments.

The strategy does not focus on community-based or community level facilities though it does recognise their importance and does refer to them. These facilities are primarily aimed at the needs of local communities and perform an important function in that role. While not analysing this provision in any depth, however, the strategy does provide some guidance on best practice in the governance and management of such facilities and the criteria that might be used in deciding whether or not such facilities should receive public funding support.

It should also be noted that the strategy does not focus on non-active recreation such as provided for by cultural facilities. While this is another important area of provision it is beyond the scope of this project.

## **1.2 Area Under Consideration**

The principal areas considered by this strategy are the Metropolitan Area of Limerick and the Counties of Clare and Limerick as shown on the map at Figure 1 hereunder. However, as indicated on the map, the area under consideration must extend beyond these administrative areas. This is for two reasons—

- I. The facilities that are available in the parts of the surrounding city and counties provide a service to the population of the areas under consideration and
- II. The population in the accessible parts of the adjoining city and counties can act as part of the support population for the facilities located within the city and counties the subject of this study.

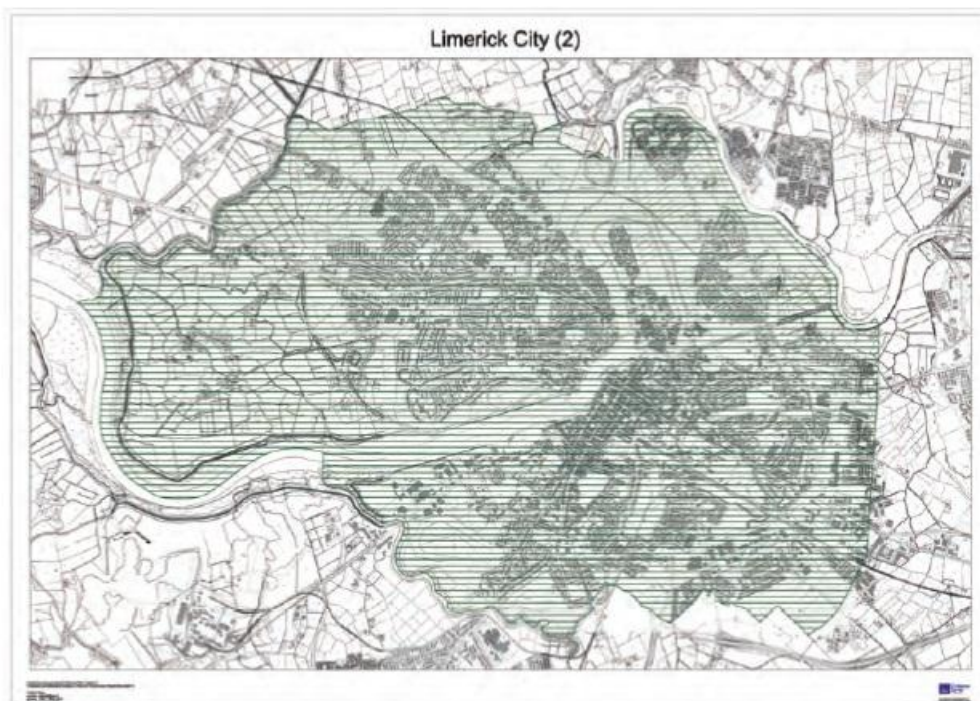
Therefore, parts of South Tipperary, North Tipperary, Cork, Kerry, Galway and Galway City are included for purposes of analysis.





**Figure 1 Map of Area of Analysis**

The following map indicates the boundaries of Limerick City within this area as presently designated.



**Figure 2 Map of Limerick City Area**

### **1.3 Activities that have been considered**

The activities that have been considered in the preparation of this strategy can be categorised in many ways. However, the following is an overall indication of the characteristics of those activities that have been included.

- Formally organised and informal activities
- Indoor and outdoor activities
- Minority and mass sports and activities
- Those requiring specialised facilities and those requiring more general facilities
- Those requiring specialised expensive equipment and those requiring less specialised and low-cost equipment
- Those requiring specific natural environments and those which can in principle take place in a variety of location

### **1.4 Methodology**

#### **1.4.1 Data Gathering**

Data was gathered from a variety of sources during the development of this strategy. These included published sources, the opinions of key stakeholders which are set out below and similar strategies in Ireland and abroad.

The data sources used included the following –

- The Draft National Sport Facilities Strategy 2012-2016
- An Evidence Base for Sports Facilities in London published by the Greater London Authority
- Ballpark Figures published by the Irish Sports Council
- City and County Development Plans of relevant authorities
- Limerick City Regeneration Plans (which are now being incorporated into Local Authority plans)
- Lough Derg Sustainable Marina, Recreational and Tourism Study
- Clare County Council Tourism Strategy 2010-2014
- North Tipperary Tourism Strategy

- CSO Census Data
- CSO QNHS on Sports Module 2006
- Draft Chapters for the Regional Sports Strategy produced by Clare County Council
- Increasing Walking - How Important Is Distance To, Attractiveness, and Size of Public
- Indoor Sports Facilities in Ireland (1995) published by Cospoir
- Internet websites regarding the nature and availability of facilities
- Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme – Policy and Value for Money Review published by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism
- Local Sports Partnership Strategies
- Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines
- Needs Assessment Guide – Sports and Recreation Guides published by the department of Sport and *Recreation* of the Government of Western Australia
- Increasing Walking. How Important Is Distance To, Attractiveness, and Size of Public by Billie Giles-Corti, PhD et al, 2005
- Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, published by the UK Department for Communities and Local Government
- Provision Of Public Open Space, Sport and Recreation Code of Practice (2004) published by North Devon District Council
- Sport And Recreational Exercise Among Adults (Aged 16+) In Clare And Limerick, 2007-2009 published by the Irish Sports Council and the ESRI
- The Irish Sports Monitor Report published by the Irish Sports Council
- Irish Sports Council Report on Children’s Sport Participation and Physical Activity
- EPA Environmental Reports

Various pieces of information were extracted from these sources and are reflected in the document below and in the proposed policies and strategic objectives.

#### 1.4.2 Consultation

A variety of key stakeholders were consulted in the development of this strategy. These consultations were based on a stakeholder engagement proposal that was developed in consultation with the Steering Group. The main purposes of the consultations were as follows –

- To identify the current level of provision of key facilities by the stakeholders
- To identify extent of the current capacity of those facilities that is utilised
- To identify any plans for future development
- To identify the catchment area of the users of the facility (this was generally possible on an anecdotal basis only)
- To identify any additional developments in the area that were considered necessary by the stakeholders
- To identify the accessibility of facilities for those with a disability and others with particular needs
- To identify accessibility to facilities for the general community including those who may often not be in a position to gain access to certain facilities

The following are the stakeholders who were consulted during this process. Some of this consultation took place through the Steering Group and some through specific meetings with the relevant organisations.

- All Local Authorities in the area
- Mid-West Regional Authority
- Limerick City Regeneration Agency (now incorporated into Limerick City Council)
- Sporting bodies responsible for the provision of major facilities or the organisation of major events including GAA, FAI and IRFU
- Commercial providers of large-scale facilities such as horse and greyhound racing
- Local Sports Partnerships
- Coillte
- Local Development Companies
- Shannon Development
- Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
- Third-level Institutions in the area
- Bodies with an input into the provision of recreational facilities for those with a disability
- Certain community groups with particular approaches to the provision of facilities

The following were consulted for the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Directive Assessment Screening

- Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
- Department of Arts, Tourism and Sport
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Department of Communications and Natural Resources
- EPA

Some of this consultation took place through the Steering Group, others took place in face-to-face meetings and some through telephone discussions.

The outcome of these consultations has informed sections 1.9, 2.1 and 3 below.

In addition to these specific consultations, notices were placed in relevant newspapers inviting submissions from any interested parties with regard to the issues being considered in the strategy.

#### *1.4.3 Application of Standards*

At the initial discussion regarding the preparation of the strategy it was intended that a set of appropriate standards would be developed regarding the issues of population thresholds that is the minimum market (population or income) needed to bring about the selling of a particular good or service and range that is the maximum distance consumers are prepared to travel to acquire goods. When applied to sports and recreation facilities this would refer to the size of population needed to support particular sporting facilities and the maximum distance that people are willing or should be expected to travel to access those facilities. The application of these standards would result in a mapping exercise that would indicate those areas that were possibly over supplied with particular types of facilities, those that were under-supplied with facilities and those that had no reasonable access to facilities. It should be remembered that, in this context, the facilities that are being considered are those that are of a regional scale in terms of size, cost and necessary support population.

This approach proved, however, to be somewhat more difficult than was originally anticipated. Little data exists regarding the distances that people should be or are willing to travel to facilities of a particular type. Indeed, when referring to swimming pools, the Department of Arts, Tourism and Sport quoting Geraint John and Kit Campbell states that “there is no such thing as ‘the’ catchment area of a pool. Instead the area from which users come ebbs and flows with the time of day, day of the week and season of the year.

Nevertheless, most 25m local pools serve essentially a fairly local market with the majority of users coming from within about 2 miles (approx. 3 kms.). Large leisure pools are likely to have the

largest catchment area, particularly at weekends. During the week in school terms, however, their catchment area may not be much larger than that of a 25m local pool."

The report goes on to state that "a 'rule of thumb' used in the U.K. swimming pool business is as follows – "The swimming pools will apply equally to an urban or rural location and should aim to serve a catchment population of 15,000-25,000. Targeted at the 'local' or 'neighbourhood' community, the facility should be seen as either to complement existing facilities or fill deficiencies in provision as identified in Regional Recreation Strategies or local district Plans."

*Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme -Value for Money and Policy Review Report, Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, 2005*

A further complicating factor in the Limerick and Clare areas is the impact of tourism use on the viability of facilities. It is likely that many of the commercial or semi-commercial facilities used by visitors would not exist if it was not for the income generated by that market.

In terms of accessibility to facilities, similar difficulties were experienced. Many publications consulted suggest distances of between 3 km and 6 km as the maximum distance likely to be travelled by regular users of a facility. However, consultations with the management of larger facilities carried out during the course of the preparation of this strategy suggested a catchment ranging up to 70 km. in certain directions.

A report carried out for Sport England concluded that 'In general, we have not found that overall sports participation ..... is impacted by the availability of facilities or accredited clubs' suggesting that provision does not of itself ensure participation.

*Understanding Variations in Sports Participation, Sports England, 2010*

Another study for Sports England on the use of synthetic turf pitches (a key resource in the context of the provision of multi-sport facilities) suggested the following in terms of the distances people are willing to travel to a facility.

*Synthetic Turf Pitch Study carried out for Sports England and Sports Scotland by TNS, 2006*

Distance Travelled	Sport Played			Pitch Surface		
	TOTAL %	Football %	Hockey %	3G %	Sand %	Water %
<b>Under 1.6 km</b>	19	19	9	20	19	*
<b>1,6 to 3.2 km</b>	19	20	14	16	21	9
<b>3.2 to 8.0km</b>	32	33	32	33	31	29
<b>8.0 to 16.0km</b>	17	18	18	18	16	13

Distance Travelled	Sport Played			Pitch Surface		
	TOTAL %	Football %	Hockey %	3G %	Sand %	Water %
16.0 to 32.0 km	7	6	12	6	8	18
More than 32.0km	6	4	16	6	5	30
Average distance	9.6 km	8km	17.6km	9.6km	9.6km	25.6km

**Table 1 Average Distances Travelled to Sports Facilities**

This suggests that though the majority of participants do not travel more than 8 km a considerable number are willing to travel a longer distance for a good quality facility. It is interesting to note also that the participants in more specialised sports were willing to travel further than participants in more mainstream sports.

A report prepared for Kilkee Waterworld in 2004 suggested that 80% of swimming pool business is generated from within a 20 minute drive time catchment in urban areas and a 30 minute drive time catchment in rural areas. In general, this suggests a 20 km radius as a reasonable catchment area for such facilities in a rural context and a smaller area in an urban context. Within the study area in general it is appropriate to treat all catchments as rural in that a substantial rural hinterland will be included in the catchments of all urban centres within the area.

In the light of these considerations it has been decided not to set prescriptive population targets for specific facilities. A five-level strategy of provision is identified and proposed in order to balance expensive provision with maximum access and having regard to the types of activities participated in by the majority of people,. This is outlined in more detail below.

However, in order to give some sense of the level of provision of some key capital-intensive facilities that might be appropriate, use was made of a tool developed by Sports England. This tool suggests that the following level of provision would be appropriate for a population of 310,000.

*Sports Facility Calculator, Sports England, 2012, <http://www.sportsengland.org/calculator>*

Facility	Amount
Swimming Pools	60 lanes
Sports Halls	90 courts
Synthetic Pitches	10 pitches

**Table 2 Need for Certain Facilities Using Sports England Model**



These figures must, of course, be treated with caution. For one thing, the range of major team sports in Ireland suggests that the number of synthetic pitches required may be higher than indicated by the UK model.

Notwithstanding the limitations of applying the basic UK model to Ireland, when account is taken of all pools within the study area and making some conservative assumptions, current provision is well in excess of the minimum required. Even when public facilities only are taken into account the level of provision is adequate, though access is, of course, a separate matter.

While the number of full-size synthetic pitches is somewhat less than required, particularly for GAA, the overall level of provision is, nevertheless, close to what is suggested as being required. Nevertheless, it is proposed that additional full-sized pitches be provided at key locations in order to cater for the wider range of sports undertaken in Ireland.

Finally, with regards to sports halls it is difficult to be precise. Many community halls have the capacity to perform the function of a sports hall. While some additional provision is likely to be necessary, the optimisation of the use of existing facilities is also a critical consideration.

#### *1.4.4 Irish Model of Facility Provision*

This whole issue is further complicated in an Irish context by the nature of the mechanisms that have been used historically for the provision of facilities.

The Irish model of facility provision has, at least in the past, relied significantly on the provision of support to voluntary sporting and other voluntary bodies rather than on the public provision of facilities. This is, of course, not always the case. Swimming pools are often provided by public bodies, though not always, and, in more recent times, substantial Multi-sports facilities such as the Lee's Road Regional Sports Facility in Ennis and The Arena in the University of Limerick are provided and managed by public or publicly-funded organisations. Nevertheless, many facilities in Ireland have been provided by voluntary organisations even if with public support, which has often led to the provision of organisation-specific facilities which are sometimes under-used but closed to other sports organisations and activities. In addition, where sports facilities have been provided by educational bodies, these have not always been made available out of school hours to other organisations.

This model is not the norm in Europe. For example, Ineum Consulting/Taj in a 2008 report titled 'Study on training of young sportsmen/women in Europe - Final Report' included the following in a review of the mechanisms through which sporting facilities are provided in Europe -

..... in almost all Member States, the decision of financing/building sports facilities and stadiums is made by the Government, local and regional authorities and/or municipalities. In rare cases, private bodies may make those decisions.



In Finland, more than 70 percent of the sports facilities and stadiums are built and maintained by municipalities. Some bigger facilities may be privately owned.

In the Czech Republic, municipalities and regions carry out the construction, management and decide of the availability of their sports facilities.

In Germany, the Government, statutory corporations, clubs with their sponsors, regional authorities and municipalities with their funds and business companies build and finance facilities and stadiums.

In Hungary, sports facilities are usually built with State and local Government subsidies, and remain their property, but the State/local Government may grant a right of utilisation to a public company or a business association. The decision is made accordingly by the Government and the local Government.

Similar observations were made about the mechanisms for providing facilities in a range of other European countries. With respect to Ireland, the following was stated -

In Ireland, the primary decision-making group in each of the sports' governing bodies decides if it is necessary to build/finance sports and stadiums. Where sports facilities are to be built / financed in a particular sports club, then the sport's governing body will make its decision in conjunction with the relevant sports club.

In addition, a report by the UK Sport and Recreation Alliance stated that 'Local authority and educational establishments currently provide half of all playing facilities. Together, local authority (41%) and educational establishments (32%) provide 73% of all hired sports facilities and nearly half (48%) of all sports provision for community clubs'. Also, Sport England notes that 'Local government spends approximately £1 billion per year on sport and leisure - **more than 50%** of the total resources available to sport every year.'

*Sport and Recreation in the UK – Facts and Figures, Sport and Recreation Alliance, 2012*

While no comparable figures are easily available in Ireland, it is notable that, swimming pools apart, in the region of 90% of sports capital grants were made available to non-public organisations between the years of 2007 and 2010, with the majority of them being made to individual voluntary organisations. It is also notable that the Indecon report on the *Economic Impact of Sport in Ireland* for the Sports Council in 2008 noted that there were nearly 3,000 GAA clubs (including Ladies Football and Camogie clubs) in Ireland, over 2,500 Association Football Clubs and over 350 Golf Clubs. The majority of the GAA and Golf clubs own their own facilities as do many Association Football clubs.

Overall, therefore, it can be said that, historically at least, the provision of sports facilities has tended to be dominated by single code voluntary organisations though with significant state support.

It is noted that this has sometimes led in the past to facilities being developed but not being available to the community at large. It is currently clearly Government policy that this situation should not continue and that where public money is made available to organisations to provide facilities that it should be on the basis that these are made available to as many organisations and sports as possible. This policy has been adopted within the strategy and forms a key part of its approach.

### **1.5 The Strategy and the Land-Use Planning Process**

This strategy contains a significant amount of information regarding the nature and extent of sports and physical recreation facilities within the study area, the current population distribution and anticipated population growth; the distances that might be expected to be travelled to particular facilities; and the range of facilities to which members of the local community should be expected to have access. The strategy also sets out a vision as to how the provision and use of significant facilities should be managed over time, in order to provide an appropriate balance between access and viability. The strategy also contains some minimum standards that might be adopted in terms of the provision of open and recreational space.

This information and the philosophy of provision are, amongst other things, intended to inform the decisions of Planning Authorities when they are developing the policies in their own City and County Development Plans, when they are making zoning decisions and when they are considering what factors to take into account when considering a proposal for a new development, particularly when a number of similar facilities exist within the proposed development's catchment area.

While it is intended that the policies proposed in the strategy and the information that the strategy contains will provide guidance to Planning Authorities, including the Regional Authority, it is not intended that these policies should be used in a prescriptive manner or adopted in their entirety into Development Plans. Indeed, it is intended that the Strategy should act as a guidance document and be seen as advisory in nature for land-use planning purposes. This is for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the Strategy is, as its name suggests, strategic in nature and, as such, is not sufficiently detailed to provide on its own a sufficient basis for specific decision-making

Secondly, as noted in the Strategy, the position of the development of sports and physical recreation in Ireland is unusual for the extent of the voluntary and community effort involved and for the manner in which support is provided by the State in this area

Thirdly, while a common strategic approach is suggested for the whole study area, the precise manner in which this approach should be applied in practice is a matter for each Planning Authority.

It is proposed, therefore, that with regard to the role of the Strategy in planning and land-use management, this should be implemented through the adoption of the Strategy as a guidance document and through its being referred to in Development Plans as such. In this regard it should be considered as being similar to other Regional Strategies such as the Regional Housing Strategy and the Regional Retail Strategy.

## **1.6 Strategic Environmental Assessment Process**

It is a requirement of the brief that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) be carried out as part of the process of preparing the strategy. The SEA provides assistance to decision-makers in considering the potential environmental impacts of policy decisions and allows such considerations to be taken into account as the policy-making process unfolds.

The stages of the SEA process as set out by the EPA are as follows –

### Stage 1 - Screening of Plans and Programmes

This stage was not required in respect of this strategy as it was part of the brief that an SEA be included as part of the process.

### Stage 2 - Scoping the SEA

A Scoping Document was prepared and forwarded to the Statutory Consultees for their observations. These observations were taken into account when the rest of the process was being implemented.

### Stage 3 - Identification, Prediction, Evaluation and Mitigation of Potential Impacts

The Environmental Report was the principal mechanism used for this stage of the process. This report identified the current status of the environment, the key environmental issues that were relevant to the proposed strategy and the implications of the strategy for these issues.

### Stage 4 - Consultation, Revision and Post-Adoption Activities

This part of the process involved consultation regarding the Environmental Report, the linking of the Environmental Report to the generation of policies and the setting up of monitoring processes to assess the impacts of the strategic policies adopted.

## **1.7 Habitats Directive Assessment Screening Process**

It was also a requirement of the brief that a Habitats Directive Assessment (HAD) screening be carried out with respect to the Natura 2000 sites within the area in order to determine whether

an extended HDA would be required and in order to identify whether a proposed development should not be permitted due to its potential environmental impacts.

Due to the fact that this is a high-level strategy that does not identify specific sites for development or additional activity, the screening did not identify any specific Natura 2000 sites where an Extended Habitats Directive Assessment would be required. However, it was also noted that increased activity or developments, depending on their nature and location, might have negative implications for Natura 2000 sites. The screening of the sites has, therefore, produced conditions which would need to be fulfilled before developments or activities associated with sports and physical recreation would take place within or in the vicinity of Natura 2000 sites. These conditions are reflected in the SEA conditions and are incorporated as contingent requirements for the implementation of the strategic policies that have been identified.

## 2. Review of Current Knowledge

### 2.1 Participation Rates

#### 2.1.1 CSO National Quarterly Household Survey (2006)

The following are details regarding participation in sport in the Mid-West Region in general as identified in the CSO's National Quarterly Household Survey in 2006. While these figures apply to the whole of the region there is no reason to believe that the principles do not apply to the area which is the subject of this study.

Region	All Active	Improving health	Improving Performance	Participation in competition	Social and recreational	Other
Mid-West	100	62.8	2.9	10.0	20.5	3.8
State	100	58.6	4.6	10.6	20.7	5.5

**Table 3 Motivation for Participating in Sport (percentage of active population)**

Of those persons who are physically active in the Mid-West region, 62.8% engage in activities to improve their health. The next highest proportion (20.5%) engages in physical activity for the recreational and social element of it, while 10% engage on a competitive level. Just 2.8% engage to improve their sporting performance.

At national level, improving health was also the main motivator for those participating in physical exercise and sport (58.6%), with a social element proving the second most common reason (20.7%).

	All active persons	Gym	Sports Club	School or College	Community Hall	Public Swimming Pool	Public Places	Other
State	100	14.8	24.1	2.3	1.3	4.3	47.2	6.0
Mid-West	100	14.7	22.9	3.6	0.0	4.8	47.2	6.3

**Table 4 Favoured location for sports and physical recreation (Percentage of all active persons)**

Of all active persons in the Mid-West region, the venue of choice for participation in sports has been mainly in public places (47%) with the next most popular venues for participation being sports clubs (23%) and the gym (14.6%) respectively. The public swimming pool stood at 4.8% while the least popular venue of choice for participation was at school, college or university (3.5%).

Region	Male	Female	All persons
Border	54.5	59.2	56.9
Midland	56	63.5	59.7
West	54.9	66.8	60.9
Dublin	68.5	63.7	66.1
Mid-East	64.2	68.9	66.5
Mid-West	59.5	65.6	62.5
South-East	60.3	63.2	61.7
South-West	58.9	64.9	61.9
Total	61.3	64.4	62.9
Persons (000)	1,034.00	1,101.80	2,135.80

**Table 5 Percentage of total population aged 15 and over active in sport and physical recreation**

Dublin and the Mid-East were the most active regions, with over 66% of their population aged 15 and over participating in sport or physical exercise in the previous 12 months. With a national average of 62.9%, the Mid-West region falls slightly under at 62.5%. With the exception of Dublin, women are more active than men and in the Mid-West region, 65.6% of females participated in sport in the survey period while just 59.5% of men participated.

Main sport	Border	Midland	West	Dublin	Mid-East	Mid-West	South-East	South-West	State
Walking	39.6	44.9	43	34.3	36.8	42.7	39.1	45.1	39.3
Aerobics	10.8	10.1	9.7	15.8	11.3	11	19.4	9.4	13
Swimming	8.1	5.7	9.7	7.6	8.7	9.3	8.1	7.3	8
Gaelic football	9.4	7.3	7.2	3	8	5.9	4.2	6.5	5.7
Golf	7.2	8.1	5.7	8.7	10.2	5.9	6.4	6.3	7.6
Soccer	7.7	4.8	5.6	9.6	6.4	5.2	5.8	6.3	7.1
Hurling & Camogie	0.3	3.8	2.7	0.6	1.1	4.6	4.5	1.9	1.9
Cycling	2.8	3.3	5.9	4.7	3.8	4	2.5	3.9	4
Other	5.7	4.3	4.9	6.6	5.7	4	4	7.2	5.7
Fishing	1.6	2.2	1	0.8	1.1	1.9	1.3	1.1	1.2
Athletics	1.5	1.4	1.2	3.1	3	1.6	1.3	1.2	2.1
Basketball	2	2.8	1.9	1.3	1.5	1.3	0.9	1.4	1.5
Rugby Union	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.9	0.4	1	0.3	0.6	0.6
Billiards & Snooker	1.4	0.5	0.4	0.8	0.8	0.6	1	0.2	0.7
Dancing	0.9	0.1	0.4	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.6
Tennis	0.7	0.6	0.3	1.6	1	0.5	0.5	1.2	1
Total	210	118.1	204.8	640.6	243.3	179.8	228	311.2	2,135.80

**Table 6 Percentage of Active Population by Sport and Region**

Across all regions walking, aerobics and keep fit were the most popular main activities. In the Mid-West region walking was by far the most popular activity at 42.7% with aerobics the next most popular choice at 11%. Swimming came in at 9.3% while golf and Gaelic football were 5.9% respectively. The least popular sports in the region were dancing and tennis. Of the team sports, soccer (5.2%) and Gaelic football (5.9%) were the most popular.

### 2.1.2 ESRI/ISC Report

Another source of information regarding sporting and physical recreation in the area is provided by the ESRI/ISC study on Limerick and Clare as part of the Irish Sports Monitoring Series.

The following table is a summary of the levels of physical activity in the county. This shows that the population of the area is similar in its habits to the national population with the exception of the extent of walking for transport. This is not critical to the focus of this strategy and, in any event, is probably related to the extent of public transport available in the area relative to that available nationally and particularly in the larger metropolitan areas.

Activity%		National%
Played sport in previous 7 days	33	33
Walked for recreation in previous 7 days	57	59
Regularly walks for transport	36	46
Regularly cycles for transport	9	11
Sedentary	19	17

**Table 7 Summary of physical activity**

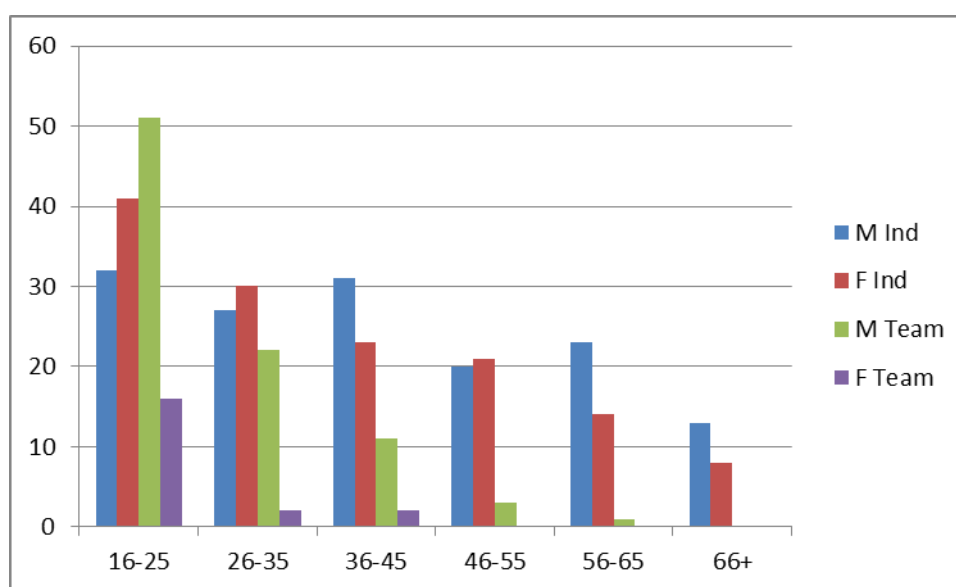
This is a useful table since it suggests that information gathered regionally and nationally can be legitimately assumed to apply to the Clare/Limerick population as well. The next table is that relating to the most popular sporting activities. As noted in the report, this table is remarkable with regard to the range of sports undertaken. It should be noted that these are sporting activities and exclude the other very popular but less formal activities such as walking.

All		Male		Female	
	%		%		%
Swimming	7.3	Soccer	11.0	Exercise	8.6
Exercise	7.0	Swimming	6.7	Swimming	8.0
Soccer	6.1	Golf	5.5	Dancing	4.4
Golf	3.4	Exercise	5.4	Jogging	2.2
Cycling	3.2	Cycling	4.5	Yoga	1.9
Dancing	2.7	Hurling	4.3	Cycling	1.9
Jogging	2.6	Rugby	3.4	Gaelic football	1.5
Hurling/camogie	2.4	Jogging	3.0	Horseriding	1.3
Gaelic football	2.3	Gaelic football	2.9	Golf	1.2
Rugby	1.9	Athletics	1.6	Soccer	1.2
Yoga	1.0	Dancing	1.2		
Athletics	1.0				

**Table 8 Most popular sporting activities**

These figures also show the significant differences between the sexes with regard to participation with males more likely to participate in team games and females more likely to participate in individual activities.

The age and gender-specific participation rates are also of interest for the strategy as this information will have an impact on the demand for and need to supply specific facilities. The following diagram based on one contained in the same report indicates these differentials.



**Figure 3 Active participation in individual and team sports by gender and age**

From this it can be seen that individual sporting participation continues throughout life but that team sport participation peaks in the early years and declines quickly after that, particularly in the case of females.

This study also examines socio-economic impacts on participation in sport. It finishes with this statement –

Finally, although the Clare-Limerick area contains one substantial city and a number of large towns, over one third of the population lives in isolated locations and these individuals are less likely to participate in sport. Similarly, farmers stand out as an occupation with low participation. These findings imply the need for a policy mix that ensures focus on rural as well as urban areas. Attempts to tap into existing social networks to promote sport might be particularly fruitful in rural areas, where it may be more difficult to establish initial contact with potential participants.

This suggests that access to sporting and physical recreation facilities is as important for the rural population as it is for the urban population. This presents a number of challenges since, in order to assist the viability of sports facilities, they need to be located within easy access of larger-scale



populations. It must also be emphasised again, however, that this latter survey report relates to sporting rather than physical activity and that the disadvantages of more isolated rural populations is less pronounced when the broader range of potential activities is taken into account.

### 2.1.3 Gaps identified by survey participants

The CSO study referred to above considered the issue of gaps in sports facilities as identified by respondents to the survey. The following are some of the responses.

The first table reflects the location of choice for participation in sports.

	All active persons	Gym	Sports Club	School or College	Community Hall	Public Swimming Pool	Public Places	Other
<b>State</b>	100	14.79	24.09	2.27	1.31	4.29	47.21	6.00
<b>Mid-West</b>	100	14.68	22.91	3.56	0	4.83	47.16	6.34

**Table 9 Preferences for Sports Activity Locations (Percent of Active Population)**

There are a number of implications of this. Firstly it is noticeable that the Mid-West by and large demonstrates the same pattern as the national population. Secondly, it is noticeable that, Gyms and Sports clubs are the most important facilities apart from the public place locations, which probably reflects the importance of walking as an activity. Sports clubs and gyms tend to be provided at a local level and do not really fall within the focus of this strategy.

The second table reflects the opinion of those who are inactive as to the facilities that would be most likely to encourage them to participate in physical activity.

Again this shows that the results from the Mid-West are approximately equivalent to those from the rest of the state. What is particularly interesting, however, is that neither cost, lack of accessibility or lack of transport are considered to be significant barriers either nationally or in the Mid-West; indeed in the Mid-West these reasons are virtually negligible.

These results must be treated with caution, however. Lack of time and lack of motivation can indicate that the cost and level of effort involved in participating in sport and physical recreation is a barrier to participation. However, motivation and perceived lack of time can be associated with accessibility and cost of participation. While lack of facilities may not be stated as a major reason lack of access to facilities may be part of the causes of perceived lack of time and low motivation.

In addition, references to disability, illness, injury and age as barriers to participation may well indicate the lack of appropriate facilities for people in those circumstances rather than a fundamental unwillingness to participate in physical activity. Indeed, the experience of the Sports Disability Officers in the Local Sports Partnerships would suggest that when events are organised and appropriate facilities made available, the level of participation by these groups rises considerably.

While, at first sight, therefore, it would appear that lack of facilities is not a barrier to participation, access to appropriate facilities and activities may well present barriers and it would be unwise to assume that the availability of appropriate facilities and activities is not an issue that needs to be addressed on the basis of these responses alone.

Category	State	Mid- West
All Inactive persons	100	100
Lack of time due to work commitments	27.7	29.1
Lack of time due to caring commitments	9.1	10.0
Lack of transport	0.3	0
Lack of facilities or accessibility	1.2	0
Lack of Motivation	18.0	20.6
Prohibitive Costs	0.7	0
Disabilities/Illness/Injury	14.9	16.6
Age	13.7	15.5
Other	7.9	10.2
Never Participated	16.2	10.4

**Table 10 Barriers to participation as perceived by inactive population (percentage of all inactive population)**

This must be borne in mind when considering the information contained in the following tables. These two tables indicate the perception amongst the active and the inactive population regarding the facility developments that would assist participation.

Region	All inactive persons	Public Walkways	Long - distance cycleways	Swimming Pool	Gym	Community Sports Centre	Other	None
State	100	6.8	2.2	10.2	6.4	4.6	2.1	73.9
Mid-West	100	4.4	2.5	11.8	10.2	7.7	4.6	69.8

**Table 11 Facilities needed as perceived by inactive population (percentage of all inactive population)**

Region	All inactive persons	Public Walkways	Long - distance cycleways	Swimming Pool	Gym	Community Sports Centre	Other	None
State	100	16.4	7.2	20.6	13.1	9.3	4.0	49.9
Mid-West	100	12.3	6.5	20.1	18.5	10.2	5.8	45.5

**Table 12 Facilities needed as perceived by active population (percentage of all active population)**

What is probably most interesting about these tables is the large percentage of the inactive population that did not believe that any improvement in facilities would add to levels of

participation. In addition, it is noticeable that the active population was of the opinion that there was a range of facilities that might assist in increasing participation.

The outcomes of these tables must, however, be considered in the context of the previous table which indicated that lack of participation had little to do with lack of facilities or difficulties of access.

#### *2.1.4 Impact of Travel Time*

Given that it is often perceived as a significant element in the extent to which facilities are used by an individual, the impact of travel time has been little studied. One Australian study suggests that people are willing to travel averages of between 4.00 and 7.00 kilometres to access sports and recreational facilities of different types. Other studies and plans from the UK suggest travel times of 15 minutes as a guideline, while others suggest a 20 minute travel time. However, as noted earlier, in the consultation process providers of larger and more unique facilities suggested that people travelled up to 40 km to avail of the facility.

#### *2.1.5 Impact of Quality of Facility*

The higher the quality of a facility and the greater the range of the activities they contain the further people are likely to be willing to travel and the more often they are likely to use the facility. A study of access to open space by Giles-Corti and others states that

Good access to attractive and large POS is associated with higher levels of walking. Simply providing proximate POS appears insufficient to increase walking: Consideration needs to be given to its size and attributes that make it attractive.

*Billie Giles-Corti, PhD, et al, PPG 17, Increasing Walking. How Important Is Distance To, Attractiveness, and Size of Public Open Space, American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Volume 28, Number 2S2, 2005*

This is particularly important given the role that hiking and walking plays in the physical activity of the local population and the recreational activities of visitors.

## **2.2 Population Required for Sustainable Facility**

This is a difficult question to answer in an Irish context. The pattern of provision of sporting and recreation facilities is somewhat unusual in an international context. The role of the state, national, regional and local in Ireland has been focused on the provision of support to voluntary and community bodies for the provision of facilities rather than the provision and management of facilities directly by national and local authorities themselves. In the UK, for example, a report published in 2010 stated that –

There is a range of providers involved in managing public sports and recreation facilities..... Just under half (47 per cent) are managed by councils directly, or by councils that have contracted with a private sector contractor (10 per cent) or trust (15 per cent). But schools (16 per cent) and the voluntary sector (4 per cent) also play important roles in managing provision. (P. 12).

<http://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/lobbying-and-campaigning/sport-research/UK-fact-figures>

The same report indicated that the provision of facilities on education sites which were also made available to local communities was a major driver of facility development in the 1990s.

The government has stimulated new capital investment in sports facilities and the joint use by schools and local communities of new and existing provision through a number of initiatives, most notably the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) for PE and Sport Fund, the Extended Schools initiative and the Building Schools for the Future Programme. These are providing substantial opportunities for councils to invest in improved sports facilities in their areas. (P 50.)

<http://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/lobbying-and-campaigning/sport-research/UK-fact-figures>

This approach is, of course, set in the context where Local Authorities are the principal education authorities in their areas.

In *Planning Bulletin 11* published in 2002 by Sport England the following is stated -

In terms of the number of facilities it provides the commercial sports sector has, in the past, lagged some way behind the public and the voluntary sectors, the two main providers. However, a series of booms in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s has resulted in new waves of sports facilities appearing in and around towns and cities in the UK. The 1970s saw a sudden proliferation of squash clubs, the 1980s and early 1990s saw the golf boom, while the late 1990s and the start of the new century have seen a significant increase in the number of private health and fitness clubs.

It will be noted that the nature of the facilities provided by the commercial sector are similar to those provided by that sector in Ireland which has been taken into account in the preparation of this strategy.

The approach that has been taken in Ireland, however, in which there is a lower level of provision by public bodies and particularly Local Authorities, has tended to result in the development of facilities that are sport-specific rather than the more multi-sport approach that is more normal in other countries.

In addition in Ireland, non-team-game facilities such as tennis, golf, athletics and so on, have been provided by private clubs even if they have again been facilitated by state assistance. Significant facilities have also been provided through the education system particularly at second and third level, but these have traditionally tended to be reserved for the use of the students of the individual institutions involved and have tended not to be made available to the wider community.

This situation is also reflected in the way that the encouragement of participation in sport has been organised at national and local level. The Department of State responsible for Sport and Physical Recreation works through an independent Council which, in turn, works with Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships to facilitate sporting development. The development of non-sports related facilities such as walking, cycling and fishing is facilitated by a range of national and local bodies from those responsible for health (Sli na Slainte) to those responsible for tourism, (Failte Ireland), local

development (Local Development Companies) and forestry owners (Coillte). Other specific bodies such as Horse Racing Ireland and Bord na gCon are responsible for the development of facilities for specific sports such as horse and greyhound racing.

This approach has been changing somewhat in recent years, not so much by the establishment of new responsibilities for state and local bodies but by the ways in which grant allocations are made. In more recent times, the provision of grants has tended to be associated with greater access to facilities and with the sharing of major resources between different sports. This policy approach has been highlighted recently by the Minister of State for Sport who has stated that the extent to which proposals for capital funding of sports facilities incorporate commitments to their being available to a wide range of sports will be an important factor in the decision as to which proposals to fund.

Overall, therefore, for community-based facilities their viability is dependent on high levels of voluntary activity. The same applies to the larger facilities of many of the major sporting organisations which also rely on subvention by National Governing Bodies and significant amounts of voluntary time.

It is also clear that many facilities require public subvention to remain viable. All of the public swimming facilities in County Clare, for example, receive annual subventions, while many other similar facilities also receive grant aid of one type or another.

In an environment such as this, it becomes particularly difficult to assess the viability of facilities since the viability is not based on normal commercial criteria. This situation also suggests, however, that there is a significant demand deficiency for many facilities and that the provision of additional facilities is likely to be problematic both for the existing facilities and any newly planned facility. This issue is discussed further at Section 3 below.

### 3. Review of Current Plans and Strategies

Most plans and strategies include some reference to sport and physical recreation. It was considered appropriate to review the principal plans and strategies in order to identify any specific issues or inconsistencies. Many such plans and strategies are relatively generic in nature and do not contain specific objectives. The following are the key elements of relevant plans and strategies.

#### 3.1 National Plans

##### 3.1.1 Draft National Sports Facilities Strategy 2012 – 2016

When the preparation of this strategy was at an advanced stage a Draft National Sports Facilities Strategy was published. This strategy, it should be noted, primarily focuses on the provision of sports facilities while this document focuses on sports and physical recreation. There is, therefore, a considerable added focus in the current document, particularly given the very large numbers of people whose physical activity is not reliant on the use of conventional sports facilities.

The Draft National Sports Facilities Strategy contains a significant amount of general analysis. However, its principal importance to this document lies in its recommendations. These are as follows -

1.	Continue to invest, as resources permit, in the provision of sports facilities at national, regional and local level, in recognition of the economic, health and social benefits associated with participation in sport and physical activity.
2.	Establish an interdepartmental/agency forum to improve information flows and identify opportunities between the relevant stakeholders involved in the support of sports facility funding and provision.
3.	Target funding towards the development of sports facilities which will help advance social inclusion.
4.	Target the refurbishment of existing facilities to broaden the range of sports activities which can be accommodated.
5.	Prioritise the provision of weather independent multi-purpose sports facilities in newly developed areas and areas planned for development in future.
6.	Future provision of sports facilities to be considered within a broader framework of active leisure, recreation and amenity.
7.	Develop a coordinated National Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Development Plan with all key stakeholders.
8.	Promote the better use of existing sports facilities as an alternative to funding entirely new projects where more cost effective.
9.	Continue to promote the sharing of facilities between key stakeholders such as schools and

	sports clubs by giving priority to joint school/club applications for funding.
10.	Engage with stakeholders to identify under-utilised buildings which may have alternative sports uses and address barriers and constraints to participation.
11.	Promote the development of local sports facilities strategies by local authorities, which are based on a common methodology and link into county settlement strategies/development plans, to highlight and prioritise local needs and inform the planning and funding of facilities.
12.	Encourage local authorities when developing Local Area Plans (LAPs) or masterplans to provide for a multi-sport facility ideally located next to a school complex and public open space.
13	The design of all new publicly funded sports developments and the redevelopment of existing facilities should be designed to be accessible to people with disabilities.
14.	Require funding applicants to address the issues of sustainability and energy conservation in their facility design.
15.	Provide a National Indoor Training Arena within the National Sports Campus to meet the indoor training needs of Irish elite sportspersons and others.
16.	NSCDA to provide training facilities on site via the agreed partnership approach with major field sports.
17.	The Sports Capital Programme to continue to be the mechanism by which local sports facility funding is provided and should continue to operate on an applications basis.
18.	National and regional sports facility funding should be specifically targeted at identified gaps.
19.	Improve the provision of easily accessible, clear and helpful information to target groups to promote consistency in the level and quality of applications under the Sports Capital Programme local fund.
20.	Capital investment to be underpinned by a commitment by the applicant to provide on-going funding for programmes and coaching.
21.	Training facilities and revenue generating elements should be developed together in order to optimise viability.

Many of these recommendations are relevant to this document, though some are more related to national and sports-specific issues. However, the recommendations of this document should, at a minimum, be consistent with those contained in the National Strategy.

## 3.2. Regional Plans

### 3.2.1. Regional Planning Guidelines

According to the Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 the region is well served with recreational and amenity facilities. However, there are a number of regional scale facilities that might be provided, such as a regional theatre, either by the expansion of existing facilities or the development of new greenfield-site facilities. Pending the adoption of the Regional Recreation Strategy, the guidelines state that major new facilities should generally be provided within the Gateway/Hub area and specific sites should be reserved for them through coordinated development processes.

Other areas have the resources to provide region-scale facilities of a specific type, including the following and development plans should also make provision for such developments–

- Water-based activities on Lough Derg, the Shannon Estuary and the Atlantic Coast;
- Walking activities using designated routes. The region contains a number of long-distance walking routes that cross county and regional boundaries as well as loop and local walks;
- Camping and other similar activities in the Burren, Galtees/Ballyhoura area & Slieve Aughty.

### Tourism and Leisure in the Region

Tourism is extremely robust in the Mid-West region and with increasing international demand for leisure and recreation, is set to be a significant economic driver for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Key tourism resources, such as the Burren, West Clare, Lough Derg and the accommodation hub of Limerick Metropolitan Area/Ennis/Shannon, will obviously play an important role in this sector.

Within the Mid-West region the major water resource available provides particular opportunities for water-based recreation and tourism. This water-based potential includes those activities that are marine-based as well as those based on the inland waterways. Support for these forms of activity is particularly important as well as facilitating the development of the facilities they require. This will require the co-ordinated activity of a wide range of bodies both statutory and private if the maximum benefit is to be gained from these resources in a way that does not compromise the environmental quality which is the foundation of their potential.

*(The following table sets out some of the sport and recreation potential and needs within the different sub-zones identified in the Guidelines).*



Zone	Potential	Needs
<b>(Zone 1) Limerick, Ennis, Shannon</b>		Provision of region-scale recreation and amenity facilities
<b>(Zone 2) Outer Core Area</b>	<p>Centre for specialised regional social and commercial facilities, e.g. recreation on Lough Derg and boating on Shannon Estuary</p> <p>Development of niche services for the regional core, e.g. recreational activity</p>	Provision of region-scale recreation and amenity facilities
<b>(Zone 3) West Clare</b>	Development of niche services for Limerick/Ennis/Shannon, e.g. recreational activity	Aquaculture and the sub-zone's ports and harbours for commercial, industrial and recreational activity
<b>(Zone 4) North Clare</b>	Development of niche services for Limerick/Ennis/Shannon and Galway, e.g. recreational activity	
<b>(Zone 8) North East Clare</b>	Tourism potential based on Lough Derg and Slieve Aughty	Integration of sub-zone's tourism and recreational facilities with major tourism centres

The RPGs set out the implications for Development Plans as follows -

*When the Joint Regional Recreational Strategy is adopted its policies and objectives should be incorporated into development plans. Regional possibilities for recreation and leisure should be addressed when the coordinated plans for these areas are being developed.*

*In addition, the area of the Clare Glens should be developed and managed in a co-ordinated way between North Tipperary and Limerick County Councils.*

*A number of long-distance walking routes run through the region. These as well as loop and local walks are an important recreational resource and should be protected. In addition, where potential routes exist they should be protected and enhanced. Development plans should include policies to protect the integrity of these routes, and should take the impact of any proposed development on these routes into account when considering applications for permission for developments in their vicinity.*

### 3.2.2. Mid-West Area Strategic Plan(MWASP)

This plan sets out the planning, land-use and transportation strategy for the local authority areas of Limerick City, Limerick County, Clare County and North Tipperary County Council's and their respective statutory councils contained therein. The plan is strategic in nature and does not set out prescriptive requirements for development in the region; neither does it specifically consider the issues of sport and physical recreation as land-uses or consumers of transport. However, the overall settlement and transport strategies that are contained within the document are relevant for consideration though it must also be noted that this document refers to North Tipperary as well as to the areas that are the focus of this strategy.

The following are a list of key recommendations of MWASP -

#### Economics

1. A more streamlined corporate governance structure to achieve a better platform for Limerick Metropolitan Area to achieve its potential Government direction on the long-term future role for Shannon Airport and development of a long term strategic business plan for the Airport, Shannon development Lands and Shannon Estuary
2. The need for education, re-training, up-skilling and research as the current economic base is weak
3. Greater cooperative and integrated approach provided through a single voice that can champion the change

#### Land Use

4. The promotion of the Metropolitan Area as the economic driver for the Region with a focus on the rejuvenation of the central area to develop as a place of quality for citizen, worker and visitor
5. Develop Shannon and Ennis as complementary settlements pending a better balance of employment and population levels between the two
6. Promote a role for Nenagh to provide a support services and facilities for the Metropolitan Area given the proximity afforded by the M7
7. Provide key settlements at NCW, Thurles and Roscrea to act as service centres for the rural hinterland
8. Develop rural economic and settlement nodes at strategic locations in the rural area of the Region to provide key services and provide a more sustainable compact settlement pattern

## Transport

9. Completion of the Atlantic Corridor transport connections to Cork, Galway and Waterford
10. A revision of the public transport system and subsequent investment to achieve a more sustainable, accessible and competitive region
11. Publication of the National Aviation Policy outlining the role of Shannon Airport in a national context
12. Support for the upgrading of the National Secondary and Regional Road network that functions as a key transport network in the region
13. Comprehensive review of the future rail corridors under the long term requirement to implement high-speed rail line connections between the cities in Ireland

With regard to the next steps of implementation the following are suggested –

## Planning

1. Review County, Town and Village Plans, where appropriate, to allow for the fulfilment of key roles identified in the Settlement Strategy
2. Prepare integrated plans for the development clusters identified in the Metropolitan City to promote transport, employment and residential investments
3. Prioritise infrastructural investment for the provision of water supply and sewage facilities
4. Develop rural settlement policies that sustain the indigenous rural communities in the Region, with support for rural enterprise and local rural population; but that strictly control the incidence of urban generated housing

## Transport

5. Assign a Travel Plan Co-ordinator for each of the counties
6. Develop smarter travel plans for each of main settlement locations in the region
7. Devise a series of destination travel plans for key attractors in the region
8. Restructure the bus networks to form an integrated and seamless public transport offering
9. Develop a clearly defined and prominent public transport interchange, possibly at rail nodes, in each of the main towns and a bus interchange facility in the City Centre of Limerick
10. Establish a long term implementation plan to assist the phased development of a number of national primary and national secondary routes in the region
11. Revise the role of Rural Transport to become better integrated into the public transport offering
12. Prioritise the changes in Limerick City's streetscape to accommodate more sustainable modes following the removal of through traffic since the tunnel opened.
13. Address the deficiencies in public transport information by establishing a Mid-West Transport website
14. Complete the Atlantic Corridor Road Network

It is important that this strategy is not inconsistent with these objectives; while not specifically addressing the issues of sports and physical recreation, recommendations 4,5,6,7, 8 and 10 and implementation recommendations 1,2,4,6,7,8,9 and 11 would have relevance for this strategy.

It should also be noted that MWASP identifies a number of strategic development clusters in the Limerick Metropolitan District. These are as follows –

- Caherdavin/Moyross;
- Docklands/City Centre;
- Dooradoyle/Raheen;
- Castletroy/Plassey;
- Southill/Ballysimon.

These are primarily seen as being employment/residential areas and there is little reference to their other functions. However, given that these are key locations for development, the provision of any required sports and recreation facilities within these areas would also be consistent with MWASP.

### **3.3. County and City Development Plans**

#### *3.3.1. Clare County Development Plan*

The County Development Plan for Clare 2010-2022 sets out an overall vision for the county and a range of goals supported by specific aims and objectives. With regards to recreation related goals, the plan proposes inter alia:

1. A County Clare that builds on the strategic location and natural resources of the Estuary by facilitating and maximising its potential for industrial development including port and harbour facilities in appropriate locations, improving connectivity, promoting its tourism and recreational assets, while managing the estuarine and natural environment.
2. A County Clare which maximises and manages the economic, social and recreational potential of the Atlantic Coastline and Shannon Estuary while protecting the coastal zone and its resources and adapting to and managing the challenges of climate change including flooding and sea-level rise.
3. A County Clare of 'living landscapes' where people live, work, recreate and visit while respecting, managing and taking pride in the unique landscape of County Clare.

<b>Policies of significance to sports and physical recreation)</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>Ports, Jetties, Harbours, Quays and Piers</b>	a) To facilitate the maintenance and improvements of the existing port, jetty, harbour, quay and pier infrastructure within the County and to safeguard lands within their vicinity

Policies of significance to sports and physical recreation)	Details
	<p>from inappropriate uses that may compromise their long-term economic and recreational potential and environmental setting.</p> <p>b) To safeguard lands for development in support of all marinas, piers, harbours and slipways and to ensure safe and convenient access to the water for purposes of public transport, industry, commerce, sea rescue, tourism, aquaculture or recreation.</p>
<b>Sustainable Tourism</b>	<p>a) To promote the sustainable development of walking, cycling and outdoor activities and their associated infrastructure throughout the County.</p> <p>b) To support agri-tourism and eco-tourism initiatives in appropriate locations throughout the County.</p> <p>c) To support and encourage the development of recreation and activity-related marine tourism developments at appropriate locations along the coastline and in the vicinity of the inland waterways and lakes.</p> <p>d) To support small-scale tourism enterprises that are developed in conjunction with established activities in the rural area, such as fishing, walking, mountain biking, surfing and equestrian sports.</p>

### *Marine Tourism / Recreation / Leisure*

The Northern County Clare shoreline of the estuary supports a range of activities including: moorings for pleasure craft, sail training and canoeing activities in Kilrush Harbour.

Additional activities such as dolphin or bird watching, swimming, snorkelling, hiking and visiting heritage sites occur in other areas along the estuary and its environs.

The importance and variety of these activities underline the economic value to the region from visitors, both overseas and locals.

It will be an objective to develop the Estuary for Marine and Leisure activities in order to bring the economic and quality of life benefits to the coastal region and to increase the usage of the natural marine environment for water sports by people from overseas and for local leisure needs. The Council considers that the settlements of Killadysert, Knock and Kilbaha may benefit from this initiative by virtue of their existing underutilised quays.

Objectives (of significance to recreation)	
<b>Marine Tourism, Recreation/ Leisure</b>	<p><b>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</b></p> <p>a) To facilitate the expansion of existing marine leisure initiatives in the region and the development of new opportunities for sustainable development of water sports along the Estuary to attract additional visitors to the Estuary region.</p> <p>b) To encourage the relevant agencies to promote the integrated marketing of the available amenities along the estuary.</p> <p>c) To encourage and facilitate the use of the estuary by the Cruise Ship Industry</p>

#### Beaches/Sand Dunes

The beaches and sand dunes of County Clare not only attract visitors to the area but also provide a base for a wide range of recreational activities such as surfing that are enjoyed by visitors from around the world and local residents alike.

#### **Protection of Beaches and Sand Dunes in County Clare**

Objectives (of significance to recreation)	
<b>Protection of Beaches and Sand Dunes</b>	<p>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</p> <p>a) To protect, enhance and conserve all beaches in the County and to retain Blue Flag status on beaches currently awarded this status whilst seeking to increase the present Number.</p> <p>b) To prohibit maritime development on sites either on or adjacent to designated Blue Flag Beaches and on any other popular beach area, where such developments would significantly interfere with the recreational use of the area or would cause damage or degradation of the beaches or sand dunes system.</p>

#### Open Space & Recreation

The development of quality open space and recreational amenities will be encouraged in local regeneration and redevelopment initiatives. Quality open spaces reinforce an area's character and identity and are an important aspect of regeneration, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

### 3.3.2. *Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016*

With the intensification of the City, landscape, natural heritage and recreational opportunities are of huge importance to those living, working and visiting Limerick City. They are vital to quality of life, are non-renewable assets and help enhance the attractiveness and image of the City.

#### **Some key objectives of Significance to Recreation in Limerick City**

<b>Policies of Relevance to Recreation</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Landscape, Biodiversity &amp; Recreation Policy LBR.1</b>	It is the policy of Limerick City Council to ensure that Limerick's landscape, biodiversity and recreational facilities are preserved and enhanced, and that the overall combined potential and value of the network of open spaces and related assets within the City is recognized, retained and enhanced.
<b>Policy LBR.12</b>	It is the policy of Limerick City Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To protect existing green areas and public open spaces, which provide for the passive and active;</li> <li>• recreational needs of the population;</li> <li>• To protect and enhance recreational areas including sports grounds and facilities;</li> <li>• To improve the quality and range of uses provided within parks and public open spaces including sports facilities and encourage their greater use and enjoyment;</li> <li>• To manage and maintain parks to the highest standards;</li> <li>• To provide new parks and green spaces with proper facilities, which are designed to a high standard.</li> </ul>
<b>Policy LBR.14</b>	It is the policy of Limerick City Council To protect, retain, improve and provide for areas of public open space for recreation and amenity purposes.

<b>Policies of Relevance to Recreation</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Policy LBR.15</b>	It is the policy of Limerick City Council to update the Limerick Recreational Facilities Needs Study within the lifetime of this Development Plan in conjunction with Limerick County Council to ensure a coordinated approach to the adequate provision of recreational facilities within greater Limerick.
<b>Policy LBR.16</b>	It is the policy of Limerick City Council to develop a network of high quality amenity walkway routes, particularly along waterways, linking existing parks and public open spaces and providing to strategic creation of new public open spaces.
<b>Policy LBR.17</b>	It is the policy of Limerick City Council to facilitate the creation of the proposed walkways and natural wildlife and recreational amenities as set out in the 2009 Coonagh Recreational Framework Plan.
<b>Policy LBR.18</b>	It is the policy of Limerick City Council to support the development of indoor and outdoor multi-purpose recreational facilities which are easily accessible to all members of the community.
<b>Policy LBR.19</b>	It is the policy of Limerick City Council to protect, retain and enhance the range and quality of sports facilities and grounds in the City and to permit future redevelopment and development of these facilities where considered appropriate.
<b>Policy LBR.20</b>	<p>It is the policy of Limerick City Council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote the provision and management of high quality sporting facilities.</li> <li>• To facilitate access to sports facilities for all members of the community and ensure that the particular needs of different groups are incorporated into the planning, design and management of new facilities.</li> <li>• The City Council will continue to encourage joint provision and dual use of sports facilities in appropriate locations.</li> <li>• To take account of the priorities set out in both.</li> </ul>



Policies of Relevance to Recreation	Description
	national and local sports strategies in co-operation with the County Council when planning new facilities.
<b>Policy LBR.21</b>	It is the policy of Limerick City Council to provide play facilities that are well-designed, easily accessible and maintained to a high standard.
<b>Policy TR.9 Cycling &amp; Walking</b>	<p>It is the policy of Limerick City Council to prioritize the provision of safe facilities for Pedestrians and Cyclists throughout the City.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote cycling and walking as healthy modes of transport.</li> <li>• Implement the measures contained in the National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) and the Smarter Travel Policy Framework produced by the Department of Transport.</li> <li>• Establish a complete network of cycleways throughout the City.</li> <li>• Update and implement the Limerick Cycle Strategy.</li> <li>• Design a city cycle network with emphasis placed on promoting safety and shortening journey time. The cycle network will be a combination of dedicated cycle lanes on the road and dedicated off road cycle-lanes. The network will be clearly identifiable through signposting and road marking.</li> <li>• Continually upgrade the condition of existing footpaths and cycleways.</li> <li>• Provide controlled crossings at location where they are warranted.</li> <li>• Limerick City Council will provide secure cycle parking at locations around the City.</li> <li>• Will require that secure covered cycle parking facilities be provided close to building entrances for new office blocks, apartment blocks, schools, shopping centres etc.</li> <li>• Require planning applicants to demonstrate that their development proposals will be easily accessible by pedestrians, cyclists and public</li> </ul>

Policies of Relevance to Recreation	Description
	<p>transport users.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require planning applicants where appropriate to submit detailed designs of the facilities required by cyclists.</li> <li>• To facilitate the extension, improvement, and development of the riverside walkways and footpaths along the Shannon River and its tributaries while ensuring the conservation value of the designated River areas are maintained.</li> </ul>
<b>Policy ACT.28 Themed Trails</b>	<p>It is the policy of Limerick City Council to seek to provide a series of themed trails, in particular walking trails that focus on historic parts of the City or other themes to <i>guide and facilitate visitors</i>.</p>
<b>Policy ACT.33 Festivals &amp; Events</b>	<p>It is the policy of Limerick City Council to support and develop existing festivals and encourage the establishment of new festivals and events on a yearly basis.</p>

#### Rivers and Waterways of Limerick City

Rivers and waterways are very important assets of Limerick City and play an important role in the layout and structure of the City and are an integral element of the city's landscape character. The waterway corridors allow for the provision and enhancement of open space and public amenities and provide opportunities for waterfront developments, new recreational facilities and leisure activities.

The Heritage Council's Waterways Corridor Study 2006, addresses the South Shannon River corridor from Victoria Lock at Meelick (County Galway) to the Limerick City Docklands. The Study identifies that the Limerick Metropolitan corridor has character and range of functions unique along the Shannon River. It is a major recreation resource, being used for angling, rowing, kayaking, navigation, and walking and cycling along the banks.

#### Sport & Recreation

Properly maintained and easily accessible public open spaces and sports and recreational facilities are key elements in ensuring a good quality of life is achieved for all members of the community. They also enhance the overall attractiveness of the urban environment and provide places for active and passive recreation. In order to identify shortages in the provision for sports in specific parts of the city and potential for

development of additional sports, the plan recommends that the 'Limerick Recreational Facilities Needs Study' be updated and specific account taken of the proposals contained in the Regeneration Masterplan.

#### The Coonagh Recreational Framework Plan 2009

This Plan sets out a strategy that will maximise the recreational and ecological potential of the area for the benefit of local residents, the wider City population and visitors, taking into account other committed and future development proposals.

Of particular relevance to the area is the opportunity to develop a series of 'Looped Walks' linked to the City Centre and to the expanding suburbs of Caherdavin. The potential for quality looped walks is promoted by Fáilte Ireland and involves inter alia

- the development of the amenity value of the area in response to the expanding population of Limerick City and its Environs and facilitating healthy outdoor pursuits in close proximity to the City Centre; and
- significant amenity and informal recreational provision, including walkways, cycleways, angling activities, boating facilities, and nature based activities such as bird watching and nature walks.

#### Sports Facilities & Grounds

Sports facilities and grounds include a variety of both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, which predominantly provide for the active recreational needs of the community. The plan states that it is vital that such facilities are maintained to a high standard and easily accessible. In order to ensure facilities are located close to the population, existing facilities are zoned to protect their recreational value where it is necessary to retain such facilities in their current locations and where they are of most value and accessible to the community being served particularly younger people. Sports facilities should be upgraded and maintained to the highest standards to ensure quality of provision. This gives recreational land the greatest value and potential for being used.

#### Land Use Zoning Objectives

##### Open Space & Recreation Objective ZO.6

To protect, retain and provide for open space both natural and semi natural and recreation uses throughout the City. With a presumption against developing land zoned public open space areas for alternative purposes, including public open space within housing estates.

Part III of the Development Plan on Development Management states that recreation facilities shall be included in all new Residential Proposals with regard to the following recreation matrix:

### Recreation Matrix for New Development Proposals

Units	Recreation Feature	Total
<10	Street Furniture – Park Bench etc.	1
<20	Children’s Play Area	1
<35	Hard Surface Area for football skateboards etc.  Inclusion of permanent goal posts or Skateboard Jump	2
<75	Formal Park Area/Playing Pitch	2
<100	Skateboard Park/Playing Pitch	3

#### Teenage Spaces

Teenage spaces are public spaces aimed at the 12-20 age group where young people can congregate in a safe environment with passive surveillance and participate in recreational activities e.g. skateboard parks, playing pitches, open space in residential developments etc.

Any new teenage space facility shall adhere to the following requirements:

- National Recreation Policy for Young People: ‘Teenspace’ 2007
- Be located to provide maximum visibility in and through the space
- Be located near public transportation (i.e. bus routes)
- A specific space e.g. skateboard park, shall include components that serve a variety of skill levels
- Have a code of conduct
- Spectator accommodations (i.e. seating and/or viewing area)
- Community generated art
- A drinking fountain

#### *3.4.3. Limerick County Development Plan 2010-2016*

Chapter 6 of the Limerick County Development Plan presents policies and objectives for community, recreation and leisure facilities based on the principles of sustainable communities, strengthening settlements, and the provision and retention of services and facilities. A key policy area is to improve the provision of community infrastructure and recreational opportunities for the wider community in co-operation with relevant bodies, in a sustainable manner in

accordance with the settlement strategy of this Plan. Under this policy area a range of objectives has been identified which, for the purpose of this strategy, are summarised in Table 2.7

**Some key objectives of Significance to Recreation in County Limerick**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Identify Community Infrastructure and Recreational and Leisure Needs of Settlements</b>	To identify through the Local Area Plan process, or the preparation of village design statements, social and community infrastructure needs of settlements throughout the County having regard to their population targets.
<b>Provision of Community Facilities</b>	To ensure new residential developments incorporate appropriate provision for community and recreational facilities for the benefit of local residents' or are located within easy access to such facilities.
<b>Community Infrastructure Strengthening the Settlement Core</b>	To strengthen the fabric of towns and villages and service neighbouring rural communities through promotion and provision of co-ordinated, good quality community facilities, and whole-of- life recreational services and initiatives, which facilitate social integration and
<b>Accessibility for the Wider Community</b>	Seek the provision of inclusive and accessible recreational open space and community facilities that are available for all sectors of the community, both urban and rural at a convenient distance from their homes and places of work.

Leisure and Recreation facilities

Significant progress has been made in the development of public open space in the County. Approximately 933 hectares of open space has been zoned in eighteen local area plans throughout the County.

Playgrounds

The Play Policy for County Limerick was adopted in 2005. Subsequently, playgrounds have been provided funding, from the Development Contribution Scheme, and this has been spent on developing playgrounds in Newcastle West, Kilmallock, Cappamore, Abbeyfeale, Askeaton and Castleconnell. Currently proposals are at the design stage for playground developments in Rathkeale, Croom, Bruff and Kilfinane. In 2008 the Council launched a Community Playground Grant Scheme.

### Playgrounds and Open Spaces Objectives

Objective	Description
<b>Playgrounds</b>	Promote the increase of public high quality and safe play opportunities available to children. Ensure that surfaces and play equipment provided in public playgrounds or publicly funded playgrounds conform to the Irish standards for play equipment and surfacing.
<b>Quality of Open Space</b>	Promote and facilitate the provision of high quality, well designed open space for all at a convenient distance from homes and places of work. Seek the provision of appropriate managed open space, play areas or other informal amenity areas for the benefit of local residents in all housing developments.

### Walking Routes, Cycling Routes and Rights of Way

Limerick County Council recognises the importance of cycling and walking as a mode of transport and recreational activity which is potentially accessible to the wider community. The Council has spent €200,000 from the Development Contribution Scheme in the area of mountain biking and €200,000 has been spent in developing Curragh Chase Forest Park.

Objective	Description
<b>Encourage Active and Healthy Lifestyle</b>	It is the objective of the Council to promote the development of safe and convenient pedestrian and cycling facilities in the towns and villages to minimise the dependence on private motor vehicles and to encourage an active and healthy lifestyle.

### Forestry and Recreation

The use of forestry within public areas, such as the Curragh Chase Forest Park, provide the people of the County with a valuable amenity for pursuing leisure and recreational activity, while at the same time providing a useful attraction for tourism purposes.

Objective	Description
<b>Forestry and Recreation</b>	It is the objective of the Council to encourage the multiple use of forestry with public access available, to promote leisure, recreational and tourism activities in a safe and environmentally sustainable manner.

#### Waterways and Recreation

The Shannon Estuary and other watercourses in the County provide opportunities for water based recreational activity and alternatives for tourism and recreational development. It is considered that the Shannon Estuary and Deal estuary are underutilized for leisure purposes.

Objective	Description
<b>Accessibility to Waterways</b>	It is the objective of the Council to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Promote and protect and improve public accessibility to the County's rivers and lakes, and</li> <li>b. Protect the Shannon Estuary, rivers, and lakes from ecological damage</li> </ul>

#### *3.3.4. Limerick City Regeneration Plans*

While the regeneration activity has now been incorporated within the activities of Limerick City Council, the visions and objectives set out in the regeneration Masterplans are still of relevance.

#### Southside and North side Visions

The following statement is included in the vision for both areas

The FAI, GAA and Munster Rugby are keen to explore the feasibility of regional training sports facilities in the Regeneration Areas which could include a small stadium, natural turf pitches, all weather pitches, indoor training areas, medical facilities and meeting rooms.

Some local clubs could be based here alongside sports specific development officers. The quality of some of the sports clubs grounds could also be considered, as well as improving links with schools.

Municipal facilities such as a sports complex, a swimming pool, floodlit all weather pitches and dedicated spaces for boxing and weightlifting are also being considered. As well as providing great sporting opportunities for the young people of these areas, there is also the potential for training and employment.

This statement is reflected in the zoning of Moyross in which a substantial area is set aside for a large, regional-scale sports development incorporating built and open-air facilities. Substantial facilities are also envisaged for St. Mary's Park including pitches and an indoor sports hall.

In the Southhill/Ballinacurra Weston Area significant sport facility development has also been identified although this tends to be somewhat smaller in scale and incorporates upgrading of existing facilities to a significant extent.

### **3.4. City and County Sports Strategies**

#### *3.4.1. County Clare Recreation and Sport Strategy 2009-2011*

Clare County Council sets out in its vision statement that "by 2011 the importance of active recreation and sport will be recognised and promoted and that everyone living in or visiting our county will have an equal opportunity to enrich their lives through participation". A number of core values underpin the strategy including inclusiveness, equity, person centeredness, action, sustainable development and children centeredness so that children and young peoples' needs are the principle consideration in the development of sporting and recreational activities. The County Clare Recreation Strategy adopted a lifecycle approach when preparing its document and identified a number of key target groups including Children, Young Adults, Elderly, People with Disabilities and people experiencing Social Exclusion.

In relation to developing an Action Plan three strategic areas were identified by the appointed Steering Committee which was represented by Clare County Council, Clare Sports Partnership, Ennis and Kilrush Town Councils, Clare Youth Services, HSE West, Clare VEC, Clare County Childcare Committee and Shannon Development. These are:

1. Communication and Information
2. Facilities
3. Participation and Social Inclusion

The parts of the Strategy that is most relevant to present purposes are those relating to facilities and participation and inclusion.

#### Facilities

A sample of some of the key objectives and their associated actions identified under this heading include:

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>
To research all possible sites and sources of funding for proposed new facilities.	Suitable sites identified and secured. Funding sources identified and applied for.



Objective	Action
Involve local communities in agreeing the facilities to be developed through meaningful consultation.	Public consultation in East and West Clare.  Establish a local Community Development Committee to develop new facilities.
To promote opportunities for sport, recreation and physical activities in the natural environment by developing links to and supporting existing development programmes such as the Clare trails initiatives, the Clare Walks Programme and the Ennis and Environs Cycling Initiative.	Develop 10 new walking trails and loops.  Develop 3 cycle lane initiatives.  Develop 1 cycle hub in the county.
To strengthen and develop links to existing Blue Flag beach development programme.	Continue to develop and promote facilities and policies and Blue Flag beaches in the county.
To assist communities to develop a network of community playground and play facilities under the Clare County Play Policy and Community Playground Grant Scheme 2006-2009.	Continue to support the community groups developing community playground and play facilities under this scheme.

#### Participation and Social Inclusion

A sample of some of the key objectives and their associated actions identified under this heading include:

Objective	Action
All sporting and recreation staff to be supported to create a safe environment for children and young people.	Provide training for the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HSE Protection briefings.</li> <li>• Training/Code of Ethics good practice for children in sport.</li> <li>• Child protection policy information.</li> </ul>
To increase opportunities for children under 12 to participate in a wide variety of physical and recreational activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the “Buntus Start” programme in the pre-school setting.</li> <li>• Implement the “Having fun and getting active” programme with a cross section of parents and</li> </ul>

Objective	Action
	childminders.
To promote the importance of outdoor play and connecting with the natural environment in childcare.	Implement County Childcare Workplan 2009/2010.
To identify participation levels in Sports and Active Recreation in the school population in the county.	Carry out baseline study of physical activity, recreation levels and active recreation levels of all school going children in County Clare.
To increase opportunities and choices for those experiencing social exclusion so that they can participate more fully in recreational and sporting opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a consultation process to identify the needs of the socially excluded target groups with regards to recreation and sporting activities.</li> <li>• Develop projects and activities in response to the activities identified.</li> </ul>
To increase and expand opportunities for participation by the older adult in recreation and physical activities.	Promote and implement the 'Go for Life' programme within older people networks.
To provide a dedicated Recreation Development Officer for the County.	Avail of funding and recruitment opportunities to recruit a suitably qualified Recreation Officer.
To develop the Mid-West Local Sports Partnership Network as a model for Regional Sports development.	Develop an annual Mid-West work plan and continue to support regional initiatives.

### 3.4.2. Limerick City Council Sports and Recreation Action Plan 2010 – 2012

The primary objective of the Sports and Recreation Action Plan 2010-2012 is to provide a shared vision for the development of sport, recreation, play and leisure activities in Limerick City and to encourage and promote active participation in these activities for the period of the Plan. The mission statement underpinning the strategy is for “A City where agencies, sports clubs and organisations communicate and co-ordinate their plans to progress the continued development and growth of active recreation, physical and sporting activities in Limerick City for the period 2010 – 2012 thus enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors to Limerick City in terms of health, lifestyle, community development and the local economy”.

The Plan is focused on the following three key areas:

- Facilities

- Participation & Social Inclusion
- Communication and Information

The parts of the strategy that is most relevant to present purposes are those relating to facilities and participation and inclusion.

A selection of some of the key objectives identified and the actions required to achieve them is presented here.

#### Facilities

Objective	Action
Improve recreational facilities along the banks of the River Shannon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a high quality Riverside trail for pedestrians and cyclists between Shannon Bridge and the Coonagh Roundabout.</li> <li>• Extend the Canal side Cycle and Pedestrian Route between Hymies Boreen and Park road by making Park Bridge Pedestrian and cyclist Access only.</li> <li>• Provide a high quality Riverside trail for Pedestrians and Cyclists between Rhebogue and Thomond Bridge.</li> </ul>
Improve Access to the River Shannon's Recreational Facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide the River Shannon with 2 new Pedestrian &amp; Cycling only Bridges at Browns Quay and Corbally Baths.</li> <li>• Develop and progress the adoption of recreation and personal watercraft bye-laws for Limerick City.</li> </ul>
Maintenance, upkeep of open spaces and public parks in Limerick City.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of public park bye-laws to incorporate recently developed parks.</li> <li>• Maintain and upgrade as necessary the children's playgrounds in each public park.</li> <li>• Examine the feasibility of developing older persons' recreational facilities at Shelbourne Park (subject to available finance).</li> </ul>
Work with local school principals networks, VEC, Management Committees and Parents Councils to identifying & resolving issues relating to access to existing school facilities by the wider community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify issues and possible solutions to enable the facilities to be used by the wider community.</li> <li>• To develop a framework of good practice to improve access to built facilities for all members of the public.</li> <li>• Work with 3 school facilities as pilot sites to implement good practice framework.</li> </ul>
Work with local school principals networks, VEC, Management Committees and Parents Councils to identifying & resolving issues relating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify issues and possible solutions to enable the facilities to be used by the wider community.</li> <li>• To develop a framework of good practice</li> </ul>

Objective	Action
to access to existing school facilities by the wider community.	to improve access to built facilities for all members of the public. Work with 3 school facilities as pilot sites to implement good practice framework.
To increase the profile and usage of publicly funded (part/ fully) Sporting and Recreational Facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion and advertising of facilities</li> <li>• The use of improved signage, and continued fair pricing.</li> </ul>

### Participation & Social Inclusion

Objective	Action
Increase number of girls and women taking part in physical activity.	Develop and support programmes aimed at increasing participation by girls and women in sport and physical activity.
Increase opportunities for older people to lead an active lifestyle.	Active Seniors - Support the development of opportunities for and promotion of alternative lifelong activities.
Allow for the development of sport & physical activity for people with disabilities.	Seek funding to maintain the work of the Sports Inclusion Disability Officer.
Help to integrate those from Ethnic Minorities, marginalised groups & disadvantaged areas, in Sports and Physical Activity in the City.	The number of Community Sports Development officers should be maintained to support the delivery of activities, for these groups.

A key factor to the success of the Action Plan is the interagency approach that will involve close co-operation and co-ordination with a view to maximising resources and improving the quality of life for residents and visitors to the City. This interagency approach will also be utilised for the monitoring and evaluation of the Plan which. Operational Plans will be prepared by the relevant organisations outlining how the overall vision can be achieved over the next three years.

#### 3.4.3. County Limerick Recreation Strategy and Action Plan 2010-2014

Limerick County Development Board approved the development of a recreation strategy for County Limerick which, similar to Clare County Council's Recreation and Sports Strategy, adopts a whole-of-life-cycle approach (children, young people, adults, older adults, people with disability and the disadvantaged). A multi-agency steering committee was established to inform and oversee this process. Leisure NI, an Antrim based consultancy committed to delivering creative leisure solutions, was appointed to undertake a consultation process and to facilitate, with the Steering Group, the development of the strategy and action plans. The report articulates the process and findings of the extended consultation exercise and presents a series of recommendations together with a detailed Action Plan for the next 4 years, which should be delivered by the constituent agencies represented on the Steering Group. It is emphasised throughout that effective delivery of the strategy will be dependent on a joined-up approach and partnership between various agencies.

After an exhaustive consultation process, which included the dissemination of a questionnaire survey and a series of focus group sessions and one-to-one interviews, a range of strategic themes and objectives emerged. Under each objective a range of actions have been identified and a selection of the most relevant themes is summarised below.

### **Recreation Infrastructure and Accessibility**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>
To make more efficient use of existing underutilised facilities.	Identifying and piloting a suitable model of shared use of schools, community facilities and sports facilities for recreation activities.
To support the development of new infrastructure/amenities which address identified need.	<p>To review existing provision of facilities – establish condition and fitness – for – purpose.</p> <p>To support the development of Feasibility Studies into the recreational potential of natural resources in County Limerick including motorised and non-motorised activities.</p> <p>To support creation of youth facilities such as youth cafes and band practice rooms in new or existing premises on either full or part-time basis.</p> <p>Design and develop multi-use games areas based on the recreational needs of all young people in an area.</p> <p>To consider the development potential of water-based activities using the County's natural resources.</p>

### **Participation/Programme**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>
To increase participation amongst target groups.	<p>To establish a baseline for participation in activities.</p> <p>To support new opportunities for participation in Walking and Cycling.</p> <p>To establish an Indoor Rowing League/ Competition – hosted in venues throughout the County – schools and clubs.</p> <p>To expand the integrated arts programme for non-</p>

	<p>disabled and disabled young people.</p> <p>To initiate an older adults Arts Festival in Limerick covering a wide range of Arts disciplines.</p>
To support initiatives which will improve people's lifestyle and health.	<p>To introduce workplace initiatives to encourage participation in alternative recreation activity e.g. "walk to work", "cycle to work", lunchtime walking clubs, "take the stairs", lunchtime culture break.</p> <p>Introduce a school's allotment scheme and encourage older adults to participate.</p> <p>Provide health information services in spaces dedicated to young people.</p>
Give young people a voice in the design, implementation and monitoring of recreation policies and facilities.	<p>To utilise the County Youth Council and local youth group structures on a County-wide and local basis to inform strategies and plans relating to recreation and community and amenity programmes.</p> <p>Pilot initiative to involve young people in an identified Estate Management Committee.</p>
Promote organised activities for young people and examine ways to motivate them to be involved.	

### 3.5. Major Sporting Body Strategies

#### 3.5.1. GAA

For the purposes of this exercise, the key element of the GAA Strategic Plan 2009 to 2015 is as follows –

The Association is engaging in an ambitious initiative to develop a network of 'Centres of Excellence' around the country. These centres will comprise of natural grass, synthetic grass playing pitches, floodlights and ancillary facilities which will serve the needs of County teams, development squads, clubs, schools and colleges. These centres will encourage and facilitate increased participation and be of great benefit to the playing of our club and school games and our recreational games.

In this context it is also stated that two 'Centres of Excellence' are being developed in the Limerick/Clare area, one in Tulla in County Clare and one in Rathkeale County Limerick.

### 3.5.2. FAI

The FAI Strategy is primarily focused on providing assistance to clubs to upgrade their facilities and to access funding such as Sports Capital Grant funding. The FAI also has standards for grounds to be classified as stadia and states that it “will aim to support, advise and assist clubs in achieving these criteria, and in developing facilities on a long-term basis.”

Overall strategies, therefore, seem to be focused at a club level rather than at a high strategic level.

### 3.5.3. IRFU

The IRFU Strategic Plan 2008 – 2012 emphasises the improvement and up-grading of existing facilities rather than the development of significant numbers of new facilities.

### 3.5.4. Irish Sports Council

The most relevant elements of the ISC Strategic Plan, 2012 to 2014, are the following which are set out as objectives in that plan -

1. The key target figure is to increase the percentage of the adult population participating in sport from 33% to 45% by 2020.
2. The second target for adults is to reduce the numbers who are sedentary from 18% to 13% by 2020.
3. The most relevant measure for the Council to increase participation in children's sport and physical activity have been set based on The Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity (CSPPA). They are the extra-school targets. For primary children the aim is to increase the percentage of children taking part at least once a week in extra-school sport from 83% to 85% by 2015 and to reduce the number of children who never take part from 11% to 10% over the same time period. For post primary children the equivalent figures are to increase regular players from 64% to 70% by 2015 and to reduce non-players from 34% to 20% by 2020.
4. The national network of Sports Partnerships will continue to measure activities and outputs through the SPEAK Report. There are specific targets set with regard to Information and Resources, Club Development Work, Education and Training, Delivery of Local Projects, Linked Initiatives and Local Networking.

These strategic objectives emphasise participation in sport as a key focus and highlight the importance of identifying those activities that involve mass participation and those facilities that have been identified as those most likely to give rise to enhanced levels of participation in sport.

### 3.5.5. Irish Sports Council Report on Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity

This study was an important review of physical activity amongst school-going children in Ireland. Amongst its recommendations (termed advice) are the following which is an edited version of what is contained in the full report –

### 1. Invest in people: the human resource

We recommend that an 'Active Schools Network', with the aim of more children, more active, more often be established in Ireland. This evidence-based initiative would help achieve the increased participation goal.

Local communities need to be empowered to develop their sport knowledge and skills, so that they are confident and competent and will encourage their children and youth to bring activity from the school to their backyard, their local playground, their community halls, green spaces and footpaths. The physical education fraternity need to examine why there is such poor continuity between their curriculum and what is provided in extra-curricular sport. Their advice in finding a solution to this problem would be valuable.

### 2. Broaden the range of programmes

This research has found that there is a lack of balance in the opportunities provided to children and youth for participation in physical activity. This lack of balance can be seen across all three pillars of participation, in extra-school and extra-curricular sport and physical activity, and in physical education. For example, in the games strand of physical education curriculum, the number of opportunities provided for participation in traditional team sports or invasion games outnumber the opportunities to participate in non-invasive court or fielding games. This is amplified at community level and in after school opportunities.

Strategies need to be developed to assist in broadening the range of opportunities to include activities like gymnastics, dance, aerobics and martial arts. This will require significant changes in grassroots developments and sports policy development will need to drive these changes. This will introduce pupils to the full range of physical activities, including games (invasion, fielding and court), gymnastics, dance, aquatics, outdoor and adventure activities, athletics and health related fitness. This quality physical education programme must be supported by a broad and balanced extra-curricular and extra-school sport programme. The goal is to provide access to safe, fun and varied sport and physical activity opportunities. This requires policy to support more equity in funding between sports for the training and deployment of development officers and coaches to work in the community and in the school, enhancing the school-community link.

### 3. Pathways to participation: the importance of a multi-sport model

There is a need in Ireland to remodel the locations for sport and physical activity participation and to move away from the currently dominant uni-sport model, that is one sport (or a limited number of similar sports), one club, one ground to a more multi-sport model, that is a variety of sports (individual and team based), numerous clubs, all catered for in one ground.

### 4. Pathways to participation: fundamental motor skills

From the age of four years children engage formally with extra-school sport. This is an important time in terms of their motor development, and it is essential that they have access to environments that help them develop a range of skills, kicking, throwing, locomotion, balance etc. Data from CSPPA suggests that a fundamental motor skills programme, not aligned to any one sport or activity, but whose purpose is to develop overall skills and abilities common to all sports and activities is



needed in Ireland. This community based initiative would allow children of all ages to begin their journey into sport and exercise skill development in a fun and enjoyable way.

#### 5. Remove gender, age and social inequalities

Address the low proportion of girls who are involved in regular physical activity. Importantly, the gender inequalities shown to exist in the timetabling of physical education in schools in Ireland must be removed. In many schools, this can be answered simply through timetabling rearrangement.

Participation rates decrease as children age. This was evident in physical education (senior pupils receive less physical education than juniors), in extra-curricular and in extra-school sport and physical activity.

This study (also) found that children and youth from higher socio-economic backgrounds participate more in extra-school sport than those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Current extra-school sport and physical activity opportunities for participation in Ireland may reflect and even exaggerate disparities amongst social class groupings. For example, dance and swimming are the top two extra-school activities for girls; both require paying to use facilities (halls or swimming pools). Sports policy in Ireland must cater for the economically disadvantaged.

#### 7. Target sports and activities at risk of disappearing

From this study it is evident that some sports and physical activities are in danger of disappearing. For example, gymnastics is only taught to 28% of the post-primary children who were surveyed (most with a qualified physical education teacher in their school), and even fewer (3%) continue their involvement in either extra-school or extra-curricular clubs.

These extremely low numbers will have implications for recruitment and training of future coaches to teach this important fundamental motor skill. It is recommended by this report that high risk sports and physical activities, such as gymnastics, should be identified for immediate intervention.

#### 8. The amotivated

High proportions of children and youth chose to never participate in extra-school sport.

A greater understanding of the needs and motivations of these children is required. The focus group study, a part of the CSPPA study, will begin to address this issue. However, interventions to help these children find a sport or activity that they might enjoy and feel competent and confident in their ability to engage in this activity are needed. This will require looking at alternative forms of activities to suit the age, motor ability, development and interests of many children.

#### 9. Age of recruitment and the role of the under-age player

Only 5% of all youth involved in extra-school sport were engaged in coaching. This is a massive missed opportunity for clubs throughout Ireland. A change in the way young people are engaged needs to be developed. For example, responsible youth over the age of 14 years of age could be trained to work with young children, under the supervision of a member of staff. The local sports partnerships, developed by the Irish Sports Council, are a body that could drive such an initiative forward.

## 10. Active travel

Walking to school is a viable form of daily physical activity for children and youth. It is also the only form of activity that does not appear to decrease with increasing age as 18 year olds are as likely to walk to school as 10 year olds. Transport, education and sport policies need to protect and promote this form of activity.

## 11. Sedentary behaviour

There is a need to develop national guidelines for a maximum recommended amount of sedentary behaviour for children and youth. Time spent in sedentary behaviour increases as children age; this is paralleled by a drop in physical activity. Departments of health, transport, arts, sport and tourism need to combine efforts to decrease minutes of sedentary behaviour and to prevent drop-out from physical activity in children and youth.

## 12. Monitor change

There is need for a robust, surveillance system to be put in place. This system would carefully monitor the levels of physical activity of Irish children and youth to determine change, highlight any increasing risk of inactivity early for effective intervention, evaluate the success rates of interventions in achieving the activity goals identified earlier.

These are important recommendations since they relate to levels of sporting and physical recreation in the future. They also point to the need that is highlighted in many other reports and studies of the need for the provision of integrated sports facilities within communities, ideally on the one site, but certainly under the one management umbrella.

### **3.6 Tourism Development Strategies**

#### *3.6.1. Lough Derg Sustainable Marina, Recreational and Tourism Development Report prepared for Shannon Development, Clare County Council, North Tipperary County Council & Galway County Council*

The following are the key sport and physical recreation statements contained in this report –

Provide Integrated Tourism Developments associated with watersports at

- Lands north of Tinerana Bay to point south of the Cormorant islands and around Annacarrig
- Williamstown/Dromaan/Whitegate/Farrahil area where access roads are in place
- Areas within and around main settlements

Visitor berthing is a key infrastructure component of tourism to Lough Derg. The 8000 + registered boats on the Shannon system including cruise hire boats carrying overseas tourists are a source of significant expenditure within lakeside settlements.

Use of public berthing reaches and exceeds capacity at peak times, so until public berthing capacity is increased it is recommended that priority is given to developing more berths available to visitors within both private and public harbours and marinas, rather than to an increase in private berths.

In responding to the need for additional facilities the following should be taken into account –

1. Preference for new berthing on Lough Derg should be given to providing additional capacity within existing marinas, harbours and settlements.
2. Providing new attractions, services and facilities for visitors should also be a priority including showers, pump out facilities, toilets, cafes, restaurants, activities, transient accommodation etc.
3. The creation of new private berthing sites should only be considered where 30% or more of berths will be available for visitor use on a short term transit basis, where they will be marked on charts and where associated facilities and services are provided. In these new developments shore side housing should be resisted in preference to enhanced marina facilities such as showers, toilets, café/restaurant (open to the public), chandlery, activity centres. Potential locations are as for major integrated tourism sites above preferably with pedestrian or cycle route access to settlements for visitors.
4. No private marina development should be permitted where the access is via a tributary river with limited or no current boat passages.
5. No private marina development should be considered for the flooded area south of Killaloe except if access can be achieved via the disused canal only, if the marina is close to Killaloe and if there is considerable public transit berthing gain to the town.
6. Connaught (Portumna) and Munster Harbours are both potential assets for more public berthing and could be developed as such. Development here needs to include toilets, showers and safe pedestrian access to services.

#### *Small fishing boat access and berthing*

Small access and service points for angling visitors could be considered within any of the sites identified as less vulnerable on Map 6 with the addition of Coose Bay via existing access.

Overall this study identifies the potential for further sporting and recreational development within the strategy area, though it does also recognise the very vulnerable nature of the Lough Derg Environment in terms of habitats, water-quality and landscape vulnerability.

#### *3.6.2. Clare Tourism Strategy*

While there are a number of references to potential sports and recreation-related sports and tourism activities in the county, the principal specific reference is to the development of water-based activities in the Shannon Estuary.

### 3.7 Implication of Reviews of Current Knowledge, Information and Strategies

#### 3.7.1 Common Themes

From the review of national, regional and local policy documents, County Development Plans and the various recreation, sports and play strategies for each of the participating counties in the Mid-West region, as well as the data that is available from a range of sources, a number of key themes emerge that are relevant to this strategy.

##### *1. Role of Sports and Physical Recreation*

Sports and Physical Recreation is seen as an important element in all aspects of life and for all ages. It is common knowledge by now that sport and physical recreation have important health benefits both physical and psychological. However, sport and recreation are also seen as having important social and economic impacts both direct and indirect. Indeed one strategy suggested that the development of sporting and recreational facilities could have a major impact on social behavior as much by the social significance that would be associated with such development as by the physical activity to which it would give rise.

In the Mid-West Region the economic benefits of sport are significantly associated with tourism and with the activities that can be provided that will attract tourists. Limerick and Clare have significant natural amenities that can be developed in a sustainable way to facilitate enhanced tourist activity. It is also clear that tourist income has facilitated the development of facilities in some parts of the region that would not have been likely to have been justified by the demands of the local populations alone.

As well as the contribution to tourism, sports and physical recreation facilities contribute to general economic activity and to employment in the study area both directly by the provision of employment within the facilities and the general sector and indirectly by enhancing the attractiveness of the area for investment.

Sports and Physical Recreation is acknowledged as being important in all significant strategic policy documents and all bodies have adopted policies and strategies for its development. Some of these strategies and policies are less specific than others but all recognize the importance of the activities.

##### *2. The range of sports and recreation facilities that are already available in the region and in close proximity thereto*

The Limerick/Clare area already has a wide range of facilities both natural and built available to it. For an area of its size it is well provided with large stadia that can accommodate mass sporting events. The area also has newly-developed specialist sporting facilities as well as training and physical conditioning facilities of national standard.

This does not mean that all sports are well catered for but it does mean that the facilities that remain to be developed are less numerous than might be the case in other regions.

### *3. The importance of the Limerick City area as the centre for the provision of major sporting facilities and the large population that Limerick serves within its own area and in its hinterland*

Limerick City and its environs is a key provider of facilities for the study area. It already contains many of the major facilities in the area – horse racing, greyhound racing, GAA stadium, rugby stadium, international swimming pool, largest multi-sport complex in UL and so on – and it will continue to be the principal focus for such large-scale facilities in the future. In addition to its function as the regional Gateway and its acting as a location for such a wide range of sporting and physical recreation facilities, the city and its environs also contains a large proportion of the study area's population.

Of a total study area population of 308,191 in 2011, a population of approximately 170,000 or 55 % lives within a 20 km radius of the city. This is targeted to rise to 210,000 of a total population of 379,905 by 2022 according to the Regional Planning Guidelines. While the percentage of the population within this catchment will rise only marginally, over 56% of the total population increase will be accommodated within this one catchment.

In addition to being the key centre for the provision of major sporting facilities in the study area, therefore, Limerick City and its environs is also a location which will require the provision of significant additional facilities to serve the local as well as the regional population.

### *4. The extent to which the Limerick/Clare area reflects national trends with respect to sports and physical recreation participation*

The studies carried out in the Mid-West Region and in the Limerick and Clare areas in particular suggest that the trends in the region mirror national trends very closely. These trends relate to levels of participation and inactivity, to the age and social profiles of participants and to the most popular physical and sporting activities. This means that national data can reasonably be applied to the Limerick and Clare population with regard to these topics.

### *5. The nature of the activities that are of greatest interest to the local and visitor populations*

There is a clear trend as to the most popular sporting and physical recreation activities amongst the various populations. The positive aspect of this data is that much of the facilities that need to be provided in order to facilitate enhanced activity is not very costly. Much attention is paid to mass sporting occasions and to team games. However, the percentage of the population that participates actively in team sports after school leaving age is small. However, the activities that people do participate in are more individual pursuits that are generally well provided for and that can be easily enhanced by low-cost provision of facilities. The one exception in this regard is swimming. In general, swimming facilities are mentioned as an important resource though the level of usage by the public in general is such that most public facilities require public subvention and most private facilities require a variety of other associated activities to remain viable.

### *6. The perceived importance of water-sport development*

This is seen by virtually all plans and strategies as being of significant importance in the area both for visitors and the local population. Given the wealth of water resources in the area this is not surprising.

*7. The need to provide for those who are in danger of being marginalized and excluded*

This is reflected in the 'whole-of-life' or 'lifecycle' approach taken by most organisations when developing their strategies. This approach adopts the broadest possible view when considering recreation needs and is typically targeted at the following groups: children, young adults, elderly, people with disabilities and people experiencing social exclusion. This also needs to be reflected in the way facilities are designed and operated so that those with most barriers to participation are most facilitated.

An interesting point in this context, however, is that lack of access, transport or cost was not mentioned as prohibitive factors for the inactive population in the Mid-West. On the other hand, however, disability or illness and age were mentioned by significant numbers. This suggests that greater attention to the provision of specialized services for people in these situations would be of benefit. Indeed, this is reflected in the work of the LSPs, whose Disability Sports Officers have been extremely successful in increasing sporting and physical activity amongst those with a disability. In addition, participation amongst older age groups has also been facilitated by the work of the Partnerships through their targeted programmes.

*8. The need to find a balance between the over-provision of expensive facilities that require larger populations and the provision of reasonable access to a wide range of the most-used facilities*

In studies such as this a lot of attention tends to be focused on the development of facilities for team and specialist sports. However, the evidence clearly suggests that activities such as walking and hiking, cycling, gyms and similar individual, non-invasive activities are those most likely to give rise to additional physical and sporting activity. It is important, therefore, that access to the lower impact but high-demand facilities be maximized and that a more strategic approach be taken to the provision of the more specialized facilities.

*9. The importance of the development of sports clubs for particular sports as well as the development of the facilities to sustain them*

While the development of facilities for sport and physical recreation is extremely important, the development and support of clubs to facilitate the taking up of activities that are less high-profile and less wide-spread is also important. Thus, there are few clubs for many forms of sport such as gymnastics, badminton, tennis and so on as well as other outdoor team sports such as cricket. The need to provide some focus on the development of the soft infrastructure for sport development as well as the hard infrastructure is another emerging theme.

*10. The need to maximize the use of the facilities that already exist in the community, to upgrade and to enhance them where necessary as well as to provide new facilities*

Many communities already have a significant range of existing and potential facilities within them. As resources for the provision of facilities become more and more constrained it is important that the use of existing facilities is maximized. This may require some upgrading of facilities but it will also mean changes in governance, changes in the way in which access is provided to facilities and the

management of the total community resource in an integrated way by the community with external advice and guidance where necessary.

*11. The need to ensure that new investment in facilities allows for maximum access*

The need to maximize the return on public investment in sports and recreation facilities, particularly at community level, will require that where new investments are being made, the making available of the facilities being funded to a wide range of users will need to be ensured.



## 4. Spatial Data Analysis

### 4.1 Resident Population Distribution

The Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines set out the population targets for the region up to 2022. These are set out in the following table and include the 2011 Census results which were not available at the time of the preparation of the Guidelines.

	Total 2006	% 2006	Total 2011	% 2011	Town Growth 2022	Gateway Growth 2022	Gateway %	Hub Growth 2022	Rest of Zones 1 and 2 Growth 2022	Other Growth 2022	Total 2022	% 2022
Clare	110,950	31%	116,885	31%	3,500	2,550	8%	8,700	10,500	5,400	141,600	31%
Limerick County	124,265	34%	134,527	36%	6,200	9,000	27%		10,500	7,100	157,065	34%
Limerick City	59,790	17%	56,779	15%		21,450	65%				81,240	18%
North Tipperary	66,023	18%	70,219	19%	4,500				5,000	6,600	82,123	18%
Total	361,028		378,410		14,200	33,000		8,700	26,000	19,100	462,028	

**Table 13 Population and Population Targets for Mid-West Region as per Regional Planning Guidelines**

These figures show that in the period from 2006 to 2011 Limerick City lost population and its percentage of the total regional population also fell during that period. The percentage of the regional population within the city area had fallen to less than the target percentage of the regional population by 2022. This implies that, in order to reverse this decline and move in a positive direction with respect to the targets (which are set by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government), all aspects of development within the region should consider the implication for population distribution.

Figures from the 2006 – 2011 Census indicate that the more remote parts of the region suffered population loss or lower levels of population growth than those areas in the vicinity of the larger settlements. While Limerick City lost population, the EDs in the vicinity of the City had significant population increases.

Figures from the 2011 Census also show, as would be expected that the population density is greatest in the areas around the city and the major settlements while the densities are lowest in the rural areas particularly those in north and west Clare. These densities have implications for the level and nature of services that can be viably provided in these areas. They highlight the challenge in meeting the twin aims of viability and accessibility and the need to maximise the use of the existing facilities that are available.

### 4.2 Visitor Population Distribution

There is little information on the precise distribution of visitors within the region. However, information produced by Failte Ireland (*Shannon Tourism, 2010, Failte Ireland*) indicates the following breakdown of tourists.

#### 4.2.1. Number and Attractions Visited

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Britain</b>	<b>M. Europe</b>	<b>N. America</b>	<b>Other Areas</b>
<b>Clare</b>	415	109	131	144	31
<b>Limerick</b>	337	122	117	79	19
<b>Tipperary (North)</b>	45	22	14	5	4

**Table 14 Overseas Tourists to Counties 2010 (000s)**

This shows the predominant role of Clare as the tourism destination for the region. A review of the attractions visited by tourists provides some additional information.

<b>Name of Attraction</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>2010</b>
Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience	Clare	720,574
Bunratty Castle & Folk Park	Clare	263,336
Holy Cross Abbey	Tipperary	240,000
Aillwee Cave & Burren Birds of Prey Centre	Clare	92,123
O'Briens Tower	Clare	82,884
Curraghchase Forest Park	Limerick	80,000
Glór - Irish Music Centre	Clare	50,726
Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trails	Limerick	50,000
King John's Castle	Limerick	37,953
Kilkee Water World	Clare	34,000
Foynes Flying Boat Museum	Limerick	32,000

**Table 15 Attractions Visited**

While these figures do need to be treated with some caution, they do suggest that visitors to the area avail of rural facilities in Clare and particularly in West and North Clare, but tend to make more use of facilities in or in close proximity to Limerick City when visiting Limerick.

These figures particularly need to be treated with caution, however, as it is not clear how many of the visitors to the Cliffs of Moher are passing through the region with little intention of using other facilities other than those at that particular visitor centre.

Another matter to bear in mind is that not all attractions are necessarily included in this list. For example, the Adare Heritage Centre has over 95,000 visitors a year when account is taken of the coach tour visitors to the Centre as well as those that specifically visit the Desmond Castle Tour and the Centre Exhibition while it is estimated that between October 2010 and October 2011 Loch Gur had at least 65,000 visitors

#### 4.2.2 Visitor Sport and Recreation Activities

A review of the activities undertaken by foreign visitors to Ireland is also of interest. The following table provides this information.

*Activity Product Usage among Overseas Visitors in 2011(Preliminary), Failte Ireland*

Activity	000s
Hiking/Cross Country Walking	740
Golf	175
Angling	107
Cycling	173
Equestrian	71

**Table 16 Activities Undertaken**

From this it is clear that hiking and walking are by far the most important outdoor activities for foreign visitors in Ireland.

The information in the table below is available with regard to the activities undertaken by domestic visitors in Ireland at a national level. *(Based on the Annual Reports on Tourism in Ireland, 2005-2009 published by Failte Ireland).*

When added to the information regarding the activities undertaken by foreign visitors this demonstrates that the following are the key activities by tourists that are relevant to sports and physical recreation.

- Hiking and Walking
- Water Sports
- Golf
- Angling
- Cycling
- Equestrian

The Mid-West Region and particularly the areas which are the focus of this study are either generally well-provided with these facilities or have the potential for these facilities to be developed and expanded. In addition, many of the sports and recreation activities that need further development involve modest levels of investment.

Activity	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Water sports	25	21	24	26	27
Houses/Castles	22	25	26	25	24
National Parks	21	21	28	26	23
Visits to a Spa	Na	na	20	24	23
Heritage/Interpret. Centres	17	17	17	15	21
Hiking/Walking	19	17	21	25	21
Gardens	17	21	19	20	20
Museums/Art Galleries	11	11	16	14	13
Golf	11	12	10	11	10
Angling	7	6	8	6	6
Cycling	6	4	6	6	6
Equestrian Pursuits	4	3	4	4	3

**Table 17 Activities of domestic visitors (%)**

### 4.3 Distribution of Current Major Facilities

The distribution of current major facilities is set out in the following maps and tables.

Facility	Name	Location	Status
50m Swimming Pool	UL	Limerick Metropolitan Area	National
25m Swimming Pool	Ennis Leisure Centre	Clare	Regional
25m Swimming Pool	Lahinch Seaworld	Clare	Regional
25m Swimming Pool	Shannon Leisure Centre	Clare	Regional
25m Swimming Pool	St. Enda's	Limerick Metropolitan Area	Regional
25m Swimming Pool	Grove Island	Limerick Metropolitan Area	Regional
25m Swimming Pool	Askeaton Coral Island	Limerick	Regional
25m Swimming Pool	Salthill	Galway	Regional
25m Swimming Pool	Kingfisher Club Renmore	Galway	Regional
25m Swimming Pool	Kingfisher Club NUIG	Galway	Regional

Facility	Name	Location	Status
Waterworld	Kilkee	Clare	Regional
Waterworld	Tralee	Kerry	Regional
25m Swimming Pool	Tipperary Town	Tipperary	Regional
25m Swimming Pool	Nenagh	Tipperary	Regional
<25m Swimming Pool	Cillian Murphy Consortium	Kilkee	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Kingfisher Club, West County Hotel	Ennis	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Clare Inn	Ennis	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Auburn Lodge	Ennis	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Woodstock	Ennis	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Bunratty Castle Hotel	Bunratty	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Lahinch Golf and Leisure	Lahinch	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Falls Hotel	Ennistymon	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Quilty Holiday Cottages	Quilty	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Castleoaks	Limerick Metropolitan Area	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Strand Hotel	Limerick Metropolitan Area	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Raddison Blu	Limerick Metropolitan Area	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Clarion Hotel	Limerick Metropolitan Area	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Greenhills Hotel	Limerick Metropolitan Area	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Maldron Hotel	Limerick Metropolitan Area	Local
<25m Swimming Pool	Castletroy Park	Limerick Metropolitan Area	Local
GAA Stadium	Limerick Sports Grounds	Limerick Metropolitan Area	Regional
GAA Stadium	Cusack Park, Ennis	Clare	Regional
GAA Stadium	Semple Stadium, Thurles	Tipperary	National
Rugby Stadium	Thomond Park	Limerick Metropolitan Area	Regional
Rugby Stadium	The Sportsground	Galway City	Regional
Bike Trails	Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trail	Limerick	National
	Nenagh Bike Trail	Tipperary	Regional
	Kilmallock Cycling Hub	Limerick	Regional

Facility	Name	Location	Status
Large-scale parks	Curragh Chase Forest Park	Coillte	Limerick
	Burren National Park	OPW	Clare
	Lees Road Sports and Amenity Park	Ennis	Clare
	Lissycasey Ecology Park	Lissycasey	Clare
	Dromore Wood	Ruan	Clare
	Cratloe Wood	Cratloe	Clare
	Vandeleur Woods	Kilrush	Clare
	Ballyallia Woods	Ennis	Clare
	Dromore Woods	Ruan	Clare
Skateboarding	Lees Road Sports and Amenity Park	Ennis	Clare
	Mount Kennet	Limerick Metropolitan Area	Limerick
	Castletroy Amenity Park	Limerick	Limerick
	Tralee Waterworld	Tralee	Kerry
	Shannon Leisure Centre and Skateboard Park	Shannon	Clare
Marinas	UL Activity Centre	Ballycuggeran	Clare
	Kilrush Marina	Kilrush	Clare
	Mountshannon Marina	Mountshannon	Clare
	Killaloe Marina	Killaloe/Ballina	Clare/Tipperary
	Scarrif Marina	Scarrif	Clare
	Limerick Marina	Limerick Metropolitan Area	Limerick
Horse Racing	Limerick	Limerick	
	Galway	Galway	
	Thurles	Tipperary	
	Tipperary	Tipperary	
	Mallow	Cork	
	Tralee	Kerry	
Greyhound Racing	Limerick	Limerick Metropolitan Area	

Facility	Name	Location	Status
	Galway	Galway	
	Thurles	Tipperary	
	Tralee	Kerry	
Golf Clubs (not including Par 3 courses)	Ennis	Clare	
	Woodstock	Clare	
	East Clare	Clare	
	Kilrush	Clare	
	Kilkee	Clare	
	Doonbeg	Clare	
	Spanish Point	Clare	
	Lahinch	Clare	
	Lahinch (Castle)	Clare	
	Shannon	Clare	
	Dromoland	Clare	
	East Clare	Clare	
	Clonlara	Clare	
	Adare Golf Club	Limerick	
	Adare Manor Golf Club	Limerick	
	Casteletroy	Limerick	
	Killeline	Limerick	
	Limerick	Limerick	
	Newcastlewest	Limerick	
	Rathbane	Limerick	
	Charleville	Cork	
	Listowel	Kerry	
	Ballybunion	Kerry	
	Tipperary	Tipperary	
Major Indoor & Outdoor Multi-Sports Facilities	University of Limerick	Limerick	

**Table 18 Distribution of Major Facilities**

It should be noted that this list deals with major facilities only, particularly those that require considerable capital investment and reflect the situation at the time of the writing of this report. There are many other facilities widely distributed throughout the region including sports pitches both artificial and grass, walking and other trails both urban and rural and indoor facilities which cater for those activities that are undertaken by a majority of the population who engage in sports and physical recreation.

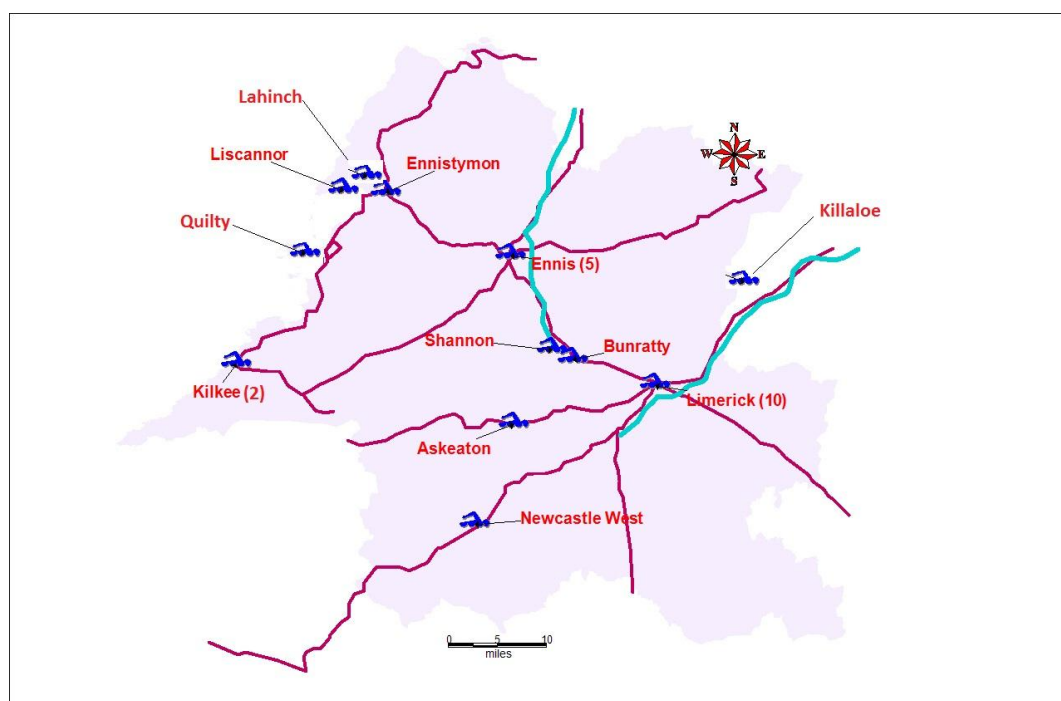
The following maps show the distribution of some key facilities. These facilities have been chosen as they are not evenly distributed throughout the area and because they have been identified as being of importance to the active population of the area or to visitors.

Some important facilities have not been mapped because they are so widely available and because their provision does not require major infrastructural investment. These particularly include walking and cycling routes and trails, angling and similar water-based facilities and gyms.

Other facilities, particularly the major stadia, have not been mapped as they are located in the principal settlements only and are relatively few in number.

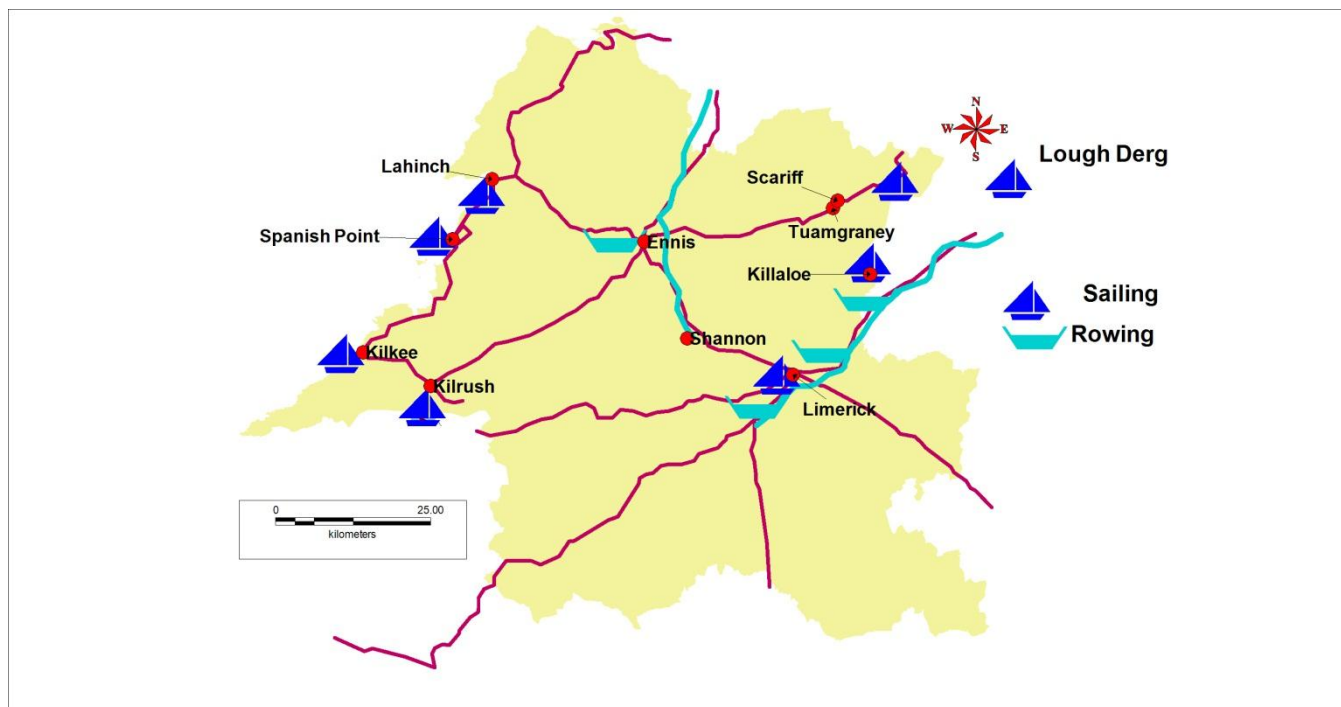
The facilities which have been mapped include swimming pools, non-angling water-based facilities and golf courses.

#### 4.3.1 Maps of facility distribution

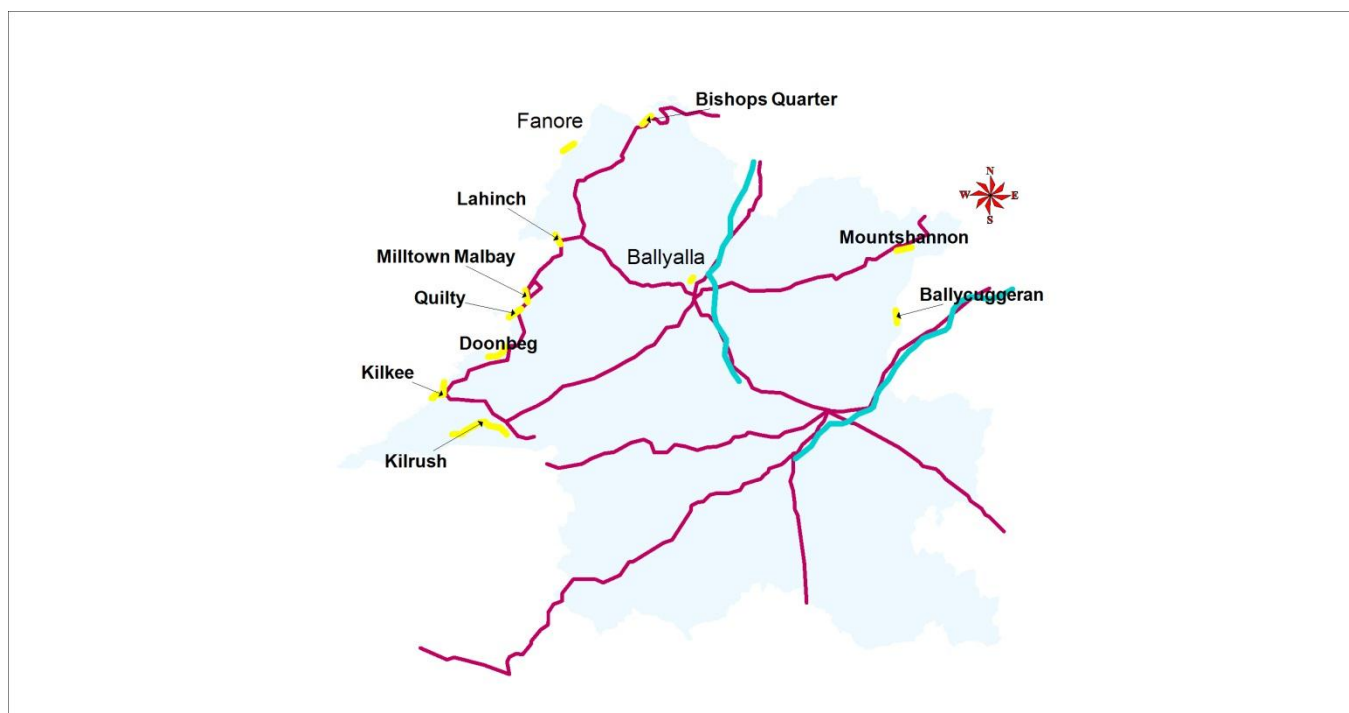


**Figure 4 Distribution of Indoor Swimming Facilities**

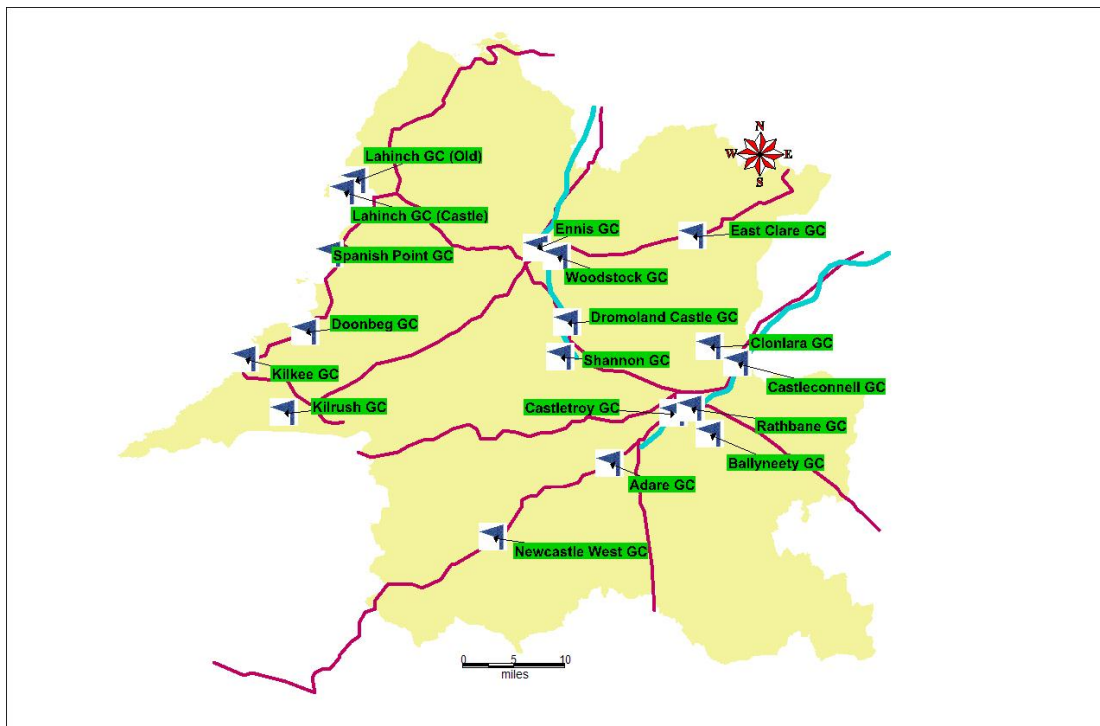




**Figure 5 Distribution of Boating and Related Activities**



**Figure 6 Distribution of Beaches**



**Figure 7 Distribution of Golf Courses**

From this distribution it can be seen that, in general, Clare and the area in the vicinity of Limerick Metropolitan Area is reasonably well served. However, the West Limerick area is less well served with facilities. When considering the West Limerick area, however, regard must also be had to facilities in other counties as parts of West Limerick can be serviced by facilities in North Kerry, North Cork and West Tipperary.

#### 4.3.2 Indicative Facility Catchments

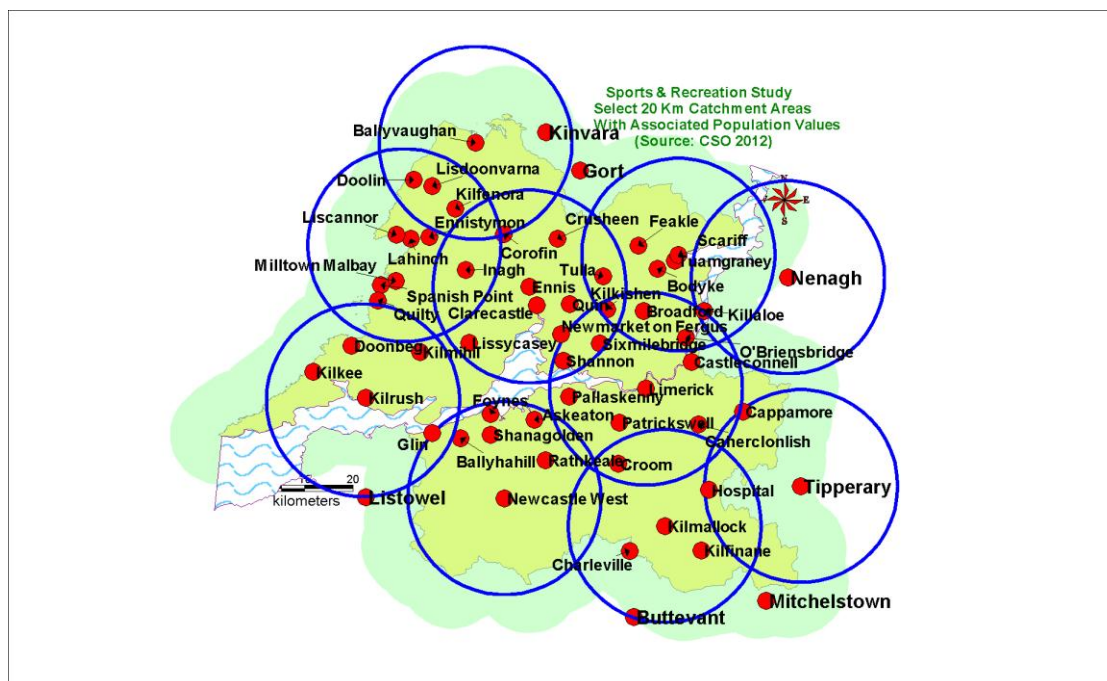
As discussed above, it is difficult to be precise about the catchment areas that should be developed for different facilities. Different standards are suggested by national and international guidelines. In addition, acceptable travel times will vary depending on the uniqueness of the facility and the alternatives that are available. In addition, there seems to be a relationship between the capacity to travel and the socio-economic status of different parts of the population. For example, overseas visitors to the Shannon region are substantially weighted towards the upper socio-economic classes in society as indicated in the table below. (*Shannon Tourism, 2010, Failte Ireland*)

Social Class (%)	Total	Britain	M. Europe	N. America	Other Areas
Managerial/Professional (AB)	25	27	20	30	23
White Collar (C1)	57	43	68	57	70
Skilled Worker (C2)	15	25	9	12	7
Unskilled Worker (DE)	3	5	3	1	-

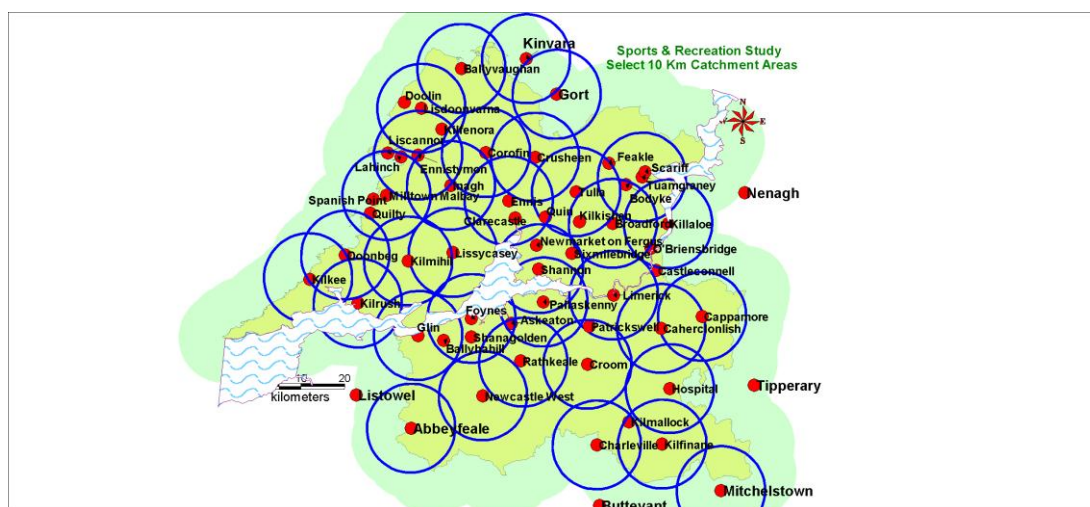
**Table 19 Socio-economic Status of Overseas Visitors to the Shannon Region**

For the purposes of this study, catchment areas of approximately 20 kilometres and 10 kilometres are being used. This issue is discussed further below in the context of the adoption of a hierarchical model of facility provision within the area.

**Indicative distribution of possible key centres and their 20k catchments and of local centres with 10k catchments is indicated on the following maps. It should be stressed that these are indicative distributions only to suggest the general implications of the approach. A strategic action for each of the participating bodies will be to develop a distribution map for its own area.**



**Figure 8 Indicative 20 km Catchments**



**Figure 9 Indicative 10 km Catchments**

### *The Limerick Metropolitan Area*

While this approach to the provision of facilities is justifiable as an attempt to balance the issues of access and viability, it is acknowledged that other more complex issues face the Limerick Metropolitan Area and its hinterland. This is due to the level and density of population that is in this area, the different travel and access facilities that are available compared to more rural areas and the presence of the larger-scale facilities that provide services to a much wider catchment than that of the Metropolitan area itself. In addition, there is a higher level of provision of private facilities within this area than in most other parts of the study area. Therefore, seeking to calculate an appropriate level of provision of facilities within this area has particular difficulties.

The overall approach that is proposed for this area does not differ in principle, however, from that proposed for other areas in that it is based on the following principles –

- Ensuring that adequate provision is available for all
- Ensuring the provision is not excessive
- Ensuring that provision is well distributed so that there is easy physical access to facilities and other sport and recreation resources
- Ensuring the integrated management of facilities insofar as that is possible
- Maximising the use of facilities whether public, private, voluntary or education related
- Using the various funding and licensing activities of public and publicly-funded bodies to influence the nature and location of the facilities provided

For the purposes of this strategy the Limerick Metropolitan Area is considered to encompass Limerick Metropolitan District and its environs both in Limerick and Clare. This area has a population in excess of 100,000 people and, as noted below, the 20km catchment area of the Limerick Metropolitan Area has a population of nearly 170,000. This area also encompasses Shannon, the only other major settlement within the catchment. Nevertheless, the provision that will be made in Shannon needs to be considered in the context of the overall provision within the Limerick Metropolitan Area.

It should also be noted that the Limerick Metropolitan Area is a centre for certain facilities for the whole region and, indeed, for areas beyond the region. Therefore, the 50m pool in the University of Limerick, the greyhound and horse-racing facilities and the Rugby and GAA stadiums cater to populations greater than that of the indigenous population alone. For certain facilities, therefore, it is suggested that the population being catered for within the Limerick Metropolitan Area should be even greater than that of the indigenous population.

The first matter to be considered is the extent of general open space that would be required to be provided within this area. There are many standards that might be adopted in order to assist in the making of decisions on this matter. However, a widely accepted standard is that proposed by the Fields in Trust Organisation of the UK (formerly the National Playing Fields Association). This organisation suggests that a minimum of 6 acres (2.25 ha) of open space be provided per 1000

population. This standard is set out in *Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play* published by that organisation and proposes that the provision of 2.25 ha be divided into two categories as follows -

(A) Outdoor Sport: 1.6 hectares

1. Facilities such as pitches, greens, courts, athletic tracks and miscellaneous sites such as training areas in the ownership of councils;
2. Facilities as described in 1. above within the educational sector which are available for public use by written agreement; and
3. Facilities as described in 1. above within the voluntary, private, industrial and commercial sectors, which serve the leisure time needs for outdoor recreation of their members, or the public.

Included within the standard for outdoor sport is a specific allocation of 1.2 hectares per 1000 people for pitch sports.

(B) Children's Playing Space: 0.8 hectares

1. designated areas for children and young people containing a range of facilities and an environment that has been designed to provide focussed opportunities for outdoor play; and
2. casual or informal playing space within housing areas.

In the Fields in Trust model, play areas can be categorised as Local Areas for Play, Locally Equipped Areas for Play and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play.

The adoption of these standards would require that approximately 160 ha be available for sports, of which 120 ha should comprise space for field sports and 80 ha space for play areas.

With regard to constructed sports facilities, the Sports England Model referred to earlier in this document, suggests that a population of 170,000 would require 32X25m swimming lanes, 48 indoor games courts and 6 full-sized artificial pitches.

In making these two sets of calculations, however, and particularly with regard to the pitches, regard must be had to the somewhat different structure of team sports in Ireland and particularly to the impact of the sports operated through the GAA system and the fact that many, particularly underage team sports participants, take part in a number of different team sports at the same time and are members of teams in different codes. This adds to the demand for playing field space. In addition, the existence in Limerick of a large third-level student body adds to the demand for such facilities as the demand from such a population tends to be higher than that amongst the general population. It should also be noted that some of the facilities of major centres such as that at the University of Limerick, serve a far wider region, which adds to the level of demand within the Metropolitan Area.

It should also be borne in mind that there is a balance to be achieved between all-weather and grass pitches and that the balance between these two types of facility is a matter to be considered at a

local level. This may result in a higher number of all-weather facilities being required than suggested in the Sports England Model. Finally, and particularly with regard to pool facilities, the demand of the visitor population to Limerick needs to be considered when the appropriate supply of swimming pool facilities is being considered.

It is proposed, therefore, that the figures suggested by the two models referred to be considered as a minimum when considering the extent of the provision of facilities required within the Limerick Metropolitan Catchment area. In considering the current level of provision of these facilities, however, the UL 50m pool and its artificial pitches should be discounted since they cater to a population from a much wider area and performs functions that are national in extent. It is also considered that the needs of the third-level Institutes in the Metropolitan Area should be given special consideration since sport and physical activity are core elements of student life and the demand for facilities arising from such students is likely to be higher than that of the general population. In addition, a decision should be made locally with regard to the number of all-weather pitches that should be provided within the overall suggested allocation of 120 hectares for field sports.

In considering the provision of facilities within the Metropolitan area it is proposed that, as a means of facilitating access, facilities are not all provided at one location but that at least one major facility is developed on the North side and one on the South side of the area. The nature and extent of these facilities should have regard to the particular needs of the area as determined by the Planning Authority. These facilities should, however, seek to serve multiple populations such as students and the local populations and individual facilities should not, if possible, be provided for each user group.

It will be noted that these recommendations focus particularly on a number of types of facility. That is because these facilities can, between them, cater for a wide variety of sports and also because they relate to the most capital intensive facilities required and to those with the highest operating and maintenance costs.

Consideration must also be given to the provision of highly specialised facilities for particular sports which may be proposed for the Metropolitan area. In general such proposals should be treated positively once they are provided in a manner that will facilitate sustainable access by the largest proportion of the population possible and once their viability can be reasonably demonstrated. It would not be appropriate for such facilities to be provided at locations away from the main population centres other than where the location is determined by the existence at a particular location of a specific natural resource.

#### *Management of facilities within the Metropolitan Area*

The integrated management of sport and physical recreation resources within the Metropolitan Area may also present challenges that are both different and greater than those presented in smaller communities. Because of the significantly wider range of organisations that exist within the Metropolitan Area and the wider range of facilities at issue, the creation of overall management steering groups is likely to be more difficult.

There are a number of approaches that may help to address this issue –



- Because there also exist within the Limerick Area large organisations, such as the third-level Institutions, that have an interest in the provision and maintenance of multi-sport facilities, and which have the experience and the resources to oversee the management and use of such facilities, it would be appropriate that such organisations would take a role in the provision and management of facilities, particularly where they would be of benefit to their own clients
- The division of the Metropolitan area into areas for this purpose and the involvement of the Local Authority, the Local Sports Partnerships and the Local Development Companies in the establishment of community-based organisations to facilitate the integrated provision and operation of facilities within the various areas would also be possible. There is considerable experience available with regard to community-based facility management and an approach such as this, which would include state bodies, other state-funded agencies, education institutions and private facility providers, would be a useful model to establish. The areas to be created should have regard both to existing natural communities and to the availability of facilities within the; the areas should not be so small as to have too small a range of facilities nor so large as to be unwieldy.

Either of these approaches or a combination of both would provide appropriate mechanisms through which the integrated management of facilities within the Metropolitan Area might be pursued.

#### 4.3.3 *Current and Future Population of Catchments*

Using the 2011 Census for current population numbers and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Mid-West to allocate future population, the following approximate current and future figures within some indicative 20k catchments can be identified. It should be noted that total population is greater than that of the overall area due to overlap of catchment areas.

<b>20km Radius Catchment Centre</b>	<b>Catchment population 2011</b>	<b>Catchment population 2011 within study area</b>	<b>Catchment population 2022</b>	<b>Catchment population 2022 within study area</b>
<b>Kilrush</b>	30,273	17,558	34,000	20,000
<b>Newcastle West</b>	44,388	41,290	54,000	50,000
<b>Kilmallock</b>	47,581	32,887	58,000	40,000
<b>Limerick</b>	169,571	164,400	210,000	204,000
<b>Tuamgraney/Scariff</b>	32,659	20,547	37,000	24,000
<b>Ennis</b>	65,918	65,233	80,000	80,000
<b>Lahinch</b>	18,484	14,390	20,000	16,000
<b>Lisdoonvarna</b>	10521	10,115	12,000	11,500
<b>Total</b>	419,395	366,420	505,000	445,500

**Table 20 Indicative 20 km Catchment Populations using 2011 Data**

From this distribution of population it will be noted that a far greater level of provision will be required within the Limerick area while some additional provision will be needed within the Ennis area. For example, using the figures suggested earlier for swimming-pool catchments, it suggests that one such facility should be available in the Kilrush and Tuamgraney and Lahinch areas, up to two in the Newcastle West and Kilmallock areas, up to three in Ennis and up to seven in the Limerick catchment.

In catchments with multiple settlements not all of the facilities need necessarily be provided within the principal settlement. Within the Limerick context, for example, some of the facilities may be provided within other nearby settlements such as Shannon while Shannon and Tulla may provide some of the facilities required within the Ennis area.

It will be noted that the only significant change in population anticipated is in the catchment of Limerick Metropolitan Area which increases by 40,000 people approximately. This is a significant increase in terms of the demand for and capacity to support facilities. The catchments of other centres will increase also but not to a lesser extent, while the catchments of some centres will only increase marginally.

Again it should be noted that this is an indicative model only. A somewhat different approach may be taken by the individual areas when considering this matter. For example, significant developments of multi-sports facilities have taken place in Rathkeale and Lisdoonvarna while another has commenced in Killaloe. This may impact on the approach that is taken within each county area to the structure of the second and third-tier catchments.

#### *4.3.4 Facilities Based on Natural Amenities*

Other facilities that are based on natural amenities or resources are widely distributed throughout the region and no area is more than 20 minutes from one of these facilities. These include facilities that accommodate the activities that are most popular with both local and visiting populations and tend to have substantial spare capacity available within them. These include hiking and walking routes, angling locations, water-sports facilities, swimming pools and golf clubs.

#### *4.3.5 Facilities of Individual Clubs and Organisations*

As noted previously, historically in Ireland the provision of sports and recreational facilities has largely been carried out by individual sporting organisations and their clubs. It is not suggested that this provision should be discontinued or prevented. What is being proposed, however, is that it be considered in a more holistic way and, that when new or upgraded facilities are being provided, that this be done in the context of maximising access of all the community and of all sporting activities.

#### *4.3.6 Facilities at a Local Community Level*

Even when account is taken of the various kinds of provision referred to above, it is likely that not all forms of provision will be accounted for. The provision referred to will often still require travel to avail of facilities and this can have an inhibiting effect on participation in sports and physical recreation. It is acknowledged, therefore, that the provision of facilities at a local community level will also be required. These facilities should generally, however, not involve major capital cost or upkeep and should particularly facilitate family-based activity. Thus, playgrounds with associated



walking routes for parents, outdoor gyms, cycle routes and similar might be provided at this level particularly if associated with the community halls that are widely distributed throughout the area of this study. These facilities would allow for spontaneous physical recreation across all family age-groups and would complement the more structured facilities provided at the 10k and 20k catchment levels.

#### **4.4 Results of Consultation**

As noted above consultation were held with a variety of key stakeholders with regard to the development of this strategy. The following are the key areas that were focused on in these consultations.

Widespread consultations were held with public bodies, sporting organisations, education bodies, local development organisations and local sports bodies. In addition specific consultations were held with those involved with particular aspects of sports and physical recreation, including those concerned with the provision of facilities for those with disabilities.

The overall outcome of these consultations can be classified under the following headings.

##### *4.4.1 Plans for the provision of additional facilities*

A number of organisations have plans or intentions to provide or facilitate the provision of additional substantial facilities. These include –

- Limerick Regeneration in respect of Multi-Sport Facilities in the Moyross and Southhill areas
- The University of Limerick with regard to the provision of additional facilities at the UL Arena
- Limerick Institute of Technology which has intentions of providing additional facilities to serve its Limerick Campuses
- Limerick FC which has plans to provide a large-scale training facility for underage players and the re-development of Market's Field as a small-scale stadium

Others envisaged the provision of additional facilities to serve a wide population including the Clare FA which envisages the provision of all-weather facilities in Shannon.

Other organisations indicated that there was a possibility that new developments might take place but that there were no specific plans with respect to such developments.

Other organisations did not envisage any further development of a substantial nature in the short-to-medium term.

##### *4.4.2 Adequacy of existing provision*

A number of organisations considered that the existing provision within the area and the surrounding counties was adequate for current purposes. This related, in particular, to horse-racing and greyhound racing provision. Both organisations indicated that there was adequate spare capacity within the current facilities and that any growth in demand could be adequately addressed by the existing facilities.

No organisation which was consulted suggested that there was over-provision of facilities though it was acknowledged that with respect to some facilities such as public swimming pools, their survival was dependent on continued public subvention.

Some organisations that were responsible for multi-sport facilities also indicated that maintaining the viability of such facilities required considerable management flexibility and the use of the facilities for non-sporting but profitable purposes

#### *4.4.3 Organisational Issues*

Organisational issues arose regularly in the course of consultations. These related to a wide range of issues but amongst those that arose on more than one occasion were those set out below. It became clear during the course of the discussion that organisational and operational issues were as important as the question of the provision of the facilities themselves.

- The importance of the provision of access to facilities as well as the provision of the facilities themselves
- The need to provide for all age-groups from the young to the older populations
- The need to make specific provision for those that have particular needs including those with disabilities
- The importance of including local communities in the design and operation of facilities so that there is local ownership and buy-in and so that local communities feel a responsibility in the provision of facilities
- The importance of the use of multi-sport models for the provision of facilities at a community level which also reflects current Government policy
- The importance of good governance and the enhancement of the capacity of local organisations that own facilities and potential facilities in order to ensure that they are in a position to maximise the manner in which the facilities are used
- The importance of the provision of facilities for non-team and non-invasive sports as well as those for team sports
- The importance of the establishment of community-based, inter-organisational structures to manage facilities in a particular area in a co-ordinated and integrated way

#### **4.5 Review of Gaps and Over-Provision**

The review of gaps and over-provision is based on a review of the range of facilities that are available, consultation with various stakeholders and a review of the types of facility that are considered to be important in published documentation.

In doing this review, public, private and semi-public facilities are all taken into account. In addition, the role of visitors in supporting facilities is also taken into account since some forms of facility are dependent on income generated by visitors for their survival.

In many cases it is difficult to be precise about those facilities that are adequate, overly-provided or under-provided. Adequacy of provision is also related to accessibility as well as to location; in some cases certain sectors of the population are excluded from participation, in some cases physical access or the facilities to accommodate such access is the issue, while in other cases geographic distance is the issue.

Account must also be taken of the availability of clubs and other organisations that are necessary to ensure that activities can take place even if the physical facilities have been provided.

Finally, in certain cases it is assumed that facilities may require public sector support in an on-going way as they will not be capable of viability without subvention.

## 5. Strategy

### 5.1 Key principles

#### 5.1.1. *Threshold and range refer to the following –*

- Threshold is the population that should be served by a particular facility
- Range is the maximum distance that people should be expected to travel to a particular facility

The basic principle of how these concepts would be used is that the area should be provided with facilities so that as much of the population as possible does not have to travel beyond what is considered to be a reasonable distance in order to access key facilities and that facilities should be provided only to the extent that they are needed to serve a particular population.

While these concepts and the principle of their application is straightforward in theory it is not so in practice. As noted above, the provision of sports and recreation facilities in Ireland relies to a large extent on the support of national and local authorities with regard both to capital investment and on-going running costs and on the provision of voluntary time and effort. In the context of the structure of the provision of sporting and recreation facilities in Ireland, therefore, the application of the normal principles of commercial viability is more complex than it might be in another context.

Nevertheless some guidance is available –

Overall, distances of between five and ten kilometres are generally identified as the range people are willing to travel in order to access a facility on a regular basis. This comes from a variety of sources nationally and internationally. It has been noted that this will vary with the nature of the facility and users are willing to travel further to a major facility. Therefore, for example, the management of the UL Sports Facility indicated that their catchment area excluding provision of some major facilities tended to Roscrea and Charleville distances of about 70 and 40 kilometres respectively while its Ballycuggeran development in County Clare attracts people from a wide catchment as well.

The threshold for some facilities has also been identified. A threshold of between 15,000 and 25,000 has been identified for swimming pool provision.

In order to address this issue, a four-level strategy is proposed with wide provision of the least costly but popular facilities through the use of a 10 km catchment model, the provision of a range of more specialised facilities through the use of a 20 km catchment model and the provision of larger and more specialised facilities such as stadia and larger specialised and multi-sport facilities in the Limerick Metropolitan Area/Shannon/Ennis area.

This model would recognise, of course, that for larger population catchments such as Limerick Metropolitan Area or Shannon, multiples of the facilities provided in the less populous catchments would be required.

### *5.1.2. Distribution of Facilities*

As noted above, it is difficult to be precise about the populations to be served by different facilities given the voluntary element of provision in Ireland and the impact of tourism in the Limerick/Clare area. It is also important to note that the level of population to be served will relate both to the cost of operating and maintaining the facility in question and the extent to which a facility is expected to be financially self-sustaining or otherwise. It is clear that, given the nature of the distribution of the Irish population, if adequate access to facilities is to be provided to all sectors of the population, significant support from public funds must be provided to enable a sufficient spread of facilities to be provided.

### *5.1.3. Provision for the needs of tourists and other visitors to the area*

Limerick and Clare have a wide range of natural and built resources that facilitate sporting and physical recreation for tourists and other visitors. The provision of facilities must take account of the needs of this as well as the indigenous population. The needs of the visiting population can sometimes add to the viability of facilities also used by the local population; sometimes they are significant users of a resource or facility; and sometimes, for specialist populations, the majority of the users will be visitors.

The principal providers of facilities targeted at visitors are likely to be private providers. The principal considerations that fall to be taken into account by decision-makers with regard to these facilities are that there is a clear unsatisfied demand for the facility proposed, that the scale of the facility is appropriate to the scale of the resource and that the environmental considerations set out below can be met.

### *5.1.4. Importance of Organisational Issues*

The provision of high quality facilities is not a sufficient condition for the creation of vibrant sports and recreational communities in Limerick and Clare; organisational issues are just as important. These issues range from the development of structures to maximise the benefits of all facilities in an area to the

### *5.1.5. Opportunity for the Establishment of a National Scale Centre in the Area*

In the discussions with consultees the question of the opportunity for the establishment of a national centre was examined. These discussions did not give rise to any concrete suggestions. It was generally considered that most national centres for strong sporting activities have been established and that those organisations that do not have such a centre are unlikely to be able to provide such a centre.

## **5.2 Strategic Objectives**

The major objectives of this strategy are set out in the brief but are restated here in order to provide a framework for the strategic policies that are set out later.

The overall objectives are as follows –

- 1 To provide a framework for policy and decision-makers that will enable them to development and implement policies at local and regional level with regard to the provision and management of facilities for sports and physical recreation that will enable the other objectives to be attained
- 2 To maximise access to a variety of facilities for sports and physical recreation for all inhabitants of the region
- 3 To manage the provision of facilities so that while maximising access as set out in the previous objective excess provision that would lead to excessive demands for on-going support from public funds or that would lead to the decline in the quality or closure of some facilities
- 4 To have regard to the role that facilities for sports and physical recreation play in attracting national and international visitors to the region and to make provision for this role
- 5 To maximise the benefits of the expenditure of scarce resources on the provision of facilities for sports and physical recreation and to maximise the usage of such facilities as are provided
- 6 To support the provision and management of facilities in a way that maximises access for all sectors of society including those whose capacity to participate in sports and physical recreation may be compromised by physical, sensory, or intellectual disabilities
- 7 To provide and manage sports and recreation facilities in a way that will facilitate life-time engagement in physical activity by the whole population and in the light of the information and research that is available guide such provision and management
- 8 To manage the provision of facilities for sports and physical recreation so that environmental impacts are minimised and that where such impacts do occur that they do not compromise important natural heritage sites or species
- 9 To develop the capacity of voluntary organisations responsible for managing local facilities so that they are in a position to contribute positively to the achievement of the other objectives of this strategy
- 10 To make provision for the integrated management at local level of facilities that are owned, managed or occupied by a variety of local community and voluntary organisations
- 11 To facilitate the integrated management of public, private and community-owned facilities within particular geographic areas
- 12 To identify whether there are any major national facilities that could be accommodated in the area

### 5.3 Strategic Policies

In the light of the strategic objectives that are outlined above, the following are the strategic policies that will guide decision-makers with respect to the provision of sports and physical recreation facilities throughout Limerick and Clare –

#### Strategic Approach to Facility Distribution

- 1 That a hierarchy of facility provision will be adopted as follows –
  - Large scale stadia and facilities
  - Multi-sport facilities at key locations
  - Smaller scale multi-sport facilities
  - Community-level facilities for sports and physical recreation at a level smaller than the multi-sport facilities referred to above
  - Specific facilities provided by individual sports and recreation clubs and organisations to meet their own needs.
- 2 That larger-scale sports and physical recreation stadia and facilities be located within the areas of Limerick Metropolitan Area, Shannon and Ennis in order to maximise accessibility of larger populations, to maximise the viability of the facilities and to maximise the potential use of public transport facilities for providing access to these facilities. In particular, where significant areas have been developed or are planned for development provision should be made for the establishment of multi-sports facilities in accordance with the recommendations of the Draft National Sports Facilities Strategy.
- 3 That new stadia for team games will generally not be permitted within the area other than
  - the provision within Limerick Metropolitan Area of one medium-sized stadium not exceeding a capacity of 7,500 with a primary focus on the accommodation of League of Ireland soccer matches and
  - the provision of a new stadium at an appropriate location and which replaces an existing stadium.
- 4 That the provision of facilities which have specific needs which require them to be located outside the Limerick Metropolitan Area/Shannon/Ennis area will be accommodated subject to addressing the environmental considerations outlined below.
- 5 That key sub-regional locations be identified for the provision of all-weather sports facilities to accommodate a wide range of sports and physical recreation activities and such that, no person is significantly more than 20 kilometres from such a facility. These locations will relate to the regional structure outlined in the Regional Planning Guidelines and should include -

- Provision of facilities in the Limerick Metropolitan Area in accordance with the considerations outlined at section 4.3.2 of this strategy including the provision of at least one area to serve the North side of Limerick Metropolitan Area and one area to serve the South side of Limerick Metropolitan Area. These facilities should incorporate the facilities set out in the following two paragraphs and which should not be in addition to the facilities referred to in this paragraph
- One area to provide an integrated training facility for soccer within the Limerick Metropolitan Area
- One area to provide a multi-sports facility for Limerick Institute of Technology
- One multi-sports all-weather facility in Shannon
- The enhancement of the Lee's Road Regional Sports Facility in Ennis and the provision of a substantial indoor sports facility in the town of Ennis that will be managed as part of the overall Lee's Road facility
- The provision and/or upgrading of one integrated all-weather multi-sports facility in key settlements within Limerick and Clare but outside the Limerick Metropolitan Area/Ennis/Shannon area. The precise distribution of these locations should be decided by the Planning Authorities acting in consultation but should reflect the sub-regional centres identified in the Regional Planning Guidelines and should also have regard to the locations where substantial sports facility development has taken place or is under way. In that context the following locations should be included for consideration -
  - Kilrush
  - Killaloe/Ballina
  - Lisdoonvarna
  - Lahinch/Ennistymon
  - Tulla
  - Scarrif
  - Newcastlewest
  - Kilmallock
  - Rathkeale

Over time the facilities at these locations should include the following as a minimum –

- One full-size, floodlit all-weather playing pitch capable of accommodating those games that require the largest playing area
- Grass pitches for a variety of sports
- A floodlit walking/running track incorporating outdoor gym facilities
- An indoor facility capable of accommodating full basketball games
- Facilities for other sports such as tennis and bowls



- A play area
- Training areas

All these facilities may not be on the one site but, where they are on a number of sites, they should be managed and maintained by a single entity.

- 6 That smaller-scale facilities be provided at other intermediate locations such that no person is generally more than 10 kilometres from such a facility. These facilities should include a floodlit all-weather playing area that is not of full size, a walking track, a playground, an outdoor gym and an indoor games hall. In these locations attempts should be made to maximise the use of existing facilities and to upgrade them where necessary, developing new facilities only where unavoidable. Particular attention should be paid to the provision of training facilities at these locations as the absence of such facilities can prove a significant barrier to participation in sports.
- 7 That the provision of facilities that allow the better use and enjoyment of sporting and physical recreation facilities which make use of natural resources will generally be permitted provided that they are of an appropriate scale and address the environmental conditions as set out below. Where possible this should be achieved by the enhancement of existing facilities rather than the provision of new facilities. In addition, areas may be identified as hubs for particular forms of sporting and physical recreation activities related to their natural amenities and/or geographic location and development plans prepared to facilitate the development of such hubs.
- 8 That the provision of smaller-scale community-based facilities will continue to be supported subject to the requirements as set out above and the meeting of environmental considerations as set out below. Such facilities might, in particular, include a children's playground, a safe walking/cycling route and a community hall used for non-competitive physical recreation.

### **Social and Physical Access to Facilities**

- 9 That the needs of all age-groups are considered when facilities are being developed and that, in particular, the needs of the young and of older people are given particular attention. With regard to the former this should relate to the incorporation of age-appropriate green spaces into all developments in accordance with the provisions of the document 'Play Space Guidelines 2007 (DDDA 2006). With regard to the latter it should include the provision of separate cycle paths, the provision of level, well-maintained, non-slip walkways and convenient access to parks and green spaces as recommended by the WHO Age-Friendly Cities Programme. This policy will be implemented through the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine which proposals to other funders should receive the backing of public bodies in the area; and through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate.
- 10 That new facilities will be provided in a manner that will seek to encourage physical activity amongst different age groups in a single location by, for example, providing a children's

playground and an adult outdoor gym or walking area in close proximity. In addition, that where significant facilities are planned, these should be located, where possible, close to schools and public open space.

- 11 That particular consideration be given to the provision within publicly-funded facilities, of the spaces and equipment necessary to accommodate those activities that have been identified as being most likely to encourage additional participation in sports or physical activities amongst the resident population.
- 12 That the needs of those with a disability are provided for in the design and development of facilities for sports and physical recreation. Such an approach should include the following –
  - The incorporation of provision for those with a disability in the design of new facilities
  - The making of special provision for those with a disability in certain circumstances e.g. the provision of boardwalk areas on walking routes
  - The development and implementation of a programme of upgrading of those facilities that cannot currently adequately accommodate those with disabilities

This policy will be implemented through the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine which proposals to other funders should receive the backing of public bodies in the area; and through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate.

- 13 That the needs of those who cannot afford to pay for the use of facilities be taken into account when new facilities or the integration of existing facilities are being proposed and that mechanisms are incorporated into the project proposal which will help to address this issue. In addition and in order to facilitate access by those with limited resources, that the pricing policies of facilities be such as to require a reasonable level of payment by those that can afford to do so.

In addition that the needs of the working population be taken into account when new facilities or the integration of existing facilities are being proposed and that mechanisms are incorporated into the project proposal which will help to address this issue with particular regard to the provision of opening hours that are convenient for this population.

Also, that the provision of public transport to proposed facilities and to existing facilities not currently served by such transport will be examined as part of the objective of maximising access to sports and physical recreation opportunities for all, with the intention of arranging for the establishment of such services where possible.

This policy will be implemented through the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine which proposals to other funders should receive the backing of public bodies in the area; and through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate.

## The Need for New Facilities

- 14 That new developments of the following types of facility will generally not be supported within the area unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there is a need for the facility and that its provision will not impact on the viability of other existing facilities either within the strategy area or in areas that border it –
- Golf Course
  - Private swimming pool other than in an education context
  - Racecourse
  - Greyhound Stadium
- 15 That facilities and resources associated with the following sports and activities will generally be permitted subject to meeting environmental protection requirements and the identification of a market need that will not give rise to deadweight or displacement; and that proactive actions will be taken to enhance access to such facilities particularly through the provision of year-round parking, pathway and storage facilities where required.
- Walking trails both urban (Sli na Slainte) and rural and associated amenities such as sculpture trails or nature walks. The provision of walking trails in urban environments is of specific benefit as it provides for the most common form of physical activity undertaken by the urban population, it requires little investment or maintenance as most of the facilities are in place and it offers an opportunity to link sports and recreation provision with the objectives of the Smarter Travel agenda.
  - Dedicated cycle routes. In this regard particular attention should be paid to the potential to use abandoned routes such as the Abbeyfeale railway line and the West Clare railway line for the provision of new facilities
  - Mountain-bike trails. In this regard, in particular, the Ballyhoura bike trail system should be developed and enhanced with the provision of additional facilities to accommodate a wide range of users including families.
  - Other trails including long-distance walking and cycling routes which should be developed in accordance with the principles set out in the publication 'Creating Green Infrastructure in Ireland' (Comhar 2010).
  - Water-based activities on the Shannon, the Shannon Estuary, the Fergus and the Fergus Estuary including sailing, marine sailing, canoeing and kayaking, rowing, surfing, wind-surfing, and fishing. In this regard, specific provision should be made for rowing within the Limerick Metropolitan Area in order to benefit from one of the best stretches of rowing water in the country by, amongst other things, the holding of regattas in the area.
  - Equestrian Activities. In this regard specific provision should be made for indoor facilities for equestrian activities in Limerick and within the Ennis Area.

- Children's playgrounds and adult outdoor gyms particularly in areas where the level of provision is less than the national average. Such provision should be made in accordance with the standards set out in the document 'Play Space Guidelines 2007 (DDDA 2006).
- Other outdoor activities such as mountain climbing, orienteering and rock-climbing.

### **Integration of the Use of Facilities**

- 16 That where public access to a particular type of facility is not available but a private facility is available in the area, to seek to make arrangements with the private facility owner for the provision of public access.
- 17 That the adoption of integrated multi-sport models of facility provision be promoted and supported where possible and appropriate. Such multi-sport models will promote the inclusion of public, voluntary, school-based and privately-owned facilities in a particular area under a joint management body in order to maximise the use of existing facilities, to ensure that facilities do not lie idle more than is necessary and to ensure that where new facilities are proposed they will be provided only where there is a clear lack of capacity in the area. The promotion of such a model will be carried out through the nature of the criteria used for determining the basis on which locally-controlled public funds will be allocated to projects; through the criteria used to determine when proposals to other funders should receive the endorsement of public bodies in the area; through the use of other planning and licensing processes where possible and appropriate; and through the promotion of the adoption of this policy by funders at national and regional level.
- 18 That it will be a policy of all those engaged in the development and management of sports and physical recreation in the area to promote the adoption of the concept of Healthy Stadia.

A Healthy Stadium is, one that promotes the health of visitors, fans and the local community – and one that provides a place where people can go and have a positive, healthy experience playing or watching sport.

The Healthy Stadia concept is firmly based on a commitment to partnership and requires a multi-stakeholder approach comprising three elements; creating supportive and healthy working and living environments, integrating health promotion into the daily activities of the setting and developing links with other settings and with the wider community.

- 19 That where a new sports or community hall is being provided it is designed to be of a size that will accommodate those sports that require the greatest floor area and that the granting of permission for the provision of such a development be dependent on its being designed to such a standard.
- 20 That where new all-weather pitches are being provided they should be designed to accommodate those sports that require the largest playing area and that provision be made for the installation of flood-lighting when possible.

- 21 That the provision of sports hall and pitch facilities be based on an integrated multi-sport model and that the promoters of any such facility be required to indicate how such integration will be implemented and that undertakings be given with regard to the on-going provision of coaching and other supports.
- 22 That different models for the integration of sports facility provision at community level be supported. These models include a single-site model in which all facilities both indoor and outdoor are accommodated on the one site and a multi-site model in which both new and existing facilities located on one or more sites are managed in an integrated way through the use of mechanisms that have a legal status and that can ensure the on-going participation of facility owners and the overall community.
- 23 That where integrated facilities are being provided a floodlit walking route is incorporated as part of the overall development.
- 24 That the local community served by a particular facility be involved in the design, development and management of such facility.

#### **Development and Management of Sports Clubs**

- 25 That collaborative mechanisms for the establishment of new sports clubs at key locations be examined to facilitate the taking up of a range of individual non-invasive sports by all age groups. Such collaborative mechanisms should include community and voluntary organisations, national governing bodies, local development organisations, public bodies and educational bodies and would be appropriately promoted and supported by the Local Sports Partnerships. The types of sports that might be considered under this heading include gymnastics, martial arts, racquet sports, aerobics, dance, athletics, sulky-racing and cycling as well as team sports. Sports that have a specific historic and cultural value should be particularly considered for support under this heading.
- 26 That the enhancement of the Governance of individual organisations that own and manage facilities that are or that might be used for sports and physical recreation activities be supported in order to provide the management bodies of such organisations with the confidence and the capacity to engage in the collaborative and integrated models and processes outlined in this document. Mechanisms for the implementation of this objective will include the application of a Club Mentoring Programme and the provision of coordinated support to voluntary organisations.
- 27 That the tenure of sporting organisations with regard to land they hold from public authorities will be examined and amended where necessary and possible with the purpose of facilitating the achievement of the community-based, multi-sport integrated approaches referred to in this strategy.
- 28 That with regard to a small number of community and voluntary organisations which provide substantial sports and physical recreation facilities that are open to the general public and which face on-going uncertainties and funding challenges arising from their public service role, a long-term and sustainable funding system be identified and developed for such organisations and that the barriers to such organisations accessing funding are

addressed. Such funding mechanisms should provide for on-going maintenance and development as well as providing support for normal operational costs.

### **Economic Potential of Sport and Physical Recreation**

- 29 That the needs of the tourism sector are taken into account when proposals for new development or activities are being considered and that the proposers of facilities which will be reliant on visitors for their viability be requested to provide evidence of the likely use of the facility by visitors to the area and that the proposed facility will not undermine the viability of existing facilities in the area.
- 30 That pro-active steps be taken to promote international, national and regional sporting events within the area, particularly those such as the Great Limerick Run that involve mass participation and that the benefits of the designation of Limerick as Ireland's European City of Sport be built on in this context. In addition, the development of Limerick as a centre for Sports Medicine should be pursued through the collaboration of sporting organisations, Higher Education Institutes and other relevant organisations.

### **Environmental Considerations**

- 31 That where existing facilities are being upgraded the opportunity will be taken to upgrade those aspects of the facility that have an impact on the environment including the reduction in the use of energy, the improvement in the systems used for the treatment and disposal of waste-water and the management of associated activities to address any negative environmental impacts arising from them.
- 32 That where infrastructure developments are being undertaken, consideration will be given to whether and to what extent facilities for sport and physical recreation can be incorporated in the design and that where such provision is possible it will be made.
- 33 That when open space is being provided in association with other developments or as stand-alone amenities the quality of the open space as well as its quantity will be assessed with particular regard to its role in promoting sports and physical recreation either in itself or through the added value it provides for existing facilities. A matrix for the provision of open space such as that contained in the Limerick City Development Plan should be adopted.
- 34 That nothing in this strategy should be interpreted so as to prevent the implementation of the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary when it is adopted insofar as it applies to Sport and Physical Recreation.
- 35 That actions be taken to implement a 'Leave No Trace' approach to the use of the natural environment for sports and physical recreation so that the any natural amenity used by the public should not be impacted upon by that use and anything taken into the natural environment will be taken out again by the user.

## 6. Implementing the Strategy

While the development of this strategy has been led by local and regional authorities, its implementation will require the co-operation of many partners. Certain elements of the strategy can be implemented by those bodies that have regulatory and funding authority and opportunity. However, these bodies cannot alone ensure the proper implementation of the strategy.

### 6.1 Implementation Elements

The elements involved in the implementation of this strategy can be categorised as follows:

- 1 Land use management policies and development management processes by local and regional authorities
- 2 The use of infrastructure development projects in a manner that has regard to the needs of sports and physical recreation as well as the primary purpose of the provision of the infrastructure
- 3 Public funding mechanisms of national, regional and local bodies
- 4 The management systems used by public bodies involved in the development, ownership and management of facilities for sports and physical recreation
- 5 Processes of approval and endorsement by public bodies of proposed investments in facilities for sports and physical recreation
- 6 Processes of approval and endorsement by voluntary bodies involved in sport and physical recreation
- 7 Development programmes of national and local sports bodies with particular reference to the encouragement of the establishment of clubs and training facilities for sports that are less widespread and with particular reference
- 8 Development, investment and management decisions of voluntary bodies involved in sports and physical recreation
- 9 Community development activities of local development bodies
- 10 Decisions of local community organisations
- 11 Investment and management decisions of the providers of private facilities that form part of the sport and physical recreation infrastructure
- 12 Investment and management decisions of regional and local education organisations

The following table sets out how some of these mechanisms might be used in order to facilitate the implementation of the strategy.

Implementation Element	Organisation	Possible Actions
Land use management policies and development management processes by local and regional authorities	Planning Authorities	Facilitate the establishment of a collaborative group to identify the centres for the 10km and 20km radius catchments identified in the strategy and to agree the key facilities to be provided within such centres
		Use the strategy as a guidance document in the development of policies in development and local area plans
		Use the considerations set out in the strategy as a guidance in the evaluation of applications for permission to carry out developments related to sports and physical recreation and seek evidence of the need for the development and its impact on other existing development
		Incorporate key elements of the strategy that have a regional relevance in the next iteration of the Regional Planning Guidelines
	Regional Authority	Establish a process through which stakeholders in the provision of sports and physical recreation are consulted when relevant infrastructure projects are being considered
The use of infrastructure development projects in a manner that has regard to the needs of sports and physical recreation as well as the primary purpose of the provision of the infrastructure	Local Authorities and National Infrastructure providers	Incorporate facilities for sports and physical recreation in infrastructure projects where feasible. Potential for the provision of added value in this context should be considered particularly for transportation, flood management, water impoundment and canalisation projects
		Take the relevant policies of the strategy into account when considering which proposals to fund and impose appropriate conditions on any funding that is approved. The relevant policies are, in particular, those relating to the location, need, accessibility (physical and social), multiplicity of potential uses, management policies, willingness to



Implementation Element	Organisation	Possible Actions
		integrate with other developments in the vicinity and provision of those with particular needs.
Public funding mechanisms of national, regional and local bodies	All bodies responsible for the provision of funding to voluntary or other organisations for the provision of facilities	Establishment of systems of management that facilitate access by all members of the community served by the body in question and that seek to overcome any perceived obstacles to such access.
The management systems used by public bodies involved in the development, ownership and management of facilities for sports and physical recreation	All relevant public bodies	Develop participation and leadership of bodies such as steering groups, management committees and similar to facilitate the establishment of the integrated provision and access to local facilities as referred to in the policies
		Within the Limerick Metropolitan Area the identification of partnership areas which would form the basis for the establishment of integrated management bodies and the development of models and systems through which the third-level Institutes and other similar bodies could play a leading role in the development and management of facilities that would provide access for all
		Establishment of systems through which the needs of all members of the community are considered in the design and management of facilities. Sectors of the community that may require particular consideration include young people, older people, women, those with physical and

Implementation Element	Organisation	Possible Actions
		<p>mental disabilities, socially excluded groups, those with limited access to financial resources and those with limited access to transport</p> <p>Take the relevant policies of the strategy into account when considering which funding proposals to endorse. Such policies may include those relating to the location, need, accessibility (physical and social), multiplicity of potential uses, management policies, willingness to integrate with other developments in the vicinity and provision for those with particular needs.</p>
Processes of approval and endorsement by public bodies of proposed investments in facilities for sports and physical recreation	All relevant public bodies	Take the relevant policies of the strategy into account when considering which proposals of their constituent bodies to endorse. Such policies may include those relating to the location, need, accessibility (physical and social), multiplicity of potential uses, management policies, willingness to integrate with other developments in the vicinity and provision for those with particular needs.
Processes of approval and endorsement by voluntary bodies involved in sport and physical recreation	All voluntary bodies involved in sport and physical recreation	Work with local sports development bodies such as the local sports partnerships to establish clubs within the area in question so that the range of sports available to the population is increased
Development programmes of national and local sports bodies with particular reference to the encouragement of the establishment of clubs and	<p>All relevant sporting bodies</p> <p>Local Sports Partnerships</p>	Participation in collaborative approaches to the use of sports facilities both existing and planned with a view to maximising access to and use of such facilities by a wide range of sports and the accommodation and encouragement of new sports

Implementation Element	Organisation	Possible Actions
training facilities for sports that are less widespread and with particular reference to individual minority sports		
Development, investment and management decisions of voluntary bodies involved in sports and physical recreation	Voluntary bodies involved in sport	Leadership of the establishment of community-based initiatives to establish collaborative mechanisms for the maximising of the use and access to facilities capable of being used for sports and physical recreation
Community development activities of local development bodies	Local development bodies including local authorities, local development companies and local sports partnerships	Using grant-aid and project evaluation mechanisms to facilitate the application of the relevant policies set out in this strategy
		Participation in collaborative mechanisms as outlined above and in the development and implement of community sports and physical recreation plans
Decisions of local community organisations	Local community organisations	Management of facilities within community ownership in a manner that maximises access for purposes of sports and physical recreation of all types
		Consideration of the needs of the marginalised and of those with special needs when community-based plans for sports and physical recreation are being developed
		Consideration of the policies set out in this strategy when renewal and improvement of facilities are being considered

Implementation Element	Organisation	Possible Actions
		Consideration of the needs of those with special requirements when plans for the provision of such facilities are being considered
Investment and management decisions of the providers of private facilities that form part of the sport and physical recreation infrastructure		Assessment of the need for new facilities when their provision is being considered and of the impact of new facilities on existing services
		Participation in access programmes to make under used facilities available to those that might not normally be in a position to avail of them
		Participation in collaborative mechanisms as outlined above and in the development and implement of community sports and physical recreation plans
Investment and management decisions of regional and local education organisations	All education providers in the area	Management of facilities within community ownership in a manner that maximises access for purposes of sports and physical recreation of all types
		Consideration of the needs of the marginalised and of those with special needs when community-based plans for sports and physical recreation are being developed
		Consideration of the policies set out in this strategy when renewal and improvement of facilities are being considered

## 6.2 First Implementation Steps

Section 6.1. sets out some of the key implementation mechanisms that should be used to facilitate the implementation of the policies set out in this strategy. However, it will also be necessary for some initial steps to be taken in order to start the process of implementation. It is likely that public and publicly-funded organisations will be in the best position to undertake these steps, since they have the mandate, the authority and the access to resources to initiate the process. The following are suggested as a series of first steps that should be implemented in order to facilitate the implementation of the policies contained in the strategy.

1. Each Planning Authority should decide how to adopt and implement the policies contained in the strategy and carry out the steps necessary to implement that decision. Consideration should be given as to how the Strategy can be used as a guidance document by the Planning Authority in the context of other Regional Strategies such as the Retail and Housing Strategies.
2. The Regional Authority should consider the extent to which the policies contained in this strategy should be reflected in the Regional Planning Guidelines and should take steps to accommodate them if necessary in those Guidelines.
3. The public bodies responsible for the local development of sports and physical recreation, and in particular the Local Authorities, Local Development Companies and Local Sports Partnerships should establish local forums to consider how the policies contained in this strategy should be implemented particularly in the context of recommendation '5' above. The initial tasks of these local forums should include the following where relevant –
  - a. To identify the most appropriate locations for the major multi-sport facilities identified as being required in the Limerick Metropolitan Area
  - b. To identify the centres which should form the basis of the 20 km and 10 km catchment structure
  - c. To identify the facilities that should be included at the three levels of centre (20 km, 10 km and community) referred to in the strategy
  - d. To develop guidelines for the establishment of collaborative community structures for the integrated provision and management of facilities as referred to at (b)
  - e. To develop and promote guidelines for the provision of facilities in a manner that will facilitate use by all members of the community including the young, older people, people with disabilities and those without the financial resources to access pay facilities
  - f. To develop a good practice guideline for the structure and management of those organisations that are involved in these collaborative community processes
  - g. To engage with the providers of private facilities and to examine ways in which such facilities could be made more available to the community in general

4. Within the Limerick Metropolitan Area the partnership areas should be identified a group led by the Local Authority, Local Sports Partnerships and Local Development Companies. These areas would form the basis for the establishment of integrated management bodies
5. Within the Limerick Metropolitan Area the Local Authority, Local Sports Partnerships and Local Development Companies should enter into discussions with third-level Institutes and other similar bodies to identify the role they could play in the development and management of facilities that would provide access for all members of the community
6. Each Local Authority should develop a protocol regarding the provision of funding by it to sports and physical recreation development proposals and the conditions under which such provision should be made. Such protocols should include reference to the need for the facility, the extent that the facility will be made available to the general public, the extent to which the proposal makes provision for collaboration with other relevant groups in the area, the extent to which provision is being made for those with disabilities, the extent to which people of all age groups are catered for, the extent to which those with limited financial resources are being catered for and the extent to which environmental considerations have been addressed
7. Each Local Authority should develop a protocol regarding the provision of endorsement by it to sports and physical recreation development proposals seeking funding from others and the conditions under which such provision should be made. Such protocols should include reference to the need for the facility, the extent that the facility will be made available to the general public, the extent to which the proposal makes provision for collaboration with other relevant groups in the area, the extent to which provision is being made for those with disabilities, the extent to which people of all age groups are catered for, the extent to which those with limited financial resources are being catered for and the extent to which environmental considerations have been addressed
8. Each Local Authority should carry out a review of the tenure and usage of land under its control that has been assigned to bodies responsible for the provision of sports and physical recreation facilities in the context of the policies contained in this strategy and the good practice guidelines referred to at 3 above, and should consider amending the nature and conditions of the tenure depending on the outcome of that review
9. Each other public and publicly funded body with a funding remit should develop a protocol regarding the provision of funding by it to sports and physical recreation development proposals and the conditions under which such provision should be made. Such protocols should include reference to the need for the facility, the extent that the facility will be made available to the general public, the extent to which the proposal makes provision for collaboration with other relevant groups in the area, the extent to which provision is being made for those with disabilities, the extent to which people of all age groups are catered for, the extent to which those with limited financial resources are being catered for and the extent to which environmental considerations have been addressed
10. Each public and publicly-funded body should develop a protocol regarding the provision of endorsement by it to sports and physical recreation development proposals seeking funding

from others and the conditions under which such provision should be made. Such protocols should include reference to the need for the facility, the extent that the facility will be made available to the general public, the extent to which the proposal makes provision for collaboration with other relevant groups in the area, the extent to which provision is being made for those with disabilities, the extent to which people of all age groups are catered for, the extent to which those with limited financial resources are being catered for and the extent to which environmental considerations have been addressed

11. Each Local Authority and other provider of infrastructure should develop a mechanism to ensure that the potential of infrastructure projects to deliver sports and physical recreation facilities is considered as part of the design process

### **Considering the Need for a Proposed Facility**

The taking into account of the need for a new facility is referred to above a number of times as a factor to be taken into account by funding and other decision-making bodies when considering what facilities to support. The development of a common method of assessing need would be a beneficial strategy implementation tool.

The following are the elements that might be incorporated in such a model. The precise details (for example the extent of the catchment area involved) will vary from proposal to proposal. However, the general principles to be applied would be common.

- Assessment of the scale, capacity and catchment area of the facility that is proposed
- Assessment of the population that exists within the appropriate catchment area in terms of size and structure
- Review of the business plan for the proposed facility and, in particular the levels of usage anticipated and required for viability
- Mapping of existing and any other proposed facilities in the appropriate catchment of the proposed facility that would be capable of accommodating the activities proposed for the new facility
- Assessment of the level of usage of the existing facilities and whether or not they have useful spare capacity
- Evaluation of the reasons for any under-utilisation of existing facilities and whether such under-utilisation could be effectively addressed to meet any unmet needs
- Assessment of the need for the facility related to
  - The size and structure of the population and the level of usage that can be anticipated from such a population
  - The existing level of provision of facilities and the level of usage of those facilities
  - Any other facilities proposed within the catchment

## **7. Impact of Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Directive Assessment Screening**

As noted earlier, an SEA and HDA Screening were carried out by Limerick Institute of Technology for Clare County Council, Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council and the Mid-West Regional Authority as part of the development of this strategy.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) carried out for this strategy identified the principal environmental impacts, positive, negative and neutral, that would be associated with its objectives and policies. No negative impacts were identified provided that certain conditions were applied to the implementation of sports and recreation projects and activities. These are set out below.

It should also be noted that the SEA carried out in the context of this strategy is an element of a wider process. Both SEAs and Habitat Directive Assessments (HDAs) may have to be prepared at Development Plan stage and EIAs and HDAs at project level notwithstanding anything stated or adopted in this strategy.

### **7.1 Conditions Arising from the SEA**

1. The major centres identified for sport and recreation growth have or will require waste-water treatment systems that discharge to river systems. Many of these systems contain Natura 2000 Sites that would be vulnerable to inadequately treated waste-water discharges. Therefore, policies for the development of sport and recreation in such areas must be contingent on the provision of waste-water treatment systems with a capacity to produce waste water discharges of a standard that will not impact negatively on downstream Natura 2000 Sites. Where a development cannot be shown not to have a negative impact even with mitigation measures being adopted, then the development cannot be permitted except in the very unusual circumstances of an Imperative Reason of Overriding Public Interest being involved.
2. In addition to the impact from waste-water sport and recreation developments may have other negative implications for Natura 2000 Sites. These implications may be related to the physical destruction of a habitat, the impact of air emissions, the impact of traffic, noise and other general activities and light pollution. No sport and recreation policy shall be adopted or development permitted unless it can be demonstrated through the carrying out of an EHDA that the development will not impact negatively on a Natura 2000 Site or that where such an impact is likely it can be mitigated satisfactorily. Where a development cannot be shown not to have a negative impact even with mitigation measures being adopted, then the development cannot be permitted except in the very unusual circumstances of an Imperative Reason of Overriding Public Interest being involved.
3. Developments associated with rural sport and recreation may have implications for Natura 2000 Sites either because of the activity, footfall and general habitat disturbance associated with their development or due to ancillary services such as water abstraction, waste-water discharge or traffic associated with them. In the case of Natura 2000 Sites no permission should be granted for any specific development unless and until an adequate assessment, including, where necessary an Extended HDA has been carried out and such assessment has



concluded that the policy or project will have no detrimental impact on the site in question or that adequate mitigating measures are possible. Where a development cannot be shown not to have a negative impact even with mitigation measures being adopted, then the development cannot be permitted except in the very unusual circumstances of an Imperative Reason of Overriding Public Interest being involved.

4. Even where Natura 2000 Sites are not impacted on, any development of sport and recreation should be contingent on the effluent arising from it being such that it will not impact on any waste-water treatment system whether private or public, that will prevent that system discharging a final effluent that meets the requirements of the appropriate River Basin District Management Plans.
5. Even where Natura 2000 Sites are not impacted on, any development or activity associated with sport and recreation, should be contingent upon its not impacting negatively on the natural environment and no such development or activity should be permitted until it has been demonstrated that such is the case or that mitigation measures adequate to address the impacts can be implemented.
6. Rural sport and recreation developments may be proposed in areas without a piped waste-water collection and treatment system and this has implications for the quality of groundwater in the region. The RBD analyses have identified areas within the region where the quality of the ground-water is not adequate. Any development that requires the provision of a private treatment system should be considered in the context of the following:
  - The quality of the groundwater into which the effluent will discharge and the need to preserve or improve that quality;
  - The quality of the effluent proposed to be discharged from the waste-water treatment process;
  - The quantity of the effluent proposed to be discharged;
  - The capacity of the ground to enhance the quality of the final effluent;
  - Proposals for the management and maintenance of the treatment system;
  - The capacity of the Local Authority to monitor the quality of the discharge.

No development should take place until it has been demonstrated that the quality of the groundwater will not be impaired as a result of the development.

7. Areas that contain or are designated as Natura 2000 sites are also liable to exhibit some of the technical characteristics that would facilitate the development of high-quality facilities particularly associated with activities such as cycling, walking, hiking or mountain-biking. No policies should be adopted or permission granted for developments liable to impact on a Natura 2000 Site unless and until an Extended HDA has concluded that the proposed

development would not have a negative impact on such a site or that mitigation measures which would eliminate such impacts can be identified and applied.

8. As noted above, in implementing this strategy, full regard must be had to the requirements of the Habitats Directive including the carrying out of an assessment of the implications for any Natura 2000 Site that might be at risk from any proposed development. While all Natura 2000 Sites are of key importance, a number have particular importance as they contain species that are of particular relevance as indicators of environmental quality.

A key species in this regard is the Fresh Water Pearl Mussel and particular care must be taken that activities do not pose a threat to species such as this, whether they lie within or without the area of the strategy. Where such an impact is identified the development must be mitigated or, where that is not possible must not be implemented unless the procedure relating to developments of Overriding National Importance has been completed.

This consideration applies to developments in the following areas –

- Those that involve discharges to the Cloon River;
  - Those that involve discharge to the Blackwater River or its tributaries;
9. In considering the management of flood risk regard should be had to current flooding risks and the impact of climate change on existing defences and on the flood risk of any proposed development.
  10. In addition, in considering the impact of any proposed policy or project that is liable to give rise to a waste-water treatment demand, the likely cumulative impact of such demands that are liable to arise from any source shall be considered and no policy shall be adopted or development permitted that would result in the capacity of the area's waste water treatment system to be exceeded by the cumulative demands of successive developments;
  11. Finally, in considering the impact of any proposed policy or project that is liable to give rise to impacts on a Natura 2000 Site, the likely cumulative effect of such impacts that are liable to arise from any source shall be considered and no policy shall be adopted or development permitted that would result in the deterioration of the site's habitat status either by itself or cumulatively with other developments or activities.

The Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy, does not identify areas or sites for development that are sufficiently specific to permit or require a detailed assessment of their impact on any Natura 2000 site. Such assessments, where necessary, should be carried out when a specific project is being considered. However, the general environmental conditions incorporated in the strategy provide adequate protection to Natural 2000 sites.

## 8. Conclusion

The overall purpose of the Limerick and Clare Sports and Physical Recreation Strategy is to make sport and physical recreation more accessible, more enjoyable and more prevalent for all who live in or visit the study area. It is particularly focused on the needs of the resident population and on making the highest level of provision possible so that potential participants are encouraged and so that no member of the population of the area is discouraged from participating by issues of access whether those access issues relate to barriers of distance, design, cost or exclusion.

It is well documented that sports and physical recreation contribute to the well-being of society in many ways; not merely in terms of improved mental and physical health, but also in terms of social participation, community cohesion and economic activity.

In order for these outcomes for the users and potential users of facilities and participants and potential participants in sport and physical recreation, action will be required by all those involved in making decisions regarding the development of facilities, the management of activities and the allocation of resources to these functions over the next period of time. These decision-makers are located in a wide range of public, private, voluntary and community organisations and it is the aim of this strategy to provide a framework for such decision-makers that will enable them to provide a coherent approach to enabling enhanced participation in sports and physical recreation by the growing population of the area and that will maximise the benefit of the investments that are made.

The strategy is divided into a number of key sections as follows –

### *Review of current knowledge*

This section reviews current knowledge regarding participation in sports and physical recreation by the indigenous and visiting populations. It also examines evidence of the effect of travel distances and quality of facilities on participation.

### *Review of current plans and strategies*

This section examines the plans and strategies of some key organisations both public and voluntary that are relevant to the development of sports and physical recreation.

### *Themes that emerged from these reviews*

This section examines the strategic themes that emerged from the review of current knowledge and plans and strategies.

### *Distribution of population and current facilities*

This section examines the distribution of population, the targets for future population as well as the locations and activities favoured by visitors to the area. It also examines the distribution and extent of some key facilities.

### *The Irish model of facility provision*

This section compares the Irish model of the provision of sports and recreation facilities with those of other countries and looks, in particular, at the role of voluntary organisations in Ireland.

### *Outcomes of consultations*

This outlines the key findings that emerged from the consultations that were held with key stakeholders in the area of focus.

### *Review of gaps and over-provision*

This section examines the types of facilities that are adequately provided for and those that require additional provision. It also examines those that might be enhanced or coordinated with other facilities to improve the effectiveness of provision.

### *Strategic approach*

A strategic approach and strategic policies are contained in this part of the strategy. The key elements of the strategy include –

- A multi-layered system of facility provision to balance the need for population of a size to support facilities and the need to enhance access
- The recognition of the need to maximise and integrate the use of existing facilities
- The development of multi-use facilities at key locations
- The use of funding and approval mechanisms to manage the provision of facilities
- An enhanced focus on the provision of facilities that meet the needs of the most popular activities
- The integration of public, private, education, community and voluntary facilities
- The recognition of the need to limit the provision of public funds for facilities with an exclusive use
- The recognition that some types of facility are well provided for while others require additional provision
- The need to ensure that all parts of the community are catered for
- The recognition of the importance of access and the removal of the barriers to access both physical and social
- The recognition, in particular, of the need to cater for those with physical and other disabilities
- The development of clubs and systems better governance of sports and physical recreation organisations

- The need to support more minority and non-invasive sports and the development of clubs to facilitate them
- The enhancement of the energy efficiency of facilities

### *Implementing the strategy*

The implementation of the strategy will require co-operation from all those that are referred to in it. These include the relevant public bodies, sporting organisations, education bodies and private providers as well as community-based organisations. An approach to the implementation of the strategy is set out in the document as well as some initial steps. It is acknowledged that public and publicly-funded bodies should be the principal drivers of the strategy in the initial stages as these bodies have policy-making powers as well as significant control and influence over the ways in which public monies are disbursed. It is proposed, therefore, that they take the initial steps in adopting the strategy and in putting in place the mechanisms through which the strategy can be put into effect.

It is also acknowledged, however, that while these bodies can have significant influence, they cannot make the strategy happen on their own; the co-operation of all other stakeholders will be required for this to be effective. In the absence of such co-operation, there is a danger that the development of sport and physical recreation in the area would come to a standstill.

### *Impact of the SEA*

While the adoption and implementation of the strategy is not likely to be of major significance from an environmental impact point of view, it was considered appropriate to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the potential impacts. The initial review suggests that a strategy that provides a mix between the concentration and dispersal of facilities and activities would be the most appropriate from an environmental point of view as well as from other perspectives. Any environmental impacts that might arise from the implementation of the strategy should either be addressed at the time of the development of individual projects or activities, or by ensuring that any projects or activities meet certain conditions that are set out in the Environmental Report and that have been incorporated into the strategy. These relate to the protection of water quality and of habitats in particular.

### *Conclusion*

The strategy, as a strategy should, aims to set out a framework; it does not seek to be prescriptive. In addition, the document recognises the excellent work that is carried out by individual sports and recreation organisations within individual communities and does not seek to interfere with that work. The strategy does suggest, however, that the days in which individual organisations could own and manage their own facilities to the exclusion of other users is past. This is reflected in the thinking of the Government and as expressed in the Draft National Sports Facilities Strategy which was published in September 2012.

This strategy, by looking at the range of facilities needed for team and individual sports, at the resources needed for non-sporting forms of physical recreation, at the organisational issues that need to be addressed to ensure that facilities are used to their optimum and at some locational criteria, seeks to provide a resource for policy-makers and decision-makers in the area which will

assist in increasing the level of participation in sports and physical recreation, thereby leading to a healthier and happier community.