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## THE PROPOSAL

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That Limerick City and County Council Purchase a Site and Develop a Regional Athletics Facility for the County. Based in Newcastlewest.

## Athletics History

Athletics is one of the oldest forms of sports in existence in the world today, and organised athletics are traced back to the ancient Olympic Games from 776 B.C. The first modern Olympic Games were held in 1896 in Athens, and the first Paralympic games taking place in 1960. Athletics by its nature is an individual sport with a few team events like relays or cross country team events, but in the main it is an individual sport. In the late 1800s and early 1900s athletics was the dominant sport in Ireland. It was bigger than all the team sports at the time. Limerick men won no fewer than 10 Olympic medals between the years 1900 and 1920, all the medals, 5 Gold, 4 Silver, and 1 Bronze were won in field events which were the hammer, long jump, triple jump, high jump and the 25.4kg weight throw. All the men were from Limerick County, there was John Flanagan from Kilmallock, the Leahy brothers Paddy and Con from Cregane near Ballyagran, Pat Ryan from Pallasgreen and Tim Aherne from Athea. This was a golden era for Irish Athletics at the time.

The early 1900s also saw a lot of turmoil within the organising body for athletics in Ireland with one group working under the English governing body and another working under the Gaelic athletics Association rules. A split developed and it had a devastating effect on Athletics for a considerable time after. Today the governing body for Athletics is called "Athletics Ireland" and the CEO of Athletics Ireland is a man from Limerick called John Foley. The chairman of Munster Athletics is also a Limerick man called Mossie Woulfe from Rathkeale who also happens to be chairman of Limerick Athletics.

The beauty of Athletics is that it is a sport for all, at any age there is no upper age limit. There is no physical confrontation just pure stamina and determination.

## Athletics Overview

Athletics can be broken in to 5 categories.

1. Club Athletics
2. Special Olympics
3. Community Games
4. School Athletics
5. General Public

**Club Athletics:** Their governing body is called Athletics Ireland based in Santry in Dublin and their CEO is a limerick man John Foley. Athletics Limerick chairman and Munster Athletics chairman Mossie Woulfe, Rathkeale.

**Special Olympics:** Their governing body is called Special Olympics Ireland and they cater for the Athletic competition for people with an intellectual disability. CEO is a Wexford Man Matt English.

**Community Games:** Community based Athletics. Competitions based on community areas, you don't have to be a member of a club. CEO a Galway man, John Byrne. County Chairman, Anthony Fitzsimons from St Senans, Foynes, Co Limerick.

**School Athletics:** Irish School Athletics Association are the organisation over school's athletic President Michael Hunt Dublin. North Munster Schools, over Limerick schools competitions Chairperson Phil Roche Mungret, Limerick.

**General Public:** People who run in road races and also for leisure and just to stay fit.

## Current Situation

The current situation as regards athletic facilities in Limerick is as follows.

1. Bilboa Athletic Club in Cappamore in East Limerick have a 99 year lease on land owned by Limerick city and county council this lease began in 1982
2. The University of Limerick track was built in the early 1970's as part of the old Thomond College at the time. This is a fully equipped 8 lane 400m track with all the ancillary field areas. It also has indoor training facilities, it caters for the needs of athletics within the university, but it also acts as a base for athletics for a number of clubs, special needs groups, fitness clubs all who operate in and around the city boundary

That is where the facilities for athletics in Limerick city and county finish. There are a group of clubs to the west and south of the county who have no facilities. They live a nomadic existence and are of no fixed abode. They have survived by the hospitality of others. Through the generosity of local farmers and the use of local GAA and soccer pitches, local community halls, most of which have to be paid for and a few green areas in local housing estates with street lighting. All of which they are very grateful to be allowed to use. Athletic clubs out the county have managed to survive through the ingenuity and sacrifice of many over the years. As a result athletics comes in a very limited form in that field events are non-existent and can't be practised for. Track running and hurdle jumping suffer as well and athletes get to run on track only on days of competition which isn't ideal.

The largest concentration of disability sector services outside of Limerick City is in Newcastlewest, this comprises of the following:

- Limerick Early Intervention Services (0-18yrs)
- Brothers of Charity Adult Services
- Health Board Training Centre Gortboy
- West Limerick Independent Living
- Rathfredagh Cheshire Home

All of the above service a very large part of County Limerick, and offer several services within the sector. However all of these facilities have one thing in common, they lack an outdoor facility for physical outdoor recreation. A group came together in 2003, to form Newcastlewest Special Olympic Club, This Club has been limited to the games that they can participate in, and this is as a result of the facilities available to this group.

As a Signatory to the Council of Europe Sports Charter (1975), which subscribes to the following: **“Every person, regardless of physical capacity, should be given the opportunity to participate in the activity of their choice – at a level of their choice”**. We should do everything in our power to make this a reality.

The community games are also very limited on the facilities which they would have available to them, and would not be in a position to practise for certain events in their own communities.

There are 4 clubs to the south of the county 2 of which were set up in the last 4 years, in the west of the county you have 3 clubs which have been established over 30 years and have a long history of athletics. West Limerick A. C. based in Newcastle West is the biggest club in the county with close on 200 members 85 of which are masters (over 35 years of age men and women)

41% of areas competing in county community games in Mungret in 2014 are west Limerick based 22% of areas are from the south. 17% of areas from the east and 20% are from Limerick City. A number of athletes from the county competed in the Special Olympics in UL. In 2014 which was a huge success.

80% of people who run today are not members of athletic clubs and run for recreational and fitness purposes a statistic from the Irish sports council.

## The Need

There is a need to provide a fully equipped athletics facility.

The project would include the following.

1. Funding of a feasibility study
2. Purchase of a safe, suitable, accessible site a minimum of 7 acres. Track would need about 5.7 acres balance for parking, toilets etc. (Appendix 1)
3. Building of an 8 lane Tartan / Synthetic Track with ancillary field areas, which would be N.D.A (National Disability Approved) and IAAF approved (The International Association of Athletics Federation).
4. A store shed for equipment i.e. Hurdles etc.
5. Toilets and changing area.
6. Car parking area.

It is very important to stress that this sports facility is not only linked to the performance and the spirit of high level competition. In modern society sports holds more and more a social value. Therefore the planning of such a facility must be based on the concept of the system as a whole and looking at sports as a form of exercise and a service to the community.

A working group has been established in relation to this project the overwhelming view is that a shared public / municipal facility is the way to go. A similar development to what Clare County Council did in Lees Road in Ennis, providing a public athletics facility to be shared by all. Local government around the country are proactive in providing much needed facilities to various sporting bodies who wouldn't have a financial status to cater for themselves and only for local government there would be a very bleak outlook for many communities and sporting organisation.

## Costing

1. Feasibility study €10,000
2. Purchase of 7 acres €210,000
3. Building of 8 lane 400m track €500,000 ( Appendix 1)
4. Building of toilets & changing room €200,000
5. Store Shed for Equipped €30,000
6. Car Parking area €30,000

Total Estimated cost €980,000

Depending on the type of Tartan/Synthetic surface you use when you build a track the prices can vary from about 450,000 euros to about 800,000 euros. It is important that quality materials are used to ensure the longevity of the track and to ensure also reduced operation and maintenance costs throughout the lifetime of the amenity.

## Site Location

Newcastle west is the county town. Outside of Limerick City it has the next biggest urban population. Between the urban and rural population within a 12km radius it has a population of over 19,000 people. There are 29 Primary Schools (3,267 pupils) and 5 post Primary schools (2,649 pupils), figures based on CSO figures 2012. It is regarded as a key service centre in the Mid-West strategic plan of Limerick City and County Council. It has not only an important role to support the urban population, but as equally an important role to support a very large rural population. This is very evident in the membership of west Limerick Athletic Club which is Newcastlewest based. It is the largest athletic club in the county, and its members come from no fewer than 23 parishes. The rural population look at Newcastlewest as its service centre.

When selecting a site for a project like this a number of boxes need to be ticked for example:

1. Number of people who would access facility
2. Accessibility of Site
3. Road Network
4. Services available to site
5. Suitable Land for project.

A couple of different sites were looked at, in relation to this but through one problem or another, they did not meet the criteria, a site has been identified in Killeline, it is privately owned land, however the owner has been contacted and is willing to sell the land for this project. The site meets all the criteria required.

## The Benefits

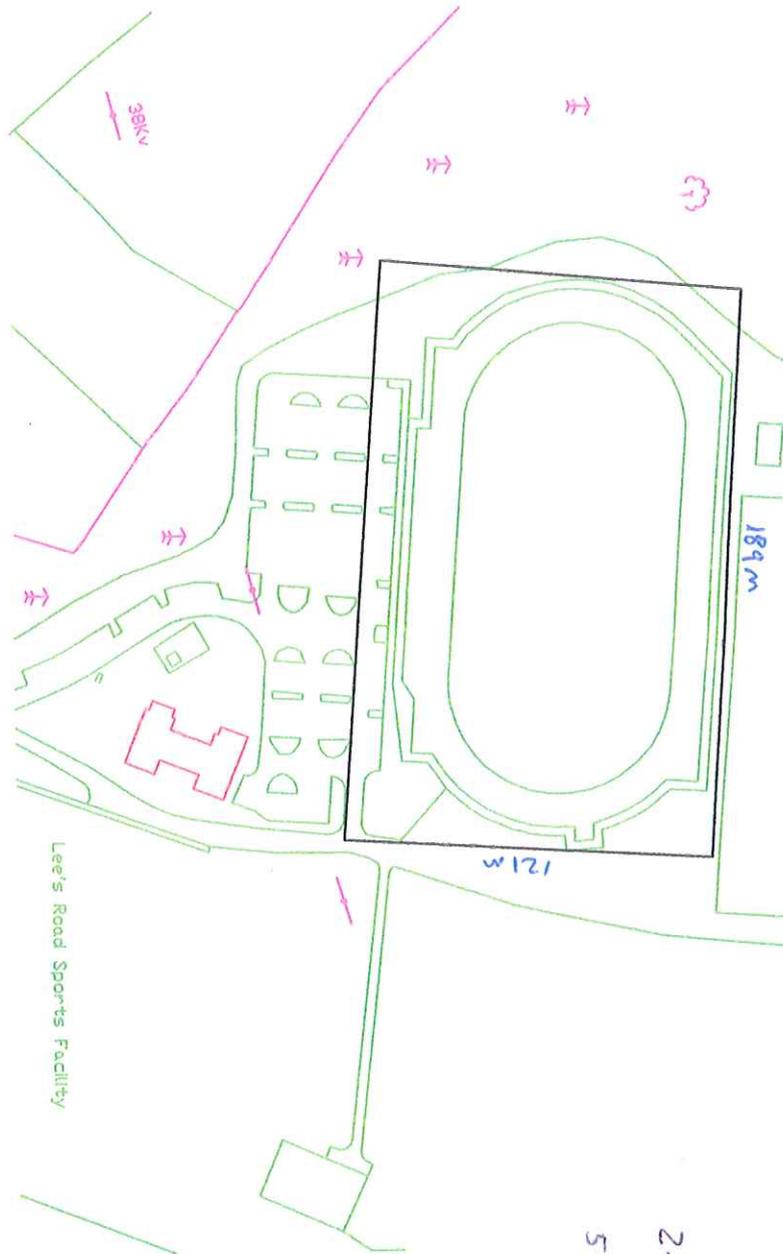
I think the special Olympics mission sums it up very well “to provide year round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic type sports for children and adults with an intellectual disability, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendships with their families, other special Olympic athletes and the community”

The provision of a sports and recreational facility can significantly enhance the quality of life and activities held within a sport and recreational facility can encourage participation, promote health and wellbeing and foster a sense of community. A common sense approach to the provision of such a facility would mean a public or municipal facility would be key to a shared facility.

1. It will transform the athletic clubs within the region and breathe new life into the sport.
2. A huge boost for athletes who compete in the Special Olympics.
3. A massive back up for the community games areas.
4. A very important piece of infrastructure for the schools both primary and secondary.
5. A huge support for the general public both urban and rural in the region
6. Commercial aspect with possible hosting of competitions.
7. Job creation and supplier demands when building such a facility.
8. Act as a fitness support to other sporting bodies such as hurling, soccer, rugby etc.
9. The health benefits can't be overstated; a tool against lack of exercise and obesity.
10. Help integrate a very large eastern European population in the town of Newcastle West up to 25% of kids in national schools, what a foreign national background.
11. Positive effect on inward investment by companies looking at Newcastle West as a possible site location.
12. Increase the chance of top performing athletes trying to achieve scholarships in to 3<sup>rd</sup> level colleges. Appendix 3
13. The facility would be the first of its kind ever built in Co. Limerick.
14. The big advantage of athletics over other sports is that it is a sport for all at any age. There is no upper age limit. There are competitions available called masters competitions right into your 70's and 80's for both men and women.

Appendix 1

Lee's Road Ennis. 400m 8 Lane Track



2.2869 ha  
5.65 acres

# Appendix 2

 Copy Adore Co Limerick Tel: +353 01 355786 Mob: +353 07 2473635		Date: 3.9.2014				m <sup>2</sup> 4250 8 Lane	
West Limerick 8lane x 400m running track							
Number	Description	Quantity	Unit	Rate	Cost Price	SubTotals	
1.2a	Excavate 200mm from proposed site  topsoil remains on site provision for hardcore roadway pc sum	1,360	tonne	€7	€9,520	€9,520	
b(i)	Re-grading of subsoil to make new formation Spraying of new formation with herbicide Covering of formation with layer of 'Terram'	4250	m <sup>2</sup>	€2	€8,500	€8,500	
b(ii)	Provide 200mm 50mm-75mm clean stone	1700	tonnes	€14	€23,800	€23,800	
c	Blinding whole area with a 25mm layer of quarry screening, neatly and thoroughly rolled	4250	m <sup>2</sup>	€3	€12,750	€12,750	
e	Supply and lay kerb 6" x 2" concrete kerb Supply and lay echo drain-inner kerb	400 480	m m	€13 €25	€5,200 €12,000	€5,200 €12,000	
g	Construct court with tarmacadam base on compacted foundation 10mm open textured wearing course tarmacadam to BS4987 to consolidated thickness of 50mm	4250	m <sup>2</sup>	€13	€55,250	€55,250	
j	Porplastic <i>SB economic</i> : Elastic base mat with structural spray coating, water-permeable, spike-resistant, anti-skid granulated surface	4250	m <sup>2</sup>	€38	€161,500	€161,500	
	Line marking on new track surface to IAAF standards & specification	1	Item	€10,200	€10,200	€10,200	
k	<b>Preliminaries</b> waste skip charge Temporary Fencing Compliance with Health & Safety Site Supervision Insurance	2	ea	1000	€2,000 €2,000	€4,000	
	<b>TOTAL(excl VAT)</b>					€ 302,720	
	<b>VAT @ 13.5%</b>					€ 40,867	
	<b>TOTAL(incl VAT @ 13.5%)</b>					€ 343,587	

Guide To Track Only Price

Ancillary Field Areas Included €500,000

## Appendix 3

# Additional CAO points for athletes

**Emma Jane Hade**

ONE of Ireland's oldest universities is to renew a programme that allows top performing young athletes get up to 40 additional CAO points in their Leaving Cert.

NUI Galway plans to attract some of the country's most talented young athletes through the scheme.

Its 'Performance Points' programme, which rewards students for their sporting abilities, will reopen after a

successful pilot year in 2014.

The university said the programme has 15 places for "elite athletes" in the scheme and is open to students applying through the CAO system who are still under the age of 21 by April 1.

Students applying must achieve at least 350 points from a single sitting of the Leaving Certificate.

Candidates will be selected through an application and interview process

The programme is an "extension of NUI Galway's current 'Elite Athlete Scholarship' scheme".

Students who make it onto the programme will also benefit from a subsistence grant, performance and medical supports, gym membership for the duration of their degree course.

NUI Galway said the programme will help students achieve "academic and sporting" goals.

Tue 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 1988 Irish Independent

A number of other Colleges and Universities offer scholarships for top performing athletes.