

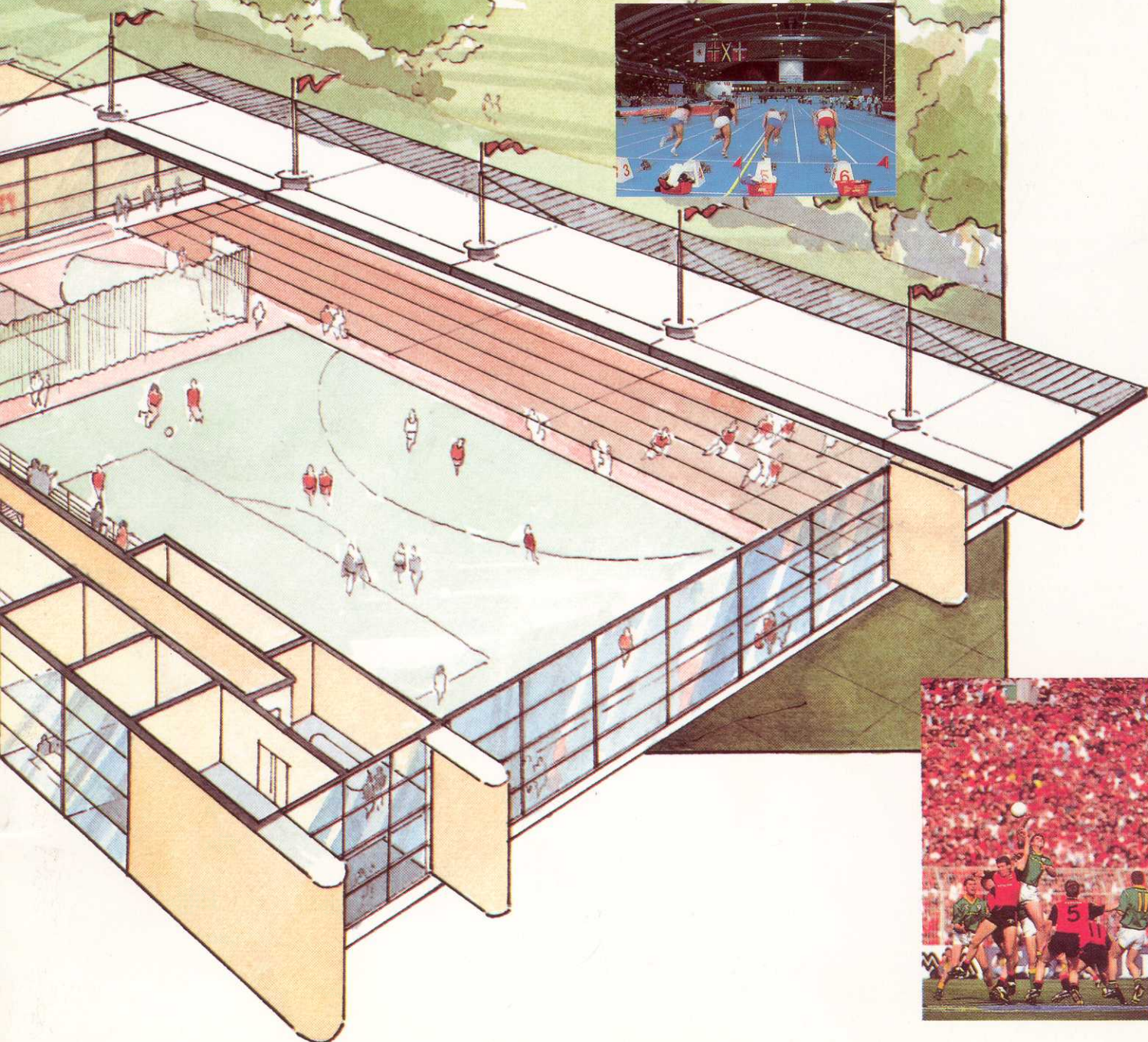


**SPORTS COUNCIL
NORTHERN IRELAND**

NATIONAL FACILITIES

Northern Ireland's

Shopping List



FOREWORD

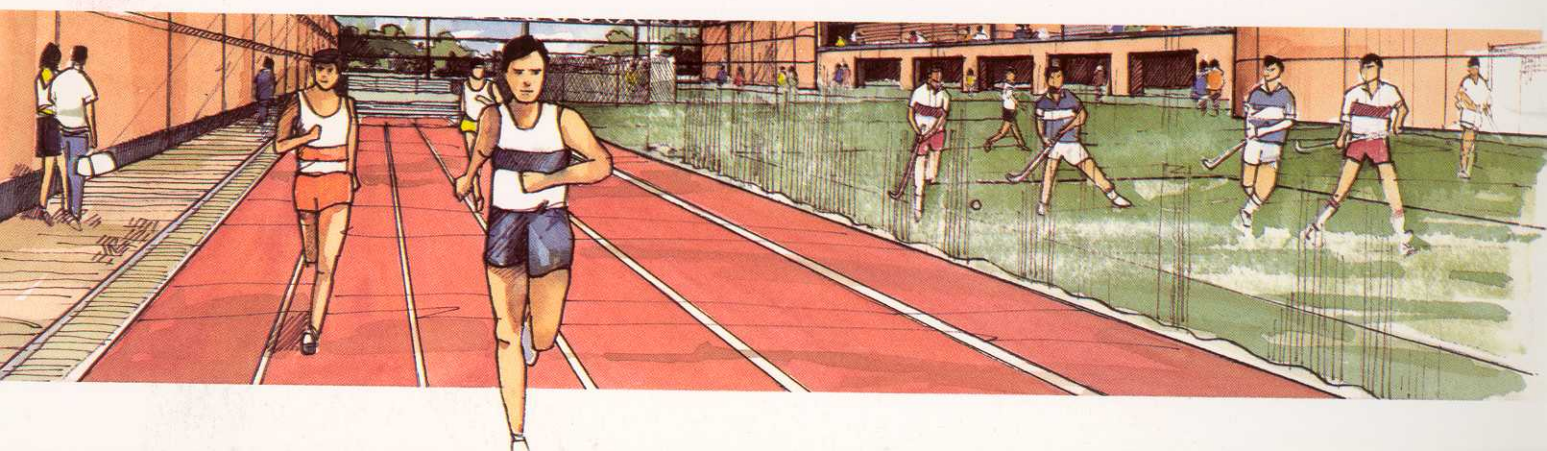
Northern Ireland has only limited training or competition sports facilities which can be truly described as National. Nonetheless, the Province continues to produce more than its share of champions at National, International and World levels. However each year sees countries throughout the world providing and improving their training and competition facility infrastructure. Northern Ireland, even by Great Britain standards, is almost bereft of quality national sports specific provision and as a result aspiring young sports persons enter the international scene at a distinct disadvantage. In addressing this concern, and commencing in 1991, the Sports Council initiated a wide ranging consultation involving Governing Bodies of Sport, District Councils, Education and Library Boards and Universities to assist in the preparation of a National Facilities document aimed at identifying the high level competition and training facility needs of sport in Northern Ireland.

This resulting publication clearly identifies and sets out the Shopping List for Northern Ireland Facilities and seeks to interest the various potential providers and funding agencies to address the issues through a strategic approach.

	Page
CONTENTS	
BACKGROUND	1
THE REVIEW	4
Sports Requirements	6
Proposed Provision	9
MEETING THE NEED	11
FUNDING	13
SHOPPING LIST FOR NATIONAL FACILITIES	15
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	17
APPENDIX I EC Grants for Facilities	18
II The Sports Development Continuum	20
III National Sports Centres	IBC

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1

BACKGROUND

The Sports Council for Northern Ireland, whose role is the furtherance of sport and physical recreation in the Province, is seeking to attain its objectives of increasing participation and raising standards of performance by assisting the development of sport at foundation, participation, performance and excellence levels. (Appendix II explains this development continuum).

The Council's programmes are delivered, in the main, through partnerships with voluntary sports organisations, Area Education and Library Boards, District Councils, and commercial undertakings in the realm of sport and physical recreation.

In order to encourage participation and create opportunities for those endeavouring to improve in sport, it is necessary to have available a range of neighbourhood and district facilities. To assist those striving for the highest levels of performance and excellence, it is necessary to provide National and Specialist Facilities to cater for both their training and competition requirements.

This document focuses on the need for National Facilities for high level training and competition using the Council's definition of a National Facility as being:

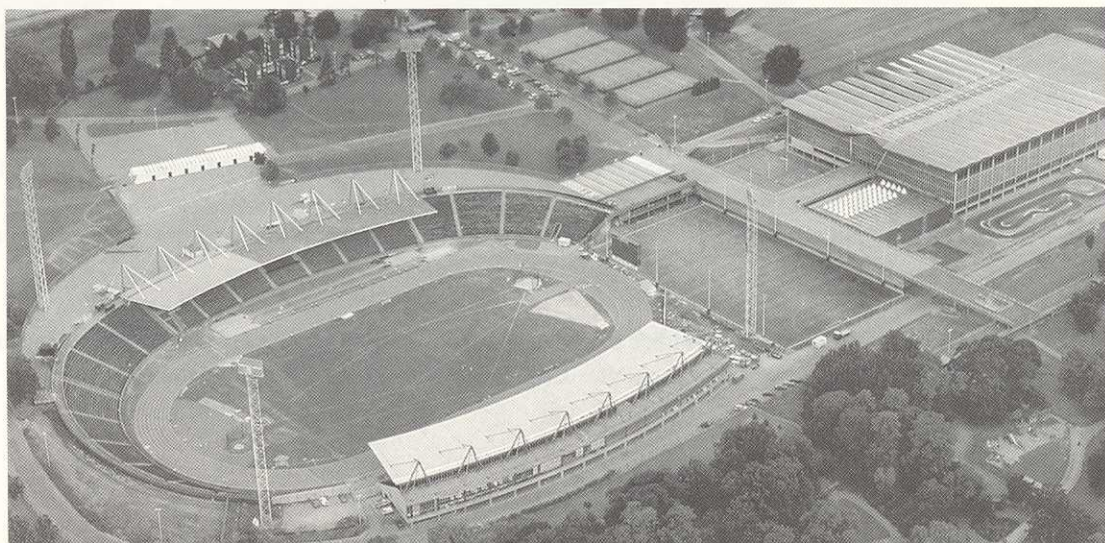
"A sports facility developed to the international specification of the sport concerned and designated by the Governing Body as its primary competition and/or training venue.

The main features of a "National Facility" shall be its capability to:

- (i) stage full international events with the spectator capacity to meet the Northern Ireland/Ireland needs; and/or
- (ii) meet the training needs of international and provincial squads; and/or
- (iii) provide for the training of coaches, leaders and officials at the highest level;
- (iv) provide the ancillary facilities, including medical, media, scientific, and catering accommodation."

Northern Ireland has a limited range of provision which can be classified as either National Competition or National Training Facilities. Windsor Park for Association Football; Tollymore, The NI Centre for Outdoor Activities; Antrim Stadium and Centre of Excellence for Athletics and the Dundonald International Ice Bowl for Skating and Ice Hockey are amongst the few examples.

There are no National Sports Training Centres in Northern Ireland of the scale and diversity of provision to be found at Crystal Palace in London, the Welsh Institute for Sport in Cardiff, Bisham Abbey in Buckinghamshire, Lilleshall in Shropshire, or Inverclyde in Ayrshire.





Nonetheless Northern Ireland has produced European and World-Class performers in a number of sports — Association Football, Rugby Football, Archery, Snooker, Handball, Hockey, Athletics, Cycling, Boxing, Bowling, Sailing, Autotest, Car Rallying and Motor Cycling. Such achievement gives deep satisfaction, not only to the individual performer but to the populace in general, and is of enormous inspirational value to young people. However, requirements in respect of high level sports participation and training have increased and the demands on facility time to meet training requirements are outstripping the availability of current provision.

Sports Council Policy

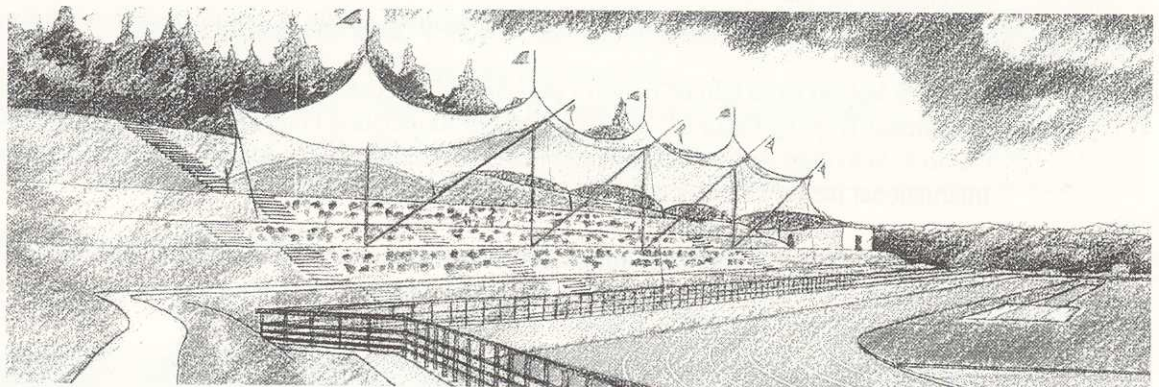
In 1974 the Sports Council adopted a policy that:

“All organised competitive activities should have access to facilities where they can adequately stage full international competitions and to centres within Northern Ireland where the home teams or individual competitors can prepare for such competitions under as ideal conditions as possible. Similarly, it is the Council’s policy to ensure the provision of high standard training facilities for non-competitive sports.”

Whilst the Council advocates that every sport in Northern Ireland should have access to venues suitable for international competition and national squad training, it recognises that the self-same facilities will serve local needs in respect of lower levels of competition and purely recreative activity.

In 1975 the requirements of the Governing Bodies of Sport for high level competition and training were recorded in Study No 3 “Provision for Sport”.

Since that publication the upgrading of community and voluntary sports facilities has resulted in some improved venues for high level competition and training. Examples are Loughside Recreation Centre for Table Tennis, Ballysillan Leisure Centre for Gymnastics, the Grove Centre of Excellence for Swimming, Maysfield Leisure Centre for Basketball, Badminton and the Martial Arts, the Mary Peters Track for Athletics, and Lisnagarvey Hockey Club.



Recent Studies

More recently the Sports Council has, in conjunction with Governing Bodies of Sport, and frequently in partnership with District Councils, commissioned feasibility studies, economic appraisals and development strategies in its endeavours to highlight the needs and encourage Government and others to address the shortfall.

Table 1 lists the various studies undertaken in recent years and these have produced, and are adding to, a body of evidence to substantiate the drive for investment in national facilities.



Table 1: STUDIES RELATED TO NATIONAL FACILITIES

STUDY	DATE	PARTNERS
• Northern Ireland Indoor Athletics Training and Competition Centre: Feasibility Study (De Lorean Project)	1988	NIAAA
Northern Ireland Sports Centre Feasibility Study	1989	—
• Northern Ireland Outdoor Team Sports Training Centre Economic Appraisal	1991	—
• 50 m Pool Feasibility Studies —		
(1) Lisburn	1991	Lisburn BC
(2) Greater Belfast	1993	—
• National Canoe Centre Study (Benburb)	1991	Armagh DC, Craigavon BC, Dungannon DC
• Nutts Corner Motor Sports Centre Study	1991	Antrim BC, Lisburn BC, Motorised Sports Bodies
• Water Sports Centre (Craigavon) Feasibility Study	1992	Craigavon BC
• Indoor Tennis Centre (Dundonald) Feasibility Study	1992	Castlereagh BC
• Mary Peters Track Development Report	1992	Belfast CC

In addition, the Sports Council has undertaken with the Governing Bodies of Sport, District Councils and Area Education and Library Boards a review of both the needs of sport and the aspirations of the traditional providing organisations to help meet those needs.



2

THE REVIEW**Methodology:**

A three-stage approach was adopted involving questionnaire surveys; a desk study of existing information; and consultations with key personnel and organisations.

(a) Surveys: The following were surveyed using a postal questionnaire:—

- All Governing Bodies of Sport — November 1991
- All District Councils — May 1992
- Education and Library Boards — October 1992
- Universities — October 1992
- Greenmount Agricultural College — October 1992

Responses to the draft findings were sought from:—

- Governing Bodies of Sport — May 1992
- District Councils — June 1992

(b) Desk Study: The following items were taken into account:—

- Recent Studies and Appraisals as identified in Table 1
- Sports Council Papers and Annual Reports —
- Sports Council Study No 3: "Provision for Sport" (1976)

(c) Meetings and Consultations

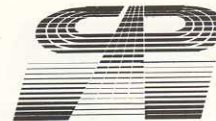
- Governing Body personnel
- Association of Recreation Officers
- Sports Council Sports Liaison Officers
- Northern Ireland Facilities Committee (Steering Group)
- Professional consultants associated with studies and appraisals

Findings

The review revealed issues of a general nature in addition to the specific requirements of the Governing Bodies of Sport and the intentions or expressions of interest of Local Authorities and other facility providers.

General Issues

- (a) The specifications defined by the International Governing Bodies of Sport for major competition venues have become more rigorous and demanding since the publication of Provision for Sport Study No 3 in 1976. The development of artificial surfaces for Hockey and Athletics are obvious examples of the technological advances which have led to increasingly sophisticated specifications for high-level competition and consequently, for warm-up and training facilities.
- (b) Governing Bodies also advised that the existing pool of resources fall short in relation to:
 - the number of teams able to compete in any international event at a single venue due to inadequate playing areas and/or lack of ancillary provisions such as changing, showering and catering



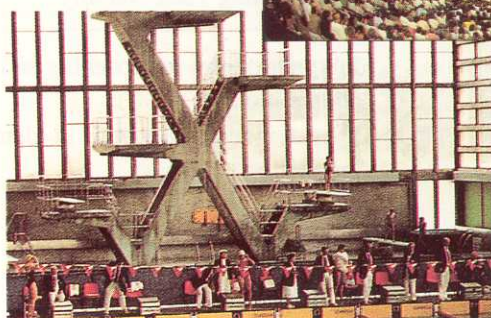
facilities;

- in the same vein, the lack of an indoor space of arena scale to host International Tournaments for sports such as Badminton or Basketball;
- the lack of facilities for the media whose presence is essential for publicity and the attraction of substantial sponsorships;
- the restricted availability of facilities and equipment for squad and/or individual preparation for international competitions;

- (c) Quality support services such as the availability of accredited sports injuries clinics and sports science laboratories must form part of the infrastructure dedicated to raising standards of performance;
- (d) The stock of facilities for Community Sport and Recreation is ageing and District Councils will, quite naturally, seek a means of modernising the facilities for their constituents. Plans for the provision of National Facilities will need, therefore, to be co-ordinated and harmonised with the new Sport and Recreation Strategies being developed by the Local Authorities.

The possibility of special assistance for a major provision or provisions to mark the advent of the third millennium is also on the horizon.

- (e) The restructuring of sports administration in the United Kingdom has already raised the profile of National Facilities provision and, with it, the prospect that there might be interest in supporting facilities of nationwide significance in Northern Ireland





Specific Requirements

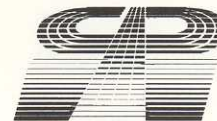
The requirements as stated by Governing Bodies of Sport, are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: THE NATIONAL FACILITY REQUIREMENTS SPECIFIED BY THE GOVERNING BODIES OF SPORT

(a) Association Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seating provision at Windsor Park • Upgrading of media provision at Windsor Park • Provision of a training centre with quality pitches, lecture facilities and convenient to readily available residential accommodation
(b) Athletics	<p>Outdoor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An 8-lane track in Belfast • Provision of additional ancillary facilities at Mary Peters Track • An 8-lane track West of Bann • Synthetic training areas throughout the Province <p>Indoor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200 m Indoor Track • Training halls (3) linked to existing outdoor provisions <p>The above facilities to be supported, where appropriate, with competition, training, and sports science equipment.</p>
(c) Bowling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading of an existing private or public facility to provide 2 high-quality greens for competition and practice
(d) Canoeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Slalom Competition and Training Centre (River Blackwater) and to include where possible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Coaches/Instructors training and assessment centre: – Residential accommodation – Ancillary storage, drying, lecture and event management facilities – “Training Tank” facility
(e) Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor facilities for coaching and indoor competition • Spectator accommodation at identified international venues



(f) Gaelic Sports Football Hurling Camogie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading of designated Provincial Grounds to provide adequate spectator and media facilities • Provision of a specialist training centre providing quality pitches for squad training, coaching and testing with ancillary indoor facilities
(g) Handball (and Racquet Ball)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 5-court provision, preferably as an adjunct to a sports complex, to provide for international tournaments, coaching and training
(h) Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading of Lisnagarvey Hockey Club's grounds at Blaris to provide covered spectator provision • Additional wet surfaced synthetic provisions in Greater Belfast Area • Additional artificial surfaces for high level squad training with ancillary indoor provision (Northern Ireland Sports Centre)
(i) Horse Riding	<p>An Equestrian Centre with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor arena • Dressage facilities • Cross Country Course • Stabling and associated staff accommodation • Spectator and media provision
(j) Lawn Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated Indoor Tennis Centre for high level training and competition • Access to properly equipped Indoor Tennis training facilities throughout the Province (court surface of prime importance)
(k) Motor Sports Cars Karts Motor Cycles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Motor Sports Centre to accommodate car and cycle disciplines for competitions and training on a 2.2 mile by 10.5 m wide circuit
(l) Rugby Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spectator facilities at identified Junior Interprovincial Match venues • Media provision at Ravenhill • Indoor wet weather training facility at Ravenhill • Improved spectator facilities at Ravenhill



(m) Shooting Disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An indoor air weapons centre • An indoor pistol shooting centre to contain 10 x 50 m bays • Upgrading of existing facilities to full international standards for the range of disciplines
(n) Skiing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 120 m homologated slope with ski tow and ancillary equipment and spectator provision
(o) Squash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 6-court facility, preferably as an adjunct to a sports complex, available and equipped for training, coaching and competition
(p) Swimming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-lane 50 m pool providing for up to 1,000 spectators
<p>(q) Miscellaneous Indoor</p> <p>Archery, Basketball, Badminton, Fencing, Gymnastics, Olympic Handball, Netball, Table Tennis, Trampolining, Judo, Martial Arts</p>	<p>Upgrading of existing facilities to international match standard with provision of quality equipment, lighting and spectator facilities. Provision of a purpose-built national indoor tournament centre to cater for a range of sports with training, media and spectator facilities</p>
<p>(r) Miscellaneous</p> <p>Countryside and Water Sports</p> <p>Angling, Canoeing</p> <p>Water Skiing, Sailing</p> <p>Rowing</p> <p>Mountaineering</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent agreed access to identified outdoor areas of special interest to sports (OASIS) • Specialist equipment for competitive events and training • On-shore event facilities • Full length (2,000 m) international competition Rowing facility • Residential accommodation closeby suitable terrain • Artificial climbing wall for training, coaching and competition