Please see below a submission with regards to sport as part of the Departments development of a strategy on behalf of Richard Shakespeare, Director of Municipal Services Department, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council.
The principal objective in this area should be the importance of building on the National Physical Activity Plan and Healthy Ireland Framework 2013-2025 in supporting local sports development to maintain and increase levels of participation.
The potential benefits in terms of quality of life, social connectedness, improved health and mobility throughout our lives cannot be underestimated. It should be remembered for example that Ireland has an aging population and that physical activity is a very effective method of reducing the burden of healthcare and increasing quality of life into later years.
The strategy should recognise the economic, health and social role of sport and promotes both participation across all ages and abilities as well as opportunities for the achievement of excellence at the elite levels. The action plan supporting this strategy should focus on responses or initiatives that will endeavour to influence or change people’s activity levels and behaviour resulting in increased and sustained participation in physical activity and sport.
Research through the Irish Sports Monitor reports highlights that participation in sport in Ireland has a very strong socio-economic gradient with those in lower socio-economic groups significantly less likely to participate in all types of sport. Therefore, greater supports and initiatives will be required for this and other target groups such as those with a disability to participate in sport.
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council is currently in the process of developing a Sports Facilities Strategy that will seek to maximise the use of existing Council facilities and also effectively plan for future provision. Key to this will be the principle of multi-use facilities that can be can utilised by a range of clubs and sports to the benefit of the whole community.
To facilitate and actively encourage this, as part of future Sports Capital Programmes and support structures, the development and the multi-purpose use of sports facilities (both new and existing) at national, regional and local level should be prioritised.
There should also be an emphasis on making more efficient use of existing facilities, opening up single use facilities to other sporting activities and better sharing of facilities, including those located within educational institutions.

Major sporting events and sports tourism in general can be significant generators of income for local areas and should be supported and encouraged through the new strategy. Failte Ireland, the National Governing Bodies of sport and the private sector will of course be key stakeholders in the success of this objective.

Richard Shakespeare
Director of Municipal Services
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council