



LOCAL AUTHORITY SWIMMING POOL PROGRAMME

Value for Money and Policy Review Report



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1 CHAPTER ONE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme, administered by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, provides grant aid to local authorities towards the cost of construction or refurbishment of public swimming pools. The Value for Money Review describes how the provision of public swimming facilities in Ireland evolved under this programme and, as such, is useful in recording how public policy has developed in this area.
- 1.2 This Review, in the precise context of a Value for Money Review, is somewhat hampered by a lack of significant expenditure in the early part of the decade, an absence of performance criteria, detailed programme objectives and specific information on such matters as participation rates, types of participants, recreational patterns etc. at local and national level. Nevertheless, the Review draws some pertinent conclusions and, in addition to addressing the lack of data mentioned above, makes some other important recommendations for future rounds of the programme.
- 1.3 The Review is in three broad segments. The first (Chapters 2 to 4) is largely descriptive, introducing the Terms of Reference, historical background to the programme and detailing the position in relation to the current round of the programme. The second segment (Chapters 5 to 11) is evaluative, in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, usage/participation, funding arrangements, comparisons with Northern Ireland/Scotland, complementing programmes and strategies and administrative arrangements. The final segment (Chapters 12 and 13) summarises the findings and makes recommendations for future actions.
- 1.4 The Review points to the unique characteristics of public swimming pools in sporting and, more importantly, recreational use. It suggests that no other piece of sports/recreational infrastructure can provide the same level of access and availability in terms of catering for all age groups and fitness levels, in all weathers, for up to 18 hours a day, seven days a week. In addition to supporting general health and fitness programmes, such facilities can play a significant role in primary and secondary school physical activity programmes. New and refurbished public pools are now completed to a much higher standard of design and finish, are operated on a more commercial and customer focussed basis, are an increasing

part of large local authority recreational facilities/complexes and are generating high and increasing levels of use.

- 1.5 In terms of performance and effectiveness of the Programme, the Review finds that the current round of the programme has been particularly successful. Between 2000 and June 2007, 24 new or refurbished pools were completed. At end June 2007, 17 public pools were under construction, 3 were at tender stage and 13 were at planning stages. The total cost of the projects built or under construction was some €326m, attracting grant aid of some €94m. Furthermore, of the 22 projects located in RAPID (disadvantaged) Areas within the round, 19 had been grant aided with the remainder at an advanced stage. The above is in stark contrast with the previous decade, with only 2 new pools being built under the programme during the 1990s.
- 1.6 The Review concludes that there are significant sporting, recreational and social cohesion reasons for continuing the programme into the medium term and this is recognised by the Government with the provision of €184m under the National Development Plan 2007 – 2013.
- 1.7 The Review acknowledges that a streamlining of the existing programme is required in terms of the approval process and that further work is required at national and local level in recording participation/usage details. This will allow the development of robust performance indicators and targets and the Review makes recommendations in this regard.
- 1.8 A comparison with Northern Ireland and Scotland shows that there is one public pool for every 32,000 people in Northern Ireland and one for every 15,000 people in Scotland. The equivalent ratio in Ireland is 58,000. The Review concludes that over the next five years, including 2007, the national target for the programme should be to reduce the number of persons per pool from the current figure of about 58,000 persons to 50,000 persons at end of 2011.
- 1.9 Chapter 13 of the Review contains the recommendations. In the first instance, it is recommended that the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme should continue as a significant element in the Government's sporting infrastructure strategy and a new round launched. Building on this, recommendations are made in relation to programme definitions, new procedural arrangements, the establishment of a standing Technical Committee and the development of new performance indicators, targets, criteria,

prioritisation and quality assurance. New criteria are recommended for project development and assessment including National Spatial Strategy considerations, catchment, usage, social inclusion criteria and, specifically, numbers of primary and secondary schools within the catchment.

Specifically, the review recommends that:

- the maximum level of grant should be increased from €3.8 million to €4.5 million for projects in, or adjacent to, and servicing RAPID areas and to €4 million in non RAPID areas and that in the case of the refurbishment of an existing pool, a grant rate of 80% (90% in RAPID areas) should be subject to a maximum grant of €2m.

In a significant change, the Review recommends that

- swimming pools within the education sector, which provide a reasonable level of public access, should be eligible under the programme for grant aid towards the cost of refurbishment, under conditions which apply to other public pool refurbishment projects being promoted by/through local authorities.

In addition, it is recommended that a specific grant should be established in respect of existing public pools for enhancing access for the disabled subject to a maximum grant of €150,000.

2 CHAPTER TWO: INTRODUCTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 VALUE FOR MONEY AND POLICY REVIEW INITIATIVE (FORMERLY EXPENDITURE REVIEW INITIATIVE)

The Value for Money and Policy Review Initiative (VFM Review) emerged from the then Expenditure Review Initiative, and is a process of evaluating public expenditure programmes and policies administered by government departments which is managed by the Department of Finance. The process was initiated in the 1996 Strategic Management Initiative document 'Delivering Better Government'¹. The objectives of VFM Reviews are to analyse government programmes in a systematic manner to determine what was actually achieved by the expenditure and to provide a basis on which more informed decisions can be made on priorities within and between programmes.

An VFM Review seeks to examine the extent to which the stated objectives of the programme have been met in the period under review and so attempt to measure its effectiveness. The outputs and outcomes from the programme will be looked at to determine what the programme has actually achieved and what impact has it had on its target population or on the wider community/region. In conjunction with this the evaluation will also seek to measure the extent to which the programme has operated efficiently with the resources available to it and so provided good value for money. Finally, the Review should point to how future activity in the area might be better organised and financed.

Reviews are usually undertaken by spending Departments under the aegis of steering groups representing the relevant Departments. The entire Government process is overseen by the Central Steering Committee on Programme Evaluation, chaired by the Secretary General, Department of Finance.

The Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme VFM Review is one of a number of reviews being carried out by the Department of Arts Sport and Tourism under its VFM review

¹ Delivering Better Government, Department of an Taoiseach, 1996

Programme. The review was intended initially to cover activity in the period 1999 to 2002 and 12 pools were completed in this period. However, while it was possible to gather hard data on such issues as opening hours, charges and participation rates in respect of each of the new/refurbished pools, no such data was available in respect of any earlier incarnation of these pools, which had implications for the level of comparative analysis which could be undertaken. Notwithstanding this, given that the programme itself had transferred in 1998 to the new Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation (now Arts, Sport and Tourism), the Government in launching the new round in 1999 had allocated significant funding over a three year period and no previous examination of the programme had taken place, it was felt that the programme, and any future rounds, would benefit from detailed examination. So, while this report cannot be viewed as an VFM Review in the fullest sense, it uses the Review process as a vehicle to carry out the first ever examination of the programme and lays down the basis on which future analysis might be planned.

A Steering Group was established to oversee the Review, under the chairmanship of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and with representations from the Departments of Finance, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Environment, Heritage and Local Government and was later joined by the Office of Public Works. The Terms of Reference for the Review were approved by the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism on the 9th September, 2003. Finalised terms of reference were noted by the Steering Committee at its meeting on the 11th December, 2003.

2.2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference are as follows -

The main purpose of the swimming pool programme VFM review is to complete an evaluation of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme ("the Programme"), examining the objectives to determine whether they are being achieved in the most effective and cost efficient way. It will attempt to explore possible changes in implementation of the current programme to reflect current sports and recreation objectives, capital resources available or likely to be available over the next three years, best practices and the increasing need to be able to set targets and measure performance. In essence the work will focus on:

- identifying and setting out the objectives of the Programme.

- examining the current validity of the objectives as identified, in the light of an assessment of the potential for the private sector to directly provide more of these facilities in the future, and the compatibility with the Department's overall strategy and other relevant strategies in relation to this Programme.
- defining the outputs associated with the programme activity and to identify the level and trend of those outputs.
- examining in particular the evolution of the Programme in the period 1999 to 2002 inclusive arising from changing demands/expectations of project promoters in provision of sports and recreational facilities.
- examining the extent that the Programme's objectives in the period 1999 to 2002 inclusive have been achieved, commenting on the effectiveness with which they have been achieved.
- identifying the level and trend of costs and staffing resources associated with administering the Programme and thus to comment on the efficiency with which it has achieved its objectives.
- evaluating, in the context of the constraints on the public finances and the need to prioritise between different forms of public investment, the degree to which the objectives warrant the allocation of public funding on a current and ongoing basis
- examining the scope for alternative policy or organisational approaches to achieving the objectives as identified, on a more efficient and/or effective basis, through comparison with equivalent schemes in N. Ireland and abroad and having regard to the advent of the National Spatial Strategy, public private partnerships, county development plans and tourist development schemes.
- examining the criteria used to assess applications under the scheme with a view to establishing how these may need to be amended to better the scheme's objectives.
- specifying potential future performance indicators that might be used to better monitor the performance of the Programme.

2.3 METHODOLOGY

The Methodology employed to address the terms of reference and dealt with in the following chapters is as follows:

- Describe the existing programme, the underlying rationale, the objectives and the outcomes.
- Set out the historical background to the Programme.
- Review the findings, conclusions and recommendations of previous reports, if any
- Categorise the expenditure in terms of the distribution by
 - county with reference to population levels
 - disadvantaged areas.
- Examine the processes involved; viz applications, selection of projects for grants and payments of grants.

- Describe and analyse management information currently available from the Programme to measure progress in meeting programme objectives. Identify gaps, if any, in existing data.
- In relation to the projects funded during the period under review and which have now been completed, obtain and analyse external data on the impact of the programme in terms of increasing participation and usage particularly by those living in disadvantaged areas. This would be achieved by carrying out surveys of participation rates, in respect of projects completed in the period 1999 to 2002 inclusive, to obtain information on the impact of the grants awarded. The relevant pools are in Dundalk, Courtown, Ennis, Wicklow, Arklow, Enniscorthy, Navan and Roscommon. Examine the operation, cost and staffing implications of administering the Programme.
- Describe schemes in operation elsewhere – e.g. Northern Ireland and Scotland, & draw inferences for the Programme.

Set out conclusions, implications and recommendations in relation to the validity of the current objectives, for the future of the programme particularly in terms of prioritising applications and setting targets & performance indicators to best measure progress in meeting programme objectives.

The core work was, first of all, to evaluate the expenditure on pools in the period from 1999-2002. However, as set out, the position that has evolved since then has been brought on board as the Review evolved. The accomplishment of this task has been aided by the assistance of the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (ILAM). The results of an ILAM survey and analyses of internal records has now led to the compilation of a detailed survey of public pool provision in the State and the results are set out in the Appendices. The work also highlights the rapidly increasing scale of private sector provision. The survey results have been useful to the evaluations made in the course of this Review.

The work of the Review has been assisted by a number of submissions, both written and oral, from the Department of Health and Children, Department of Education and Science, Irish Sports Council, Swim Ireland, the Irish Water Safety Association, ILAM, Holohan and Associates, Coral Leisure, both of whom operate pools opened under the current round of the Pool Programme and who have shared their knowledge about the Leisure Trade in Ireland. The insights provided by officials working in SportsScotland and the Sports Council of Northern Ireland and in local authorities both in N. Ireland and Scotland has also been of considerable

help. The work has been underpinned by the replies of some twenty local authorities who responded to a detailed Questionnaire about the Programme. The work has been greatly assisted by the individual members of the Steering Group who, over their various deliberations and through the meetings throughout the process, provided valuable insights and guidance. The work of correlating the data and synthesising the views, has resulted in wide-ranging recommendations approved by the Steering Group for action both in the short and longer terms. Lastly, the VFM Review has been considered by an external independent Evaluator, Raymond Burke Consulting and his comments have been taken on board in finalising the Review.

2.4 BACKGROUND TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY SWIMMING POOL PROGRAMME

The Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme has been in existence since it was initiated in the early 1970s by the then Minister for Local Government. It was administered by that Department up until 1998 when it transferred to the then Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, now the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. Conceived as a method through which everyone would be enabled to obtain swimming instruction, the Programme gradually created a network of public pools throughout the country. The resulting infrastructure put in place represented a significant investment by the State in social and sport amenities. The public pools themselves had become in many places a key manifestation of a local authority's amenity provision. The existence of a public pool has also come to be seen as vital to the well-being of local communities. Yet, despite their implicitly recognised importance in advancing broad social, health, civic and sporting objectives, this accumulated infrastructure was often underfunded and under pressure due to lack of maintenance, private sector competition, and the legacies of less than optimal operational standards. Prior to this Review, in the past 30 years there has only been one attempt at an overview of the work but this was not finalised or reflected in a strategic statement of objectives.

Although the Programme provides grants towards the provision or refurbishment of public swimming pools and has been in existence since the early 1970s, there is no specific legislation defining the programme. Funds are voted on an annual basis by the Oireachtas. A basic legislative code had been set out in the Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act, 1948 - a Part of which related to the provision of public swimming (primarily outdoor) baths. The subsequent capital programme geared towards indoor pools was initiated and controlled by the then Department of Local Government up until 1998.

Local authorities themselves have general authority empowering them to construct sporting/recreational facilities including swimming pools. There is no special requirement to seek any prior approval from Central Government before doing so and therefore the Department's role in this sphere is limited, in effect, to the operation of a grant scheme. The general legislative framework is described in **Appendix A**.

There are some 82 local authority swimming pool facilities around the country – 71 indoor and 11 outdoor. A few are open on a seasonal basis only. Several replacement pools are currently under construction having recently been approved for funding. Two are in the course of being converted from outdoor to indoor use. The list has been compiled on the basis of returns made by local authorities themselves collated in 2000; by reference to projects within the current round of the swimming pool programme (some of which were not included in those returns); by the inclusion of the green-field site pools funded and opened under the current programme; by cross checking with Departmental records of pool projects funded under previous Pool Programmes and Sports Capital Programme; and by changing the designation of two pools from outdoor to indoor (Tullamore and Askeaton).

In making this statement, what are meant by the descriptor "public" in the context of this Review merits examination and elaboration.

The term "public" in relation to public pools had been interpreted flexibly over decades, to encompass not only pools owned and run by local authorities themselves, but also certain pools owned by schools, voluntary organisations, and some commercial operations where a degree of public access has been negotiated by the local authority. A pattern has also emerged of local authority owned pools with adjoining gym facilities being run by private companies under licence or other administrative/legal arrangement with the local authority. To a certain extent, too, what constitutes a public pool has been decided by the local authority itself as some types of pool have either been included or omitted from annual returns on the basis of a judgement by the local authority itself as to a pool's day to day operational relationship with the local authority in question.

However, as part of this review ILAM was commissioned by the Department to ascertain the number of number of both public and private swimming pools in the State. ILAM's findings show that the figure for "public" pools (that is, pools that received any aspect of capital or revenue type assistance from central/local Government, public education authorities, community associations) would, in its estimation, include some additional pools. However, its definition is broader and encompasses any pool that received any aspect of capital or revenue funding

assistance from the State and from voluntary sector and whether or not the pool has significant public access.

However, it has been decided not to include in the final list, any pools to which the public has access which are in effect privately owned or where such pools did not receive significant funding under previous rounds of the Pool Programme and/or under the Sports Capital Programme. The final list is at **Appendix B**.

Under the Local Government Act, 2001 a "local authority" is an administrative area with a legally defined boundary for the purposes of local government and which is a county in the case of a county council, a city in the case of a city council and a town in the case of town council. There are at the present time 114 local authorities consisting of 29 county councils, 5 city councils and 80 town councils (latter includes five "borough" towns).

In relation to the parameters of the Programme itself, and in place since the initiation of the Programme in the 1970s, a public pool project can be undertaken by an organisation other than a local authority and can be included in the Programme, but only where the project has first been considered, supported and eventually submitted by the relevant local authority. Under Guidelines published in 1998, the local authority must first be satisfied that the proposal is viable, that the balance of funding required to complete the project is available and that the project, when completed, has a satisfactory level of public access before supporting a project. In all cases, however, grants allocated are paid to and by way of the local authority and a Deed of Covenant and Charge is put in place to protect the "public" interest, i.e. the grant aid provided by the State.

With the trend towards increased private investment and contracting out of management in the Programme and possible different understandings within local authorities as what is meant by a "public pool", a formal definition of what constitutes a "public" pool might be useful, for policy formulation and evaluative purposes.

2.5 PROCEDURAL AND TECHNICAL GUIDELINES

The internal Departmental procedures under which the pool programme is administered were inherited from the Department of the Environment, and had previously been brought into effect by that Department in January, 1998. They are set out in a document entitled "Procedures for the Planning, Approval and Financing of Swimming Pools and Technical Guidelines." (See **Appendix C**). In general terms under the Guidelines, local authorities are required to follow a four principal stage procedure: Preliminary/Feasibility Report stage, Contract Documents stage, Tender stage and Construction stage. Local authorities may not proceed to the next stage of a project until prior Ministerial approval is obtained. Under the procedures in force grant-aid is allocated only when tenders have been approved for the project and the grant amount is capped at the time of allocation. The Department of the Environment's 1998 procedural Guidelines are to be read in conjunction with the 1994 Department of Finance's "Guidelines for the Appraisal and Management of Capital Expenditure Proposals in the Public Sector"¹ since updated by revised guidelines issued in February, 2005.

¹ Earlier sets of Guidelines are of a technical nature only but the 1998 DoE Guidelines, for the first time, introduces procedural steps. Basic procedural requirements, for outline and then detailed appraisal, are common to both sets of Guidelines although the DoE Guidelines set out greater detail.

3 CHAPTER THREE : HISTORY OF PROGRAMME: 1948-1998

The current round of the local authority swimming pool programme was launched in 1999. However this has to be seen as only the latest phase of a building programme that has been ongoing since the early 1970s and has its origins in the 1940s.

There is a great deal to be learned about the overall rationale behind the Programme, how it has worked and was implemented by a description of the progress of the Programme in the period from the late 1940s to 1998 (at which point it transferred to the then Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation). This description leads to an understanding of how the present matrix of public swimming pools in the State came to be established, how the administrative system currently in place came to be and much about the thinking behind important technical guidelines for the procurement of swimming pools. This review provides also a benchmark against which to measure the progress of the current phase of the Programme – much of which is now concerned with the refurbishment and replacement of pools built in the 1970s and filling in the gaps where authorities believe them to exist.

Local authorities were empowered to undertake the provision of swimming facilities under the Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act, 1948. Assistance from the then Department of Local Government was to be by way of subsidy on loan charges, but the extent of such subsidy was not indicated at the time.² It appears local authorities took no action on this. Later the Department urged the preparation by local authorities of a planned programme for the provision of swimming facilities and indicated that payment of 50% subsidy on loan charges would be forthcoming in respect of moneys borrowed for this purpose.³ A similar subsidy would be paid where local authorities raised loans to make grants to voluntary organisations providing swimming facilities, under section 55 of the Local Government Act, 1955. The merits of the indoor heated type of pool were stressed, particularly for populous areas. As the response was slow the Department issued, in 1964, a "General Specification for Outdoor and Indoor Swimming Pools." Two lengths

² Circular Letter 5./52, November, 1952

³ Circular Letter (L 11/61), June, 1961.

of pool were specified [33.3m and 25m] and what was referred to as "the smaller pool" i.e. the 25m pool, was later to become regarded as the standard size pool. Pools were visualised as ranging in depth from 3ft to 10ft. Water temperatures in the range 72-76 F. The type of pool outlined came to be known as "the Prototype Pool" and the cost in 1964 was visualised as being in the region on £16,000.⁴ The demand for pools, and the willingness of local authorities to assist them, increased steadily.

3.1 1970 OBJECTIVES

In 1970 new terms for supporting pool development were announced by the then Minister for Local Government. The terms included a ceiling of £50,000 on the loan in respect of any one pool; loans normally to be obtained outside of the Local Loans Fund; a minimum voluntary contribution of 20% of the capital cost of the pool to be raised locally; state subsidy to be normally 50% of loan charges on approved expenditure; pools to be designed to a minimum of 25m in length and width to be 30 feet or 42 feet, depending on population to be served.

In the course of outlining the terms of support for new pools, the Minister for Local Government went on to say "I consider it particularly important that swimming facilities should be available to the younger generation and I would appeal to schools to organise the provision of swimming pools either individually or in co-operation with others."⁵ For the first time there is an articulation of the purpose behind the emerging new swimming pool programme – "The provision of a pool is, of course, only the first stage. The training of children in swimming and life-saving is the primary purpose for which financial assistance is given by the State towards swimming pools and I am anxious to encourage the provision of training facilities wherever practicable". Later the view was underlined with advice to local authorities of the Minister's view that "the teaching of swimming should have a much higher priority than diving and he strongly favours the depth of 4.5ft, so that the maximum possible space will be available for swimming instruction. Once this basic requirement is met there would be no objection to local authorities going a stage further by catering for divers."

⁴ In 1974 tenders for standard pools were noted in the region of £100,000.

⁵ Answer to a P.Q. (No.23, 11th June, 1970)

3.2 GENERAL SPECIFICATION FOR SWIMMING POOLS

Because of the widespread demand for pools at this period (over 70 local authority pools being constructed during the 1970s) and the variations in proposals as they were being developed, there was a realisation that a comprehensive specification was required for the guidance of local authorities. Accordingly, the "Guideline Specification for Swimming Pools" was issued to local authorities. General objectives are set out in that Circular as follows -

*"The Minister is pleased to note that swimming as a recreation is increasing in popularity. It is recognised as an excellent form of exercise for all age groups, it provides a physically rewarding and pleasant competitive sport and it is an important means of saving lives. He is satisfied, therefore, that swimming should be encouraged to the fullest possible extent. The provision of swimming pools where young and old can learn to swim and enjoy a pleasant pastime is the first essential."*⁶

The Circular sets out a number of parameters.

- Proposals submitted to the Department would be expected to have regard to the standards laid down in the Guideline Specification including a standard size pool of 25m x 9m, with depth ranging from 1m to 2m (interpreted as a mean between the deeper pool, suitable for diving, and the shallow pool seen as suitable for teaching).
- The desirability as far as practicable of locating pools in or near recreation centres
- Requirement for higher water temperatures required (subsequently 81-82 degrees F. was favoured)
- Loans should be obtained from a source other than through the mechanism of formal Local Loans Fund, and that the maximum loan for a pool was to be £50,000, subject to review of the ceiling for pools in larger centres of population.

The Circular also set out provisions for assistance to voluntary organisations providing swimming pools. The Department would not approve loans directly to such organisations. The contribution by the local authority was not to exceed 80% of the cost. Where a pool was to be run by a school authority the contribution was not normally to exceed one third of the cost unless

⁷ Circular letter ENV 1/72 of 9 February, 1972

the pool was made available to outsiders for definite periods when the contribution could be two thirds of the cost. Elsewhere it is stated that the programme "is at present aimed at providing pools suitable for the giving of swimming instruction".

According to the findings of a Review in 1975 the standard type pool was given "general satisfaction" by all concerned. A policy of approving pool development was then adopted and, in 1975, 51 pools had been constructed and were in use and another 23 were under construction or at advanced stages of planning.

In the same period pools controlled and operated by local authorities were showing substantial operational deficits. This led in 1975 to the Department undertaking a review of the matter. An informal group, representative of local authorities, the Irish Water Safety Association and the Department was set up, to assist in a review of all aspects of swimming pool operation. The thrust of the initiative was to "keep in touch with progress on approved pools," "identify worthwhile projects", "assist in establishing criteria in dealing with future proposals", and "help in deciding what action should be taken to ensure maximum benefit from existing pools at the least cost". The group later submitted a 50 page report to the Department on the operation and management of swimming pools and containing a number of significant recommendations of a strategic nature. These include recommendations relating to location of pools, ongoing maintenance, pool size suited to the population catchment, subsidising transport costs to existing pools, subsidising teaching of swimming and lifesaving costs, surveys of needs and involvement in Boards of management. The Report was not finalised or approved. However, after lengthy internal Department debate, a number of points were later incorporated into a draft Memorandum to be sent to local authorities giving them information and suggestions on pool usage, advertising, duration of pool sessions, occupancy rates, staffing qualifications, heating and lighting, purification of the water, and other advice to help inform the operation and promotion of pool use in their respective areas. It is not clear from examination of the relevant files that this Memorandum was issued.

The technical part of the Guidelines was also revised in 1981 when the Department issued a circular letter on the energy savings obtainable from use of pool blankets. In 1986 the then Minister for the Environment approved new guideline specifications (RNV 12/86) replacing those issued in 1972 to take account of technical advances. They included modifications of the provisions on water circulation, filtration and disinfection, measures designed to promote energy conservation, provision of emergency lighting and of an emergency telephone and alarm bells, and that a means of access to, and other facilities at, the pool should be provided for disabled persons.

In the period from 1981 to 1988 no new pools were built under the Programme. This reflected the economic downturn of the period, the fact that many pools had already been built in the preceding decade which were meeting the demand, and delays caused in the mid eighties by the change from a funding system based on loans to one, in theory, based on capital grants. The catalyst for the change to capital grants lay with the availability in 1987 of the National Lottery funds for amenity projects.

3.3 SYSTEM OF FINANCING

The formal system of financing the construction or improvement of amenities (not confined to pools) provided by local authorities by means of Local Loans Fund loans was, following the enactment of the Local Loans Fund (Amendment) Act, 1987, replaced by a scheme of capital grants. In respect of pools, the new arrangements for funding involved a capital grant of up to 80% of the cost of the pool with the remaining 20% being financed by way of local contribution. Works to a higher standard than that provided for in the specification (e.g. sauna, jacuzzi) were not to be grant aided. The new funding arrangements now also included 100% of the cost of refurbishing an existing pool. The special provision relating to pools being promoted by school authorities was no longer to apply (the latter reflecting a poor uptake on that aspect of the Programme). In practice, while swimming pool projects from the voluntary sector were not specifically excluded, it was considered unlikely that they could be assisted from the capital allocations because of the high costs involved and the need to take account of the claims of competing projects.

From an examination of extant records in the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, Department of Finance sanction was given in 1989 for the expenditure of grant monies under a subhead especially for local authority pools, on the basis of a letter from the Department of the Environment which also outlined proposed arrangements for giving assistance towards swimming pools provided by voluntary organisations. In 1997, a Finance sanction for €3.8million (£3.0m) was conveyed to the Department of the Environment, provided that the overall allocation for any given year was not exceeded, and that all Government contract procedures would be complied with.⁷

3.4 ADMINISTRATION OF SCHEME

A first set of procedural guidelines geared specifically to meet the needs of the swimming pool programme and published in 1975 sets out that "controls are being loosened and new procedures introduced" for the purpose of "increasing the discretion of local authorities" and "providing a better basis for the programming of capital work locally."⁸ This was to be achieved by the development of advisory codes, standards or specifications of a general nature, leaving the detail of particular projects including site selection, planning and execution to the local authority." The aim was "to maintain essential financial controls only and, in order to avoid possible difficulties in this regard it will be necessary to obtain approval in principle to major projects." In relation to swimming pools a three year round of proposed investments was proposed – to be updated annually with the order of priority" (presumably meaning the ranking of the project in order of established importance and urgency). Further requirements would be "a formal loan application based on tender" before commencement and, in due course, "a certificate of completion."

Thereafter⁹, the practice evolved of requiring first a decision in principle from the Minister, followed by technical approval of site plans, later, contract documents – it seems in accordance with procedural norms of construction for water, waste, roads etc. Tender approval by the Minister would follow - at which point monies would be allocated. The process was managed by a large Departmental corps of technical advisors including engineers, etc. who would approve

⁷ Letter from Department of Finance, dated 9th June, 1997 (ref. S74/02/93bj)

⁸ Circular (ENV 8/75) entitled "Devolution – Miscellaneous Projects."

⁹ This arises from a study of procedures utilised for pool projects in the 1990s

the detailed specification for a project and, in co-operation with officials from each local authority, approve each stage of the process.

In 1990 the Department of the Environment conducted a survey and an infrastructural audit of the facilities provided by the Programme and this identified areas of the country that had still to be provided with public pools – Cavan, South Donegal, Louth (Dundalk), Monaghan county, Sligo, Wexford and Wicklow. It was noted that many pools provided in the 1970s were now in need of refurbishment. Reflecting in part the gaps and deficiencies identified in the 1990 Survey, decisions by the Minister to approve, grants for, new local authority pools developments in the nineties tended to be concentrated on the Eastern part of the country outside of the Dublin area, in Wicklow, Arklow, Enniscorthy, Cavan and Navan. However in the five years from 1993 only one new pool (Cavan) was actually opened to the public. During the same period, however, refurbishment projects increased in number in the Midlands and Western areas - in Tipperary town, Mullingar, three pools in Co. Offaly, Ballyshannon, Athy and Mallow. In that period, one replacement pool was approved (Ennis).

Table 3.1 below shows the amount of monies expended in each year during that period.

Table 3.1: Expenditure 1992-1999

1999	€5.7
1998	€3.3
1997	€4.4
1996	€2.5
1995	€2.5
1994	€1.6
1993	€2.3
1992	€0.3

It can be seen that the Exchequer amounts made available up to 1998, averaged little over the total eligible cost of one swimming pool per year in those years.

A Report on Indoor Sports Facilities in Ireland was published by the Department of Education and Cospoir Sports Research Committee in 1995. The purpose was to "enrichthe baseline data on (indoor) sports facilities and their use." One of the types of facilities studied was swimming

pools (stand alone pools, or pools without a major sports hall). The research examined facility usage, standards, staffing and finances. 30 pool operations replied to the survey. At that time usage of pools, according to the survey, was 90% by swimming clubs. 68% travelled more than 2 miles to access the facility, with over 85% of the capital costs in construction of pools not raised locally. A third of respondents were receiving annual subvention towards operating cost with nearly half of operating costs being on staff salaries, 24% on energy costs and 14% on maintenance. 47% of pools were operating on a "business deficit" (i.e. loss making) basis. Pools generating a surplus tended to have a higher number of part-time staff. In determining turnover and profitability the report suggests that management quality could be at play but this was not quantified in the Report. The Report noted that 26% of pools were repaying loans (*not specified whether the loans arose from capital or current needs, or both*) – equating to some 33% of annual pools turnover and that, as a consequence "loan repayments are a major drain on finances of these facilities". The Report noted that all pools "in surplus" had no requirement to repay loans. The Report's recommendations included provision of financial resources to improve the standard of capital facilities, the putting in train of avenues to aid volunteers acquire "professional qualifications" and that all major recreational facilities should employ a qualified manager on a full-time basis. However, it would appear that the question of requiring these facilities "in surplus" to undertake preventative maintenance or to set aside funds for future refurbishment was not addressed.

3.5 NATIONAL LOTTERY FUNDING REVIEW

The Report of the Review Group on the National Lottery in 1997 recommended that surplus funds "should in future be devoted entirely to the support of community and voluntary activity in the areas of youth services, sports,health and social services, and community development etc...." At this time funding available to local authorities for public swimming pool construction had been coming from the National Lottery. The recommendation entailed the switching of this lottery funding to voluntary bodies which up to then had been funded from the Exchequer and the transfer of the Exchequer support to local authorities. The transition was carried out on the basis of no net extra cost being borne by the Exchequer. Under the Department of the

Environment and Local Government Vote, "swimming pools" were listed and funding was to come from the Exchequer beginning in 1999.¹⁰

By 1998, many pools built in the 1970s were still providing a vital service to the public. In its submission to this Review, Swim Ireland summarises the contribution of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme (LASPP) by saying "Swim Ireland cannot over-emphasise the contribution of the LASPP to swimming in Ireland and the well being of Irish people generally"¹¹and, in view of the Irish Water Safety Association, "since 1971 the LASPP has served most of our country well and allowed most of our population to learn to swim, life-save and develop their water skills."¹² However, notwithstanding identified achievements by the late 1990s many were struggling to survive due to initial poor standards of construction, inadequate operational standards, maintenance problems, some not being located in ideal positions. While a strategy had been outlined by the then Minister in the early 1970s for the Programme and in relation to the provision of swimming tuition, this does not seem to have been actively followed up in practice by pool operators at local level, the focus being largely to provide the "facility" and to respond to demand. The Review undertaken in the mid 1970s was an attempt to put a national shape on the Programme and to see it as one integrated project, focusing on encouraging usage – as distinct from just responding to demand - and a cross Departmental approach to "learning to swim" but this initiative unfortunately did not come to fruition. Where pools were built in the 1990s this seems to have occurred in an ad hoc manner, due to the pressure, persistence and persuasiveness of local interests. The amount of Exchequer funding being provided annually was equivalent to one new pool a year and therefore marked no substantive provision for refurbishment or increase in public pool stock. While the needs for refurbishment and improving operational profitability were accepted as important issues there was not any funding action either by the local authorities themselves who had primary responsibility in the area or by central Government on the scale needed to make serious inroads into the problem. At the same time the technical guidelines conceived in the 1960s were becoming increasingly both obsolete and an obstacle in the meeting of contemporary operational needs and standards.

¹⁰ Information derived from report of meeting between Minister for Finance and Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation held on 9th February, 1999. Topic also relevant to Sports Capital Programme – see Chapter Ten.

¹¹ Submission dated 16th June, 2004

¹² Submission dated 29th April, 2004

4 CHAPTER FOUR: THE ENHANCED PROGRAMME 2000 AND PROFILE OF APPLICANTS

In May, 1998, the responsibility for the Programme was transferred from the Department of the Environment to the then Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation.

4.1 STATEMENTS OF STRATEGY

The Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation's First Statement of Strategy published in May, 1998 had provided, under the heading of "sport and recreation," – "to formulate and oversee the implementation of policies for the promotion and development of sport, and to encourage increased participation in sport and recreation, particularly by disadvantaged communities." Under the heading "local development", the strategy was "to develop an effective model for integrated local development, based on partnership between state agencies, social partners and local communities, particularly in disadvantaged areas and areas marked by high levels of drug abuse."

The Department's Second Statement of Strategy 2001-2004 made specific mention of the Swimming Pool Programme under the strategy heading – "to facilitate the provision of sport and recreation facilities on a nationwide basis." The outputs were to be "the efficient and effective delivery of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme, the main performance indicator being the "number of pools developed and refurbished."

Following the establishment, in May, 2002, of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism a first Statement of Strategy 2003-2005 was formulated. Earlier strategies affecting the Programme were to remain in place. However there were new performance indicators, namely that the annual budget for the scheme was to be fully drawn down by year end, a VFM review would be completed and that claims for payments to grantees would be satisfactorily discharged within one month of their receipt.

Following the transfer to the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (ILAM) was commissioned to conduct an analysis of the condition of then existing pools constructed around the country, built between 1966 and 1981 and in the ownership of local authorities. This survey did not include those pools owned by local authorities that had closed with a view to being replaced (e.g. Cobh), those opened in periods following 1981 which could now be facing maintenance problems (i.e. Letterkenny in 1989) or those pools with limited public usage owned by voluntary groups or schools (e.g. three in Co. Offaly, Buncrana in Donegal, Presentation College in Bray, Marion College in Ballsbridge). The pools selected for survey were seen as having reached the same level of decline at about the same time due, in many cases, to absence of suitable maintenance programmes over the years combined with poor management of facilities. The ILAM survey looked at the relative condition of each of the pools based on individual assessments using the following criteria - (i) condition of pool, (ii) market needs/current usage/other alternative facilities, (iii) area status, and (iv) age of facility. 31 pools were identified by ILAM as needing major refurbishment. These were located in 18 different local authority areas of which 10 were in Dublin. (See **Appendix D**)

The ILAM survey and findings were the trigger for a revamped scheme and an enhanced funding package announced in 1999. A capital budget of €57m over the period 2000 –2002 (£15m per year) was announced, the details of which are set out in the following paragraphs. This represented a very significant increase in capital funds available to the programme.

Social Inclusion

Reflecting the broader objectives of the Department a new element was introduced into the enhanced Programme involving introduction of a 90% rate for new projects located in disadvantaged areas as opposed to 80% in other areas. This was an attempt by the new Department with its strong social inclusion remit to enhance the social inclusion element of the pool programme and complement a similar provision in the Sports Capital Programme.

"Disadvantaged area" was interpreted in the Department as referring to those geographic areas covered by Area Development Management "Partnerships"(established by virtue of Government social inclusion initiatives in the mid 1990s) but in more recent times the increased grant applies to projects located in a RAPID area (see Chapter Ten).

In announcing the increased grant aid package, the then Minister also signalled the Department's willingness to consider proposals from local authorities incorporating private participation - in acknowledgment of "the considerably expanded role and expertise of that sector in the design and management of leisure facilities since local authorities first took the initiative in this area over 30 years ago". Local authorities were encouraged, therefore, to consider proposals from private consortia to design, build, operate and finance leisure/sport centres, or a combination thereof, on local authority sites and possibly incorporating existing pool facilities where such existed.

The trend towards greater complexity in swimming pool design was identified as an important factor requiring updating of the technical part of the Guidelines –The type of public swimming pool that was provided in the seventies and eighties would no longer meet the standards required by the public. This became evident in the quality of the new facilities being provided – "a higher standard that has quickly become the minimum standard for the future."¹³

The reality was that local authorities did not always take account of the need to maximise the on-going operation of the facilities and the Department's technical Guidelines were perceived as not providing sufficient detail, particularly in relation to design issues to ensure optimum value for money. At that stage it was generally accepted that most public pools had been maintained, over the years, on a "firefighting basis" - that is, maintenance as and when necessary. Preventive maintenance regimes had not generally been implemented. Swimming pools required regular maintenance such as the replacement of filter material, overhaul of pumps and renewal of external paintwork to keep them in reasonable condition. However, there was also a need from time to time for significant capital re-investment over and above routine maintenance to repair and refurbish pools which was not always provided. A strong ongoing preventative maintenance programme for all pools was identified as essential to reduce costs in the longer term.

¹³ Address by Dr. McDaid T.D. Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation at the "Public Pools into the 21st Century Seminar" Tullamore Country Hotel, 1st June, 2000

4.2 NEW FUNDING LEVELS AND GRANT STRUCTURE

As part of the new and enhanced Programme the maximum grant rates were harmonised at 80% of eligible expenditure for either a new pool or a refurbishment, or 90% in the case of those in disadvantaged areas. Analysis had indicated that in some locations due to the previous availability of 100% funding for the refurbishment of a pool, the local authority would choose the refurbishment route rather than taking on the task of securing local funding for a new pool which would, in the long term, be of greater benefit to the community. The change "allows for movements in construction costs and removes any perceived incentive to refurbish when the construction of a replacement pool may be the better long-term option."¹⁴

Earlier, in a letter dated 8th July, 1999, the Department of Finance had given a sanction that monies from 2000 onwards for the Programme were to be allocated in a ratio 2:1 - €10m for refurbishments and €5m for new pools. However that Department agreed to drop this condition when, in its letter of end May, 2000, the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation had set out a preference for "maximum flexibility in the allocation of money as between new and refurbished pools, which were initially earmarked for £5m and £10m respectively" while understanding that

"the emphasis will still be on the refurbishment of the swimming pools which were identified in the ILAM report and which was the basis for the provision of increased funding for the programme."

In 1999 the specific sanction of Department of Finance was required to approve a project where the eligible cost of either a new pool or the refurbishment of an existing pool exceeded €6.38 million. This maximum level still applies. The level now being set was to reflect the cost of pools at that time, seen in 1999 as being in the region of €5.7 million (£4.5m).

4.3 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF PROGRAMME

¹⁴ Letter dated 31st May, 2000 from Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation to Department of Finance

This Department implements the procedures set out in the 1998 Guidelines and the structure of approvals is set out in chapter Three. Within the Department, internal tables show the stage of each project. See **Appendix E**.

From a planning perspective, the Feasibility Study prepared by the local authority as part of the Preliminary Report Stage is a key part of the overall process, focusing as it does, on central aspects of any pool project – the geographical location of the pool, its hinterland, the scale and facilities to be provided and the consequent potential number of visitors or visits per annum needed to sustain business viability. The focus of examination includes the size of the target population within a reasonable travelling distance of the pool, usually between 15-30 minutes (depending on whether the pool is located in a rural or urban area), the demographics involved, market surveys of likely participation in swimming activity for the purpose of calculating the potential numbers of visitors to the pool. In this examination the competitive effect of other swimming facilities in the area is factored in. Key issues of design and operational management are outlined. The pros and cons of refurbishment versus replacement pool are set out by the local authority and it makes recommendations as to the best option. It is evident that local authorities are now exercising considerable care in their planning processes in that there is a much stronger realisation that at the very minimum the projects must at least break even on a financial basis.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) evaluates and advises on technical aspects at each stage and its input is critical during the preliminary, contract and tender approval stages.¹⁵ Issues addressed would include compliance with technical guidelines, e.g. refurbishment versus replacement of pool, size and shape of pool, building design aspects, analysis of projected costs, contractual conditions, identification of eligible and ineligible costs (also Department role), compliance with Building Regulations and, other statutory requirements, levels of professional fees etc.

The Department's evaluative role throughout the preliminary, contract and tender approval stages relates to the composition and firmness of the proposed financial plan for construction,

¹⁵ The involvement of OPW is a continuation of the practice that was in place when the Programme transferred from the Department of the Environment with architectural technical expertise being supplied by OPW. Other forms of technical expertise available were within the previous supervising Department, for instance, in relation to, say, quality of tile, air and water filtration, sanitation, from 1998, are no longer available to this Department.

operational viability estimates, governance and management issues. At the contract and tender approval stages – the strategic issue of prioritisation of projects on a county and regional basis assume added importance, taking account of factors such as availability of financial resources within the Department's subhead, geographic spread of facilities and the need to accommodate social objectives.

Applications are dealt with on a case-by-case basis chiefly on an intrinsic merit basis, the speed of progression through the system being determined to a large extent by the speed and priority with which each local authority progresses its project(s), the human resources available to OPW at any one time to this Department and the funding available for the Programme under the annual Estimates exercise.

4.4 APPLICATIONS PROFILE 1999/2000

Following announcement of a new Programme in 1999, a call for proposals was made. As Local Authorities were slow to submit applications, a deadline of 31st July 2000 was subsequently set. This is the first time a deadline had been imposed in relation to applications under the Programme. Prior to this local authorities could make applications at any time. It was not envisaged, at that time, that the closure of the Programme would be of long duration.

49 applications (two Tralee UDC applications being amalgamated into one) were accepted before the deadline. Adding work yet to be finalised on another five almost completed projects, this brought the total under the programme to 54.

Two other applications made before the deadline in 2000 –in respect of Leisureworld, Galway and Cork - were not accepted on the grounds that the works proposed were not necessary to make the relevant facility viable. Another eight applications were received after the 31st July, 2000 deadline and consequently were not accepted. However one of these was in respect of Monaghan where the application was eventually accepted into the Programme in 2003, this exception being made because that pool had had to close down for safety reasons in 2001 and County Monaghan was therefore without any operational public pool. Two further swimming pool projects are also being administered under the programme in respect of users with special

needs, namely pools for St. Michael's House and St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys. The addition of these three pools brought the number of pools in the Programme up to an overall total of 57.

TABLE 4.1 Profile of applicants under 2000 Programme

County/City Council/Town Council (in lead role)	County/City Council LA in support role	Number grant aid applications	Identified in ILAM Report for Upgrade/refurbishment
Wexford Co.Co. Enniscorthy Wexford Borough New Ross		4	2 – Wexford New Ross
Dunmanway Cobh Youghal	<i>Cork Co.</i>	3	1 – Dunmanway
Cork City Council		1	1 – Churchfield
Tralee Killarney Kerry Co.Co.		4	1 – Tralee
Birr Tullamore Edenderry Offaly Co. Co.		4	0
Letterkenny Buncrana Donegal Co. Co.		3	0
Dublin City Council		3	3 – Finglas Ballymun Ballyfermot
Dublin South Council		2	2 – Clondalkin - Jobstown
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council		2	2 – Glenalbyn Dundrum
Fingal Co.Co.		1	0
Ballinasloe Loughrea Tuam	<i>Galway Co.</i>	3	2 – Ballinasloe Tuam
Thurles Nth Tipp.Co. Co.		2	1 – Thurles
Wicklow Co. Co. Arklow Bray Greystones		4	0
Naas Athy	<i>Kildare Co.</i>	2	2 – Naas Athy
Port Laoise	<i>Laois Co.</i>	2	2 – Portlaoise Portarlinton
Limerick Co. Co.		1	0
Limerick City Council		1	0
Dundalk Drogheda	<i>Louth Co..</i>	2	0
Castlebar Mayo Co. Co.		2	2 – Castlebar Claremorris
Roscommon Co.Co.		2	1 – Roscommon
Monaghan	<i>Monaghan Co.</i>	2 (1 Pool)	0
Ennis	<i>Clare Co.</i>	1	0
Kilkenny	<i>Kilkenny Co.</i>	1	1 – Kilkenny
Longford	<i>Longford Co.</i>	1	1 – Longford
Navan	<i>Meath Co.</i>	1	0
Clonmel	<i>South Tipp. Co.</i>	1	
47	11	55	23 out of 31

Table 4.1 above shows the profile of local authority applicants and whether identified in the ILAM Report.. The profile of applications in **4.1** shows that more than half - 58 local authorities - of the total number of 114 local authorities availed themselves of the opportunity given in 2000 to bring forward pool projects either by themselves or in collaboration with another local authority. There were no applications from the following county councils - Carlow, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo, Waterford and Westmeath or Waterford City Council under this round of the Programme. Dublin City had chosen to prioritise Ballyfermot, Ballymun and Finglas and therefore not to make applications in respect of pools operated by it in Coolock, Sean McDermott Street, Crumlin and Rathmines (ILAM reported as in need of refurbishment). Another Dublin City pool in Tara Street (Markievicz pool) was the subject of a public/private partnership. In ascertaining reasons for not making application, it can be noted that LA pool projects had recently been completed in Athlone in Westmeath, Waterford City (located at Waterford Crystal) and in Cavan in 1994. Carlow had a pool built by the voluntary sector in 1994. Sligo had a regional pool facility built in the mid 1990s. Leitrim may have chosen not to apply under the Programme as its low and dispersed population may not have justified at that time the capital investment involved for an indoor pool.

In noting that 47 local authorities were taking the lead in developing pool projects, in 12 instances the relevant county council would be in support of the project and would provide some level of financial or other logistical support for the project. This would bring the total of local authorities involved in projects under the Pool Programme to 58. This leaves a total of 56 local authorities not represented in the Programme in one form or another. Of these, the spatial analysis of pools with some form of public access provided by ILAM (and through internal sources) shows that 31 already have pools. Of the remaining 25 local authorities almost all are located in rural areas. (See **Appendix F** for list of local authorities without public pools and not in 2000 pool programme).

5 CHAPTER FIVE: EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

The main components of the Programme have already been outlined in Chapter Three, describing how the Department deals with applications for funding under the Pool Programme. This Chapter examines in more detail the various elements of the Programme, the assessment process, project criteria, the views of local authorities on the main aspects of the administrative process, timing of drawdown of payments, project review and administrative costs.

5.1 THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Feasibility Reports are required in respect of new pool proposals and Preliminary Reports in respect of refurbishment/replacement proposals under Programme criteria and these are prepared by the relevant local authority. Following the initial assessment of individual applications by officers of the Department in conjunction with the Office of Public Works a detailed submission is made to the Minister with a recommendation on whether to approve the Feasibility Report/Preliminary Report. The quality of Feasibility Reports is good reflecting the input of professional consultancy advice and covering all major aspects including location, scale, size and features of a facility, catchment data, anticipated usage and the management plan. As a result, in the period from 1999 to end 2002 only one of the initial reports was the subject of a negative recommendation and this was on the basis of an insufficient population base to sustain a viable operation. However in this case the Minister decided that the local authority could engage consultants whose report could then be examined in greater detail. In rare cases, omissions as to the location of existing or other public pools which would have had an impact on viability have been made. However, these were subsequently addressed.

A number of Feasibility Reports were not followed up due to changes in priority by the local authority and, in some cases, following requests to the Department not to proceed with processing the applications further pending further consideration by the local authority.

That so many of the feasibility and preliminary reports proved satisfactory reflects the effort made by local authorities to have their cases properly presented, the underlying strength of their

proposals, the poor state of the pools needing refurbishment or replacement and the demand for new facilities throughout the country.

ILAM, in its submission to this Review, puts the view that specialist pool consultants should also be employed to ensure correct and detailed design specifications and that they should be involved at the early design stage and be part of the Project team. ILAM also emphasises that the procedure set out in the Guidelines provided that local authorities are required to invite outline proposals from at least three consultants.¹⁶ Indicating the increasingly professional approach by local authorities to project evaluation, specialist design consultants are now commonly used.

5.2 PROJECT CRITERIA

The Guidelines specify various criteria at the initial Feasibility Report stage by which to assess projects

- Location of the proposed pool
- The economic viability of the proposed pool, including market research to establish demand
- Estimated cost and suitability of the site
- The estimated likely effect on other swimming pools.
- An up to date estimate of the overall capital cost of the proposed pool.

The examination of these are discussed further below.

Location of the proposed pool.

Applications show that local authorities have given detailed consideration to this aspect, particularly where there may be several sites with potential for pool development. However at Departmental level, consideration as to the position of a pool in relation to other pools in county, regional and national contexts has reflected the fact that the programme is a support to local

¹⁶ Submission from Killian Fisher, CEO, ILAM, dated 22nd April, 2004

authorities in discharging their roles in providing local amenities/infrastructure and that ultimately it is they who are responsible for both capital and ongoing running costs. Consequently once projects satisfy the technical criteria and meet national goals in terms of the provision of sports facilities and achieve social inclusion, no attempt is made to "second guess" the local authority on the of the project. However, it is increasingly common for public swimming pool projects to be located adjacent to other public sports facilities e.g. all-weather pitches, local soccer/GAA/rugby grounds etc.

Estimated cost and suitability of the site.

The work of OPW has focused on costs and suitability aspects and, in its view, costs have tended to reflect in a realistic way the scale of what was being proposed. The OPW have not had to raise fundamental objections about suitability of a site in any case. Occasionally the level of consultants' fees has been raised as an issue but no serious problem has arisen in this area, and any queries by OPW have been answered satisfactorily. The overall percentage levels of consultants' fees, excluding VAT, at about 12.5%-13% of costs has remained static in the last five years.

The economic viability of the proposed pool, including market research to establish demand.

Feasibility Reports have presented detailed information on the demographics of the area and assess estimated local needs. This data has been based on census data available through the Central Statistics Office.

The Department evaluates insofar as it can, the viability of what is proposed and of the various elements of the funding package. A systematic and detailed in-house re-evaluation of location, demand, operational assumptions, management systems etc. is not made given the fact that the projects are ultimately the responsibility of local authorities. If devolved government is to operate, local authorities must be free to make local decisions and be accountable locally for these decisions. A central Government Department does not necessarily have the knowledge to

weigh up detailed local considerations. The Department's role is to ensure that the project fits within national criteria established for the Programme.

The estimated likely effect on other swimming pools.

While the competitive effect of other pools is analysed by consultants in feasibility reports in terms of the impact on the project under analysis, the effect on the business of those other public pools by the new project has not, understandably, featured in Feasibility Reports. This can be accounted for by the nature of the local authority/county structure of the Programme which does not encourage an inter-county dialogue - especially where the effect may arise in respect of another county's pools. The Feasibility Reports naturally tend to highlight the potential demand for a pool, regardless of the potential effect on other public pools outside of the immediate catchment. However, the reality is that with the relatively low level of public pool availability throughout the country and the increasing awareness by local authorities of the need for viability, significant overlaps do not occur.

Estimate of the overall capital cost of the proposed pool.

These have been reasonably well estimated and projects going to construction, in terms of cost, have kept to the tender price. This reflects the tightness of the approval process, where different aspects of the project must be approved before being permitted to proceed to construction. Indeed it probably also reflects the fact that the grant amount is capped at a monetary maximum with any cost overruns being the responsibility of local authorities.

5.3 LOCAL AUTHORITIES VIEWS OF THE PROGRAMME

A Questionnaire (See **Appendix G**) was sent to twenty local authorities which had built or were building pools in the period from 1999 to Spring 2004 and they were asked for views on the Programme and the administrative process. It was felt that those local authorities with a recent knowledge and experience of the Programme would most usefully respond to what is a detailed series of questions.

The questionnaire sought to elicit information under a number of broad headings and so provide a useful framework for the examination of core administrative issues–

- The Programme
- Administration
- Guidelines
- Financial aspects/ Reducing Costs
- Role for Private Sector
- County Development Plan
- General Views

The majority of the 20 local authorities gave substantive replies under the above headings as set out in the following paragraphs.

The Programme

All but one had a positive or highly positive view of the Programme. One negative view emerged where a proposal had not been grant aided under the Programme. This application had not progressed because the proposed location was in a sparsely populated rural area and viability was open to question. In this instance, the Department requested an updated feasibility report from the local authority which has yet to be submitted.

Administration

All but one had a positive or highly positive view of the administration by the Department. One felt there had been too much involvement on what were regarded as technical points. Others felt that too much time had elapsed between approval in principle and the actual go ahead and that this had a detrimental effect on the level and value of the local contribution.

One response raised the issue of the delay between the submission of a tender price requiring the Minister's approval and receipt of that approval, possibly some time after the standard 90 day period for price validity in a tender had elapsed. This had on occasion led to an increase in the

tender price afterwards and to an extra cost to the local authority that it would have wished to have avoided. Local authorities have argued that once the contract documents have been approved by the Minister, the next and last stage (approval of the tender price and award of grant) should be given, virtually as a matter of course. However, the typical timeframe for the construction of a pool is 12/18 months, with a corresponding grant drawdown period of 18/24 months or possibly longer. Consequently grant approval in any year will impose financial obligations on the Departmental subhead for the following year or years. The instances where delays have arisen are where there has been uncertainty as to the amount of capital subhead monies available in following years. In addition, in 2004 the institution of new loan approval requirements were introduced whereby a Government "cap" on the level of local authority borrowing was introduced into the administrative system and a new tracking of all local authority borrowings in respect of Arts, Sports and Tourism projects had to be set up. The Department's practice was that Tender approval would not be given for a project unless it was reasonably clear that there would be sufficient provision in the following year's estimates to meet the grant drawdown requirements - thereby ensuring that a tender price could be approved. However, the introduction by the Government of a 5 year multi-annual capital programme for all Departments in 2004 and the subsequent adoption of a 7 Year National Development Plan considerably lessened the uncertainty in relation to the Programme capital allocations into the future with the consequently speeding up of the decision-making process.

Technical Guidelines

All but one had no criticism to make about the Guidelines. In that case it was felt that there was an overly rigid stance adopted. It would seem from replies that respondents were thinking only of the technical part of the Guidelines in answering this question (i.e. pool size, filtration issues etc.) and not the part of the Guidelines which set out the procedures to be followed. It might also be that the standard Department of Local Government/local authority funding schemes were so engrained that they were not challenged.

The lack of observations on the Guidelines may not capture the full picture. Department officials, specialist consultants and operators have highlighted much of the out of date nature of the

technical part of the Guidelines (many of which are the same since they were first published in the early 1970s). Comments have been made about the pool specifications now being inappropriate on account of the different requirements of users – necessitating in some projects provision of separate adult swimming and learner pools, fewer lanes and more attention to the slope of depths. Other issues that have arisen include "best practice" in relation to disinfection e.g. ozone versus chlorine, issues about tiling, the most appropriate form of insulation for pipe work, access to the pool area for the disabled, the design of changing rooms, shower water management, moveable floors, etc.

In its submission ILAM, in criticising the technical aspects of the current Guidelines, say that technical standards "need to be clearly agreed, advocated and reinforced in examples of good practice. These already exist through ILAM Ireland, Sports Council of N. Ireland and Sport England and therefore would not require a large investment by DAST". Swim Ireland too points to the importance of greater co-ordination at the technical level early on in the decision-making processes –

"We are of the view that a more coordinated process with respect to the consideration of pool requirements prior to design and construction is required. Swimming is a multi-disciplinary sport (including diving, water-polo, synchronized swimming etc) - issues such as moveable floors can be required for multi-use and Swim Ireland could assist with this type of prior pool construction advice."¹⁷

The Department response, to date, has been to react to technical issues as and when they arise and to acknowledge the different requirements of individual local authorities. Health and Safety issues are, of course, the responsibility of local authorities. Differences between leisure and competitive/training pools for instance, have been accommodated in approving the construction of two pools with four rather than five lanes on the basis of separate learning pools being provided. OPW provides excellent architectural advice on a range of building and swimming pool issues but it is accepted that the detailed technical aspects of modern pools requires access to a very specific range of knowledge. A means of tapping into the changing technical environment is required. An option that presents itself and one that offers a route to offset the technical expertise shortfall within the Department may lie in bringing professional expertise

¹⁷ Submission from Sarah Keane, CEO, Swim Ireland dated 16th June, 2004

together in a regular forum under the aegis of the Department so as to permit technical issues to¹ be discussed, evaluated and agreed and for the findings to be circulated to be incorporated into the guidelines. The Department should establish a standing Technical Committee to bring together the relevant expertise to look at technical issues on an ongoing basis so that it can react as needed to changes in thinking and practice.

Terms and Conditions and Timing of Payment of Grants

No concerns were raised about these by respondents and there is no evidence indicating that this has been an issue of contention - projects given tender approval normally proceed to construction shortly thereafter and grant payments are made in respect of applications promptly. It is noticeable, however, that delays have occurred where Deeds of Covenant and Charge have been required. Deeds of Covenant and Charge are required in respect of projects being proposed by third parties such as community or private sector but supported by local authorities. The Deed is to ensure that the State's investment is secure insofar as public availability of the facility is concerned and that social inclusion provisions are protected.

The Department itself has, in 2003 and 2004, made changes to the terms and conditions in order to tighten up administrative aspects of the procedure. The changes provide for

- the substantive commencement of the project within six months of the date of the Department's letter of grant approval ("sunset" clause),
- reduction of the period of time that a pool must be leased or owned for public purposes (from 25 to 15 years). This reflects the fact that the grant is increasingly below the total capital cost and is now the norm in relation to other sports grants,
- a formal reminder of the need for project review,
- the local authority's formal acceptance of the terms and conditions,
- specific social inclusion requirement in the Deed of Covenant and Charge in joint local authority/private sector projects, requiring the involvement of the local County/City Development Board.
- provision to ensure satisfactory completion of a project.

The Department has acted to strengthen the Government's social inclusion requirements, that is, adequate public access, at reasonable times and at reasonable prices for the disadvantaged in joint venture projects. This is achieved by requiring, in the Deed of Covenant and Charge, that the relevant Local County or City Development Board confirm that access arrangements to address social inclusion objectives are consistent with its strategy for economic social and cultural development. In this way, responsibility is devolved to the Local Authority and the Local Partnerships through the County Development Board for ensuring compliance with the social inclusion requirements.

Financial Aspects/Costs

A diversity of points were made.

- Several respondents felt, in hindsight, that the involvement of professional designers at an earlier point in the process would have further reduced later operational costs (e.g. by adapting the physical infrastructure to maximise efficiency e.g. one reception area).

Several local authorities noted the costs arising from the number of stages and suggested that fewer stages would reduce consultant design team costs.¹⁸

It is possible that costs may be affected by the number of stages a project goes through from initiation to final approval - Feasibility/Preliminary Report, Contract Document, Tender and Construction. However, it might be that the number of individual stages requiring specific Government approval can be amalgamated. Some of the Programme's feasibility study requirements could be performed in-house, for example, in relation to assessing the size of a population catchment etc. but such cost savings are matters for the local authority.

One respondent felt that consultants' costs might be a fixed cost and not set at a percentage of project cost. In looking at this issue it is necessary to note that it is the local authority as the commissioning/sponsoring and negotiating authority that agrees the fee with consultant design teams and not the Department.

¹⁹ The term "consultant design teams" is used in a broad way and encompasses all types of consultants used in a capital project including architects, quantity surveyers, engineers, and other specialist consultants such as landscape gardeners.

Within the construction industry, an "across the board" *guideline* scales of charges (depending on the size of the project) by consultants is in place. This scale of charges is reflected in the cost of swimming pool projects and consultants' fees are eligible for grant aid purposes. No set charge is approved by the Department and there is nothing to prevent a fixed charge being agreed between the parties to a building contract - if this can be achieved. However, as a matter of practice, the scale of charges has been approximately 12.5%-13.0% (excluding VAT) of the cost of pool projects. OPW examines the scale of charges being proposed to be agreed with consultants by a local authority and if the estimated amount looks unreasonable (having regard to the norms being operated in the building trade) and in any instance where the percentage is proposed to be more than 12.5%-13.0%, then that Office usually recommends that this Department seek an explanation from the local authority. In a handful of instances where the % price agreed has been a little higher than 13.0% this has been explained by the complexity of the project which has given rise to a greater need than usual of specialist input by consultants.

One respondent referred to the high energy costs involved – it being reported that there had been significant price increases in electricity charges in the previous three years.

Consultants' reports suggest that keeping costs of energy down is one of the reasons so much preliminary work has to go into the planning of pools and why older ones have to be replaced. The Guidelines recognise that initiatives such as the use of pool blankets at night-time reduce heat loss thereby reducing energy costs. The suggestion to establish a standing technical committee should be of help in the early identification of new technologies in pool design that would further reduce energy costs.

Role for Private Sector

The views of local authorities on whether the private or public sector, or a combination of both, should take charge of the operation of the pool usually reflected any earlier decision by that local authority in this area. The majority favour professional private operators with one in this group favouring a non-profit-making private company. Several local authorities, however, opted for a partnership arrangement. An emerging option finding favour that seeks to overcome the tensions between private and public sector ethos is the formation of a special purpose company owned

and controlled by the local authority but which would sub-contract the day to day operation of a pool to the private sector. Such arrangements have been in existence for up to five years. The role of the private sector is discussed in more detail in Chapters Six and Eight.

Views of a General nature

Several respondents stressed that the building of stand alone pools was not a viable proposition. Many noted that the overall level of grant was increasingly insufficient to meet the cost of projects. One put the view that prioritisation should be on the basis of population. Another said there should be a policy distinction made between urban and rural areas and that a purely "population" criterion would be unfair to be applied in respect of a rural area. The issue of including other facilities as part of a pool project is discussed further in Chapter Ten. The issue of locating new pools according to population and as between rural and urban areas is examined in Chapter Seven.

5.4 DRAWDOWN OF ESTIMATES PROVISION

The Department did not utilise its full estimates provision each year to end 2002. Expenditure over the period to 2005 is as set out in **Table 5.1** hereunder:

Table 5.1: Expenditure 2000-2004

	Estimates	Expenditure
2000	€19.3m	€7.4m
2001	€14.6m	€8.1m
2002	€15.3m	€3.9m
2003	€9.0m	€9.0m
2004	€15.0m	€17.6m (incl. supplementary)
2005	€32.0m	€14.1m
2006	€32.0m	€22.8m

Expenditure since the new round was launched in 2000 was slow when compared with the funding available. Some €19.4 million of the €57 million financial package was spent to end of 2002. However when compared with the years preceding 2000 the level of expenditure shows an increase. Reflecting the level of activity in the Programme by end of 2002, the allocation for 2003 was reduced to €9m. However in 2003 actual expenditure picked up substantially with all of the €9 million being spent in that year. The higher rate of expenditure in 2003 also fed into the Estimates process for 2004 - with €15 million being provided (actual spend €17.6m). The substantial pick-up in activity since 2003, increasing in scale in 2004, led to €32 million being provided for the pool programme in 2005 (including a provision of €3.7m in Budget 2005 in respect of a special needs pool for St. Michaels House) and €32.3m again in 2006. It is clear, however, that while the yearly pattern of drawdown still lags behind the annual estimate there is still an upward trajectory overall. The reasons for the gradually increasing levels of drawdown are examined in Chapter Six.

Finally, there has been some delay in bringing to a conclusion the drawdown of several of the final 5% retention payments that are due to projects. These retention amounts are not available for drawdown until the project has been signed off as fully complete in accordance with grant agreement and planning requirements. The replies to the questionnaires on this point have been circumspect on this matter. In one instance there was a dispute between the operator and the local authority about what facilities were to be provided on the site. In another instance there seems to have been outstanding issues between the architect and the relevant pool controlling authority. In other cases the reasons reflect disputes with the developer as to the quality of finish. In this regard contract documents usually refer to particular products or their "equivalent" – according to leisure specialists, this is the source of much disagreement at "micro" level. As a result formal grant closure of many of the projects has tended to be delayed for some years. This issue shows the need for pro-active project completion follow-up by both the Department and the relevant local authority. As the experience pointed to the need to increase the requirement for early formal completion of a project, the Department decided at end of 2004 to increase the retention amount from 5% to 10%.

5.5 PROJECT REVIEW

Under the Guidelines, not later than two years following the date of completion, the local authority is asked to prepare a short Report, reviewing their experience of all aspects of the project. In no case in recent years has this work been done at the initiative of the local authority. The first attempt at such reviews has occurred through the Department's Questionnaire prepared in the context of this Review. The mixed quality of the responses, some leaving important parts of the Questionnaire with no comment, shows that a stronger form of requirement is needed if this facet of the Programme's terms and conditions are to be properly fulfilled. It appears that once the pool has become operational, the local authority sees no further role for the Department. However, local authorities are no doubt required to report to their own councils on costs, usage etc. which means that much data is actually available and should be submitted to the Department. In its submission ILAM emphasise the need for proper project review.

5.6 ADMINISTRATION COSTS

The administrative costs in the period from 1999-2002 were €489,000 – see **Appendix H**. In the same period there were 30 "principal" actions, that is, approval of significant steps in the approval process – of feasibility, preliminary, contract, tender stages. Taken in comparison with the amount of expenditure under the Programme in this period €25.1 million, the cost equates to under 2% of the overall expenditure which is considered reasonable when compared with the administration of the Sports Capital Programme which was 3.6% of overall expenditure (the latter figure in turn compares with 7-9% for administration of nearest equivalent expenditure in N. Ireland).¹⁹ In the period 2003 to 2006 Pool Programme administration costs falls to 1.1% of the overall expenditure (€63.5m in that period).

The profile and level of staff involvement was weighted in the period 1999 to 2002 at the executive level. This reflects a lack of resources available in the Department to deal with policy issues in this area at the higher levels. Since the beginning of 2003 the administration of the Programme was changed with the creation of an A.P. position and suppression of an E.O. and a job-sharing C.O. position. The re-structuring facilitated faster forward movement of projects through the Programme and more regular contact with more senior local authority officials. The

¹⁹ Page 69, Sports Capital Programme 1999-2002 Expenditure Review Report

number of projects being approved for grant aid has also increased substantially from 3 (in period 2000 to end 2002) to 32 (2003 to 2006 inclusive) which translated into the much higher level of expenditure than was the case before 2003.

The structural change at A.P. level has enabled an expansion in the amount of time available for analysis of projects and was needed to respond to the increasing complexity of projects being presented for approval. "Mixed" projects (i.e. projects with gym and other sports indoor and outdoor facilities, libraries, crèche, etc....) with potentially high capital costs (in region of €20 million) and with possible long-term operational cost implications are becoming more prevalent and need closer evaluative attention. Other examples of "mixed" projects needing close scrutiny are those packaged as joint venture/ partnerships where the Department's main focus is to ensure that public access and social inclusion aspects of the projects are adequately addressed by the local authority.

In summary local authorities have expressed themselves satisfied with the quality of service provided by Department officials in the period in question. However, in addition to normal assessment of projects within their own terms, wider issues of population catchment in the context of regional and national distribution of public pool facilities should also be examined, a task handicapped due to a national audit of pool facilities not having been put in place before now. Finally a standing technical expertise Group to facilitate provision of up to date advice to local authorities in relation to technical matters should be established as a priority.

6 CHAPTER SIX: PERFORMANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAMME

Earlier commentary on the evolution of the current round of the Programme shows that formal targets were not set other than the delivery of the maximum number of local authority pools from within a given 3 year capital envelope. However, more specific “objectives” can be deduced having regard to the various strategic statements and policy commentaries made from time to time about the Programme. Such objectives are examined to see the extent to which they have been, or are being achieved. It is to be noted that targets are not set regarding usage/participation, presumably as these are seen as initially being the primary concern of the promoting local authority who have ultimate responsibility for issues surrounding viability. However, Departmental Statements of Strategy as they relate to the Sports brief, do establish an overall Goal of increased participation in sport.

6.1 IMPLEMENTING THE CURRENT ROUND OF THE PROGRAMME

In mid 2001 internal Department consideration of the progress of the Programme was conducted and it was decided, in view of the number of projects still on hands, the level of contingent liabilities involved as well as the slow rate of progress towards construction by local authorities, that the Programme should remain closed to new applicants until mid 2002 at least. At the same time it was decided to try and speed up the process of approval. It was also decided that the £5m (€6.348m) limit on eligible expenditure (and therefore the maximum grant available) would continue as a way of ensuring that local authorities would not get involved in projects that were too costly and that this limit should be retained until the current round of the Programme is completed. In mid 2002 all supervising local authorities of such projects were asked to outline the current status of their projects. Accordingly, towards the end of 2002 a further internal assessment of the Programme was undertaken with a view to assessing the work and position of the Programme in the post 2000 environment (the Programme having been presented as a three year programme from 2000). This assessment evaluated the progress to date and identified projects that seemed not to be progressing. All local authorities had responded with positive views as to their progress. A number were assessed by the Department as not having progressed at a sufficiently fast pace. Backlogs of work of up to three months in the OPW (due to staff shortages) were also noted as impeding progress.

57 projects are now regarded as being dealt with within the Programme. The profile of applications made in 2000 shows that more than half of the total number of local authorities (63 out of 114) availed themselves of the opportunity given in 2000 to develop pool projects, some jointly between the relevant county and local town council. Of those that did not apply, half already had pools with some form of public access and the rest were without pools, although most of the latter did have access to public pools in nearby towns or locations within reasonable travelling distance.

In 2000, the predominant construction activity was in the provision of new or replacement pools – with 5 projects already at or near completion that year in Enniscorthy, Navan, Wicklow and Arklow and Monaghan (the latter a minor refurbishment only). In 2001, 3 projects were completed in Gorey-Courtown, Dundalk and Roscommon.

In the context of "identifying the level and trend of Programme activity" as per the terms of reference for this Review, as of end 2006, of the 57 projects in the Programme, 23 projects had been completed and are open or had finished construction. See **Appendix I**. A further 15 are under construction or are about to start construction. Another 5 were out to tender. 19 projects – representing just over one third of the total number of projects - had yet to have tenders approved. It is interesting to compare this with the record prior to the initiation of this round of the Programme in 2000. Records indicate that throughout the whole of the 1990s there were only 2 new pools built and 12 substantial refurbishments under the Programme. During the 1990s the most significant funding for new pool projects actually came not from the Pool Programme but from Sports Capital Programmes which funded four projects during that period.

Appendix E sets out the status of projects on hands and shows the current state of play as of end 2006. The figures show that many projects, while not yet at the funding approval point, are continuing to progress steadily. In mid 2000, when applications closed for inclusion in the current round of the Programme there were 54 projects on hands including 44 at the early preliminary report stage. 7 of the remainder were already under construction - arising from the earlier round of the Programme. Using the number of "stage" decisions by the Minister as a

benchmark of activity, there were 18 in the period from mid 2000 to end 2001, 12 to end 2002, 13 to end 2003, 18 to end 2004, 23 to end 2005 and 20 to end 2006. As can be seen the rate of activity shows a steady and then faster pace from 2003 onwards, as many projects come closer to construction stage. Five pools, 2 new and 3 replacement, opened to the public in 2006.

In the context of the 1999 ILAM Report, 23 of 31 public pools identified and listed – see **Appendix D** - were the subject of applications to the Department under the current round of the Programme from 2000, leaving 8 of the ILAM identified pools outside of the current round. Of those 23, 16 have already or are receiving funding allocations with the remaining 7 projects at varying advanced stages of preparedness.

Table 6.1 below shows a breakdown of the initial 55 projects in terms of location in or adjacent to RAPID areas and National Spatial Strategy designation.

Table 6.1: Status of projects under RAPID and status under National Spatial Strategy

Table 6.1				
County/City Council	Applications	Projects	Gateway/Hub	RAPID
Clare	1	Ennis	Hub	Yes - Specific areas
Cork County	3	Cobh Dunmanway Youghal	- - -	- - Yes
Cork City	1	Churchfield	Gateway	Yes
Donegal	3	Ballybofey/Stranorlar Buncrana Letterkenny	- - Gateway	- - -
Dublin City	3	Ballyfermot Ballymun Finglas	Gateway	URBAN(otherwise would be RAPID) Yes - Specific areas Yes – Specific areas
Dublin South	2	Clondalkin Jobstown	- -	Yes – Specific areas Yes – Specific areas
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	2	Dundrum Glenalbyn	- -	- -
Fingal	1	Skerries	-	-
Galway	3	Ballinasloe Loughrea Tuam	- - Hub	- - Yes
Kerry	4	Ballybunion Killarney Tralee (2)	- Hub Hub	- - Yes – Specific Areas
Kildare	2	Athy Naas	- -	Yes -
Kilkenny	1	Kilkenny	Hub	Yes – Specific Areas
Laois	2	Portarlinton Portlaoise	-	-
Limerick County	1	Askeaton	-	-
Limerick City	1	Grove Island	Gateway	Yes – Specific Areas
Longford	1	Longford town	-	Yes
Louth	2	Drogheda Dundalk	- Gateway	Yes – Specific Areas Yes – Specific Areas
Mayo	2	Castlebar Claremorris	Hub -	- -
Meath	1	Navan	-	Yes – Specific Areas
Monaghan	2	Monaghan (2)	Hub	-
Offaly	4	Birr Clara Edenderry Tullamore	- - - Gateway	- - - -
Roscommon	2	Roscommon Town Ballaghaderreen	- -	- -
Tipperary North	2	Roscrea Thurles	- -	- -
Tipperary South	1	Clonmel	-	Yes – Specific Areas
Wexford	4	Enniscorthy Gorey/Courtown New Ross Wexford town	- Hub	- - Yes Yes – Specific Areas
Wicklow	4	Arklow Bray Greystones Wicklow	- - - -	- Yes – Specific Areas - Yes – Specific Areas
	55		14	22

The Table shows that 22 of the initially accepted 55 applications are in, or adjacent to, RAPID areas. Of the 22, 19 have been grant aided and, as of end 2006, with the remaining 3 at advanced stages of preparedness. Thus, it can be concluded that these projects in the RAPID areas have progressed very satisfactorily.

The grant regime from 2000 provided for a higher percentage grant rate of 90% for projects located in what used to be known as "designated disadvantaged areas" but it was decided subsequently in the Department that the RAPID designation should be utilised instead, giving as it does, a more accurate benchmark of disadvantage. The differential as between 80% or 90% has not been a significant factor in practice – since all applications for new pools in green-field sites and replacement pools attract the same maximum grant amount available of €3.8million, arising from increases in construction costs over the past few years.

One of the objectives suggested for the programme was to support the establishment by local authorities of viable leisure centre operations and this issue formed part of the questionnaire issued to local authorities.

The responses relating to the profitability of pool operations are summarised in 6.2 below.

Table 6.2: Profitability of pool operations

Pool	Cost of Project	% grant amount	Profit/Loss 2003	% set aside for Maintenance 2003
A	2,380,758	80%	Profit	10%
B	4,566,382	83%	Loss	3%
C	3,787,212	71%	Profit	8%
D	3,470,600	91%	Profit	7%
E	180,000	48%	Profit	8%
F	3,640,000	80%	Loss	7%
G	3,690,594	73%	Profit	14%
H	6,380,000	60%	Profit	4%
I	2,730,204	86%	Loss	0%
J	6,471,064	59%	Profit	2%
K	5,849,000	65%	Break-even	11%

Table 6.2 shows 3 of 11 pools surveyed operating at a loss.

In one instance, the degree of profitability is greater and more sustained than in any of the other pool operations surveyed. A factor in this is the degree to which the pool is oriented towards "learning to swim" category of visitor as compared with the "recreational" visitor. This would suggest that a focus on targeting local schools as daytime customers has considerable financial advantages for local authorities.

Local authorities have indicated that where pool operations have sustained a loss, it is suggested this can be related, in part, to the absence of "dry" facilities, which tend to make the entire facility profitable. Where "dry" facilities have since been provided, a modest measure of profitability has been secured. As regards heavy cost factors, such as maintenance and energy costs, these are a significant burden.

The measure of profitability can be influenced by the amount of funds set aside for long-term maintenance. However, the maintenance costs can be low in the case of facilities that are only opened a few years and which do not need significant maintenance. In addition, with new or refurbished pools there is an initial "honeymoon period" in which many people join up to membership programmes with the intention of utilising the facilities on a regular basis but then don't do so. Profitability can also be affected by the coming on stream of newer private leisure facilities. Therefore, while it can be expected that the initial years of trading will reflect a more favourable position, a mid term analysis might warrant a more cautious outcome. The ideal is that pools operate without the need for local authority subsidy, while at the same time meeting social inclusion needs, requirement for reasonable prices and good opening hours, and, adequate provision for routine and routine maintenance costs. There are indications that local authorities are adopting a much more "businesslike" attitude to these projects with special purpose companies and joint venture/partnership options more common although they do have a remit to provide socially inclusive local facilities.

ILAM, in its submission, observes that "DAST should see its role as not just the funding of swimming pools in building terms but should also strongly advocate good practice in terms of management of such facilities.....DAST can ensure that successful applicants to the programme have fully thought through the implications of their project over a life cycle of the building i.e.

25-30 years as opposed to just the build and opening stages." This raises an issue as to the degree to which the Department should be involved in guiding local authorities on operational matters. It has been the position of the Department that the programme is one of providing grant aid to a local authority for its project with the onus on local authorities to ensure proper project analysis in accordance with Department of Finance guidelines on Capital Appraisal. This, of course, includes appraisal for the whole life of the project. In addition, the Department has ensured insofar as possible, that "devolved government" applies to the programme by leaving as much of the responsibility for the project with the local authority. An example of this Departmental position is where a joint private sector/local authority project is proposed. An important element in the approval process is to ensure that social inclusion issues in terms of access, pricing etc. are adequately addressed. Rather than attempt to dictate such issues centrally, use is made of already established local fora to ensure that decisions reflect what is required to address inherently local requirements. In such cases, the Department requires the relevant City/County Development Board, with its wide social inclusion remit, to sign off on access/charges issues.

Another objective was to involve the private sector, in terms of providing capital and expertise. In the period 2000-2006 the Department provided grant aid to 3 projects which had significant private sector involvement.

However, in most of the recently completed pool projects under the Programme professional leisure management companies from the private sector have been engaged by local authorities to operate the facilities on a commercial basis. At the same time such operators are contracted to provide public access in ways that meet broad social inclusion objectives of local authorities. Such facilities include those in 9 of the 13 completed projects as of end 2004.

At the moment, the various arrangements and accompanying guidelines in place for PPPs are geared towards major and complex capital projects with significant ongoing maintenance requirements, i.e. projects having a capital cost of €20 million or more and the advice to the Department has been that the PPP model should only be used where it is appropriate and where it can deliver value for money. Conversely, it would not be appropriate where the transaction costs of pursuing a PPP are disproportionate to the value of the project. The scale of pool project costs

being in the region of €8 million have not been seen by the Department as being of sufficiently high cost to justify the extra resources involved in pursuing a formal PPP approach.²⁰ From the Department's perspective, there has been no objection to the involvement of the private sector provided the generally accepted operational considerations of a public pool form part of the project. This matter is addressed later in chapter Eight.

6.2 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The number of projects completed or under construction as of end 2006 – 38 out of 57 – well over half of the projects on hands - shows an overall satisfactory rate of progress, particularly when taking into account the facts that a further 5 projects are at tender approval stage and a further 8 at contract document stage, along with some degree of forward movement on almost all the other projects. As a result of the activity, the completion of projects under the current round of the Programme can now be contemplated within the next few years. The record in relation to locating pools in RAPID areas, by end of 2006, is a notable success.

On analysing further the reasons behind overall rates of progress it is instructive to look at the dynamics of the Programme as a whole as it gives an indication as to possible improvements in the Programme in future rounds. The responses by local authorities and pool consultants to specific queries from this Department on individual projects, and general discussions with officials and consultants have all provided insights into the reasons why some projects have progressed quickly and others not so.

On the question of financial viability of stand-alone swimming pools, it is evident that with the increasing focus on value for money/commercial return on investment percolating from central Government to local government, local authorities, while in a position to arrange the initial capital cost, are now increasingly conscious of longer term running costs associated with major capital projects. The public demand is for modern high-class swimming facilities with associated and significant Health and Safety requirements (e.g. air handling, water filtration,

²⁰ Department of Finance set out in a letter dated 8th October, 2001 that there were several considerations which would militate against a PPP approach in the pool programme and that individual pool projects do not strictly comply with the definition of a viable PPP in terms of scale and optimal transfer of risk to the private sector.

heating etc.). This means that the cost of a modern public stand alone swimming pool is such that revenue generated on a "pay per swim" basis only is probably not sufficient to repay capital and cover operating costs, and this is a regular theme of feasibility reports. Consequently it has been becoming a pattern of sports and leisure development that swimming pools become part of a larger sports/recreation facility incorporating a gym/fitness area, games area, jacuzzi, treatment rooms, cafeteria and perhaps part of a larger sports complex with indoor and outdoor playing surfaces etc. As a result, the scale of local authority sports developments has grown considerably. At present the cost of a multi-use complex (including core pool/fitness/outdoor leisure features) has been up to €20million. Large multi-use facilities in Finglas, Letterkenny, Ballymun and Ballyfermot all illustrate the pattern of development favoured by the local authorities. To accommodate their greater brief, local authorities have had to come up with solutions which have included greater recourse to loans, sale of land, use of development levies, local voluntary contributions and involvement of the private sector in pool financing, construction and operation. All of this has consequences for a future Programme. Firstly, the construction of a green-field stand-alone pool is not likely to be particularly attractive to a local authority, although specific local requirements might decide otherwise. Stand-alone pools are therefore less likely to be constructed in the future - although it can be anticipated that refurbishment proposals may relate to existing stand alone pools. In addition, the maximum grant aid of €3.8 million now also falls considerably short of the original grant rates of 80/90%, although it must be borne in mind that these % grant rates date back to the 80's/90's when very little funding was actually available on an annual basis. The cost of the modern standard swimming pool as of 2004 is approximately €7m including VAT. However, a consortium of leisure facility design specialists has recently been developing a standard pool "model" and has suggested that a 6 lane pool inclusive of "dry" gym could, in theory, cost just over €5 million. This model has yet to be tested in practice, however, but several local authorities are exploring this option. As things stand, in terms of the eligible pool costs, the grant rate now stands at less than 50% for the eligible pool element alone leaving a local authority with a substantial capital shortfall to find.

There appears to be increasing strong policy discussion at local level as to number and location of pools, i.e. where and how many public pools should be located in a county. A plan to have a new pool in one location could put at risk the sustainability of an existing pool not many miles away. As a consequence, pool projects in that county can be put on hold by the local authority while such issues are resolved. The "political" nature of the decision as to location can make the resolution of such problems difficult and the simple solution of "doing nothing" can win out against having to make a decision on priority. Alternatively, with a green-field site project, several towns may vie for the facility. What can complicate matters even further are proposals from the private voluntary or business sector to build pools with public access and this can lead to complex discussions as to what constitutes a public pool or a rivalry as between pure local authority led projects and projects seeking the support of local authorities.

The Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme does not formally require dialogue between local authorities in different countries. Accordingly there is no particular requirement or mechanism for local authorities to come to agreement with each other. By way of contrast, in respect of projects to develop new local libraries it is interesting that there is a specific role for the county manager to rank prospective projects and he or she is required to certify the ranking in writing before such a proposal will be considered by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Inclusion of such a condition in the Pool Programme might help remove a stumbling block to progress of projects where the approval of one project in a county is immediately perceived as demoting or destroying the prospects for another, with the result that nothing happens.

The Programme decision making process is a layered and tiered technical, administrative and political decision-making process, both at local and Departmental level, which means that the speed at which projects can be moved from planning to implementation can appear slow. It would be not unusual for projects to span 10 or more years, that is, from initiation of an idea to a facility being open for business. For one thing it can be anticipated that several changes of staff, both at local authority and Department level, can be expected to work on a project before it can be constructed.

The decision making process at present requires up to four separate decisions for the Minister – approval of Feasibility Report, Preliminary Report, Contract Documents and finally Tender and this can be interpreted as slowing progress on projects. However, this is not necessarily the case. Each of these procedures fulfils different functions inherent to project development. However, the net effect of the 4 stage approval procedure is that the process is effectively 8 stages, with the "file" having to complete 4 stages at local level and a similar passage at central Government level.

The question of streamlining the process must be addressed, even simply to remove the appearance of undue bureaucratic involvement, without of course compromising the detailed appraisal and the commitment of public funds. Given that the projects are not major projects in overall county or Government expenditure levels, it should seem possible to devise a more streamlined approval process.

6.3 EFFECTS OF THE CURRENT ROUND OF THE PROGRAMME ON OTHER PUBLIC SWIMMING FACILITIES

Because of the number of projects still remaining to be dealt with under the Programme, new applications are not currently being accepted and there are now various locations where the provision of public pools has no formal mechanism through which to obtain central fund assistance. In **Table 6.1** it was identified that 8 local authority pools identified as needing refurbishment in the 1999 ILAM Report are not in the current Programme. These were either the subject of applications made too late to be included in the Programme (Douglas in Cork, Kells and Trim in Co. Meath, and Roxboro in Limerick) or were otherwise not the subject of applications in 2000 (in the Dublin area - Coolock, Sean McDermott Street, Crumlin and Rathmines pools).

Other local authority pools built or refurbished in the 1990s may soon, if not already, need overhaul, due to the passage of time since the 1999 ILAM report (whose cut-off point was 1980).

A third group of public pools which might wish to make application under a new round of the Pool Programme would include those funded previously under Sports Capital Programmes in the 1990s – these are in Galway, Sligo, Bishopstown in Cork and Athlone.

The Programme might also need to engage with a number of private pools which provide access to the public, run by voluntary committees, located in or adjacent to schools and training establishments, such as in Marian College, Ballsbridge and Templeogue College, Templeogue.

A fifth group relates to public outdoor pools of which there are known to be eleven in the country, of which only one is in the current Programme.

A sixth group relates to those who made applications after the cut off point in July, 2000 but who expected to have their applications considered when the Programme was re-opened in a relatively short time. One of these has, in the interim, raised not insignificant amounts of money through voluntary effort for its green-field site pool development.

A seventh and growing group can be seen as local authorities serving newer urban communities that have not had an opportunity to make application. These include high population urban areas with no pool facilities, (citing only by way of example – areas in greater Dublin area including Lucan, Leixlip) where the demographics are likely to sustain viable pool operations.

Certain counties, Leitrim and Carlow, do not have a local authority owned pool. At present the Department is aware informally that Leitrim County Council has managed to press ahead, without direct grant aid assistance to enable a pool with public access to be constructed. In County Carlow, there is only one voluntary committee led indoor pool in existence and the provision of a pool owned and controlled by the Council in conjunction with a large third level college, has been identified.

As the programme has not yet been reopened to new applicants, none of the above groupings can be assisted. This holds out the prospect of permanent closure of existing older pools occurring at any time such as happened with the former community pool at Presentation College in Bray

which was demolished in 2001. However, construction of a new public pool in Bray is due to commence in 2007.

While other pools currently closed should re-open in the next few years through assistance provided under the Programme, there will have been a gap in service lasting a number of years in Cobh, Drogheda, Monaghan, Thurles and Tuam.

Another effect of the Programme's closure is to give a degree of "priority" to projects that are listed in the Programme simply because the initial application was made before 31 July 2000 and where local priorities might have changed.

7 CHAPTER SEVEN: IMPACT ON USAGE, PARTICIPATION

Maximising usage of public swimming pools underlies the objectives as indicated in Chapter Six. Usage is addressed by local authorities in their feasibility reports and the Department's Statement of Strategy, 2005-2007, provides as one of the outcome indicators, improved levels of usage of public pools. However, the Department does not have up to date detailed data on actual participation rates as there is no requirement on local authorities to provide this information. This Review calls for "data on the impact of the programme in terms of increasing participation and usage particularly by those living in disadvantaged areas," to be achieved by "carrying out surveys of participation rates." Of background assistance is the outcome of earlier reviews of swimming participation and two of these are described. Also following is an analysis of the information provided in the Questionnaire that was circulated to the relevant local authorities. This included a request to measure the impact of the Programme on rates of usage.

7.1 SURVEYS

1996 National Survey of Participation in Swimming:

Early analysis of levels of participation in swimming in the State is reliant on a report published by the Department of Education in 1996 entitled "A National Survey of Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity". The findings in this report are based on data collected in 1994. The available data is important as it is used as a starting point for market research work on pools today in the preparation of Feasibility Reports by consultants. The 1996 report showed that the majority by a large margin of those surveyed choose activities in the "sport for all" category which have a high health and social rating.²¹ After walking, the second most popular activity was swimming which accounted for 17% of all respondents to the survey – representing in 1996, 425,000 people. However the survey was not specific as to rates of participation in swimming nor as to whether the swimming activity was in indoor pools or at the sea-side. The survey found that swimming was also regarded as popular throughout all age groups and all social categories, with higher socio-economic groups nearly twice as likely to take part as lower groups and more women (21%) than men (14%). Of those not yet involved, 8% of respondents said they would

²¹ "sport for all" category means activities that can be participated in from recreational to elite level and which are also recommended for the elderly and for those recovering from illness as part of healthy lifestyle practice.

like to become involved in swimming. A clear majority (72%) of those partaking in physical activity did not consider their involvement competitive. 63% thought public swimming pool provision inadequate and 69% rated Government support for swimming pools inadequate.

Consultants conducting feasibility studies emphasise that these figures cover both indoor and outdoor swimming activity and have to be seen as no more than a guide to potential usage – as well as being now nearly ten years old – and should be utilised only in the context of what other information can be obtained. In this regard where consultants are also in the business of operating pools, they also draw on information provided from their own practical business experience. This provides interesting information on the demographics of pool participation. All of this is factored in when consultants' estimates of usage underpinning a local authority proposal are submitted to this Department.

Of interest in relation to the findings is the breakdown by age. Table 7.1 gives a snapshot of the position in 1996 -

Table 7.1: Breakdown of pool users by age

Age	0-15 years	16-18yrs	19-34yrs	35+yrs
% of users	n/a	30%	23%	12%

Advice given through leisure trade consultants is that U.K. studies show that 1/3 of users were under the age of 15. Through other more localised surveys in Ireland three-quarters of visits from those over 14 years are identified as being in the 25yrs to 44 yrs age bracket.

The Irish Water Safety Association has been in negotiation with the Central Statistics Office to have the matter of swimming skills addressed in a future census form. They are seeking to obtain robust data on the percentage of the population who can swim. It would be helpful if this census included information as to the extent of usage of their swimming skills and the age groups involved.

National Safety Council Survey 1995/96²²

The provision of instruction in swimming and water safety in Irish primary schools during 1995/96 was surveyed by the National Safety Council during that period. The results were based on a stratified national sample of 280 primary schools.

The survey concluded that, in 1996, almost four in ten schools provided instruction in both swimming and water safety. A further three in ten schools provided instruction in either swimming or water safety, predominantly in the latter category. Accordingly, at that time, instruction in swimming for water safety or both was provided in seven out of ten Irish primary schools attended by three-quarters of primary school pupils in the country. However this meant that in three out of ten primary schools, attended by a quarter of Irish pupils, there was no provision for instruction in swimming or water safety. The survey concludes, having regard both the different sizes of schools and numbers of pupils involved, that "in half (54%) the schools in the country, there is no provision for swimming instruction, while in four out of ten (39%) there is no provision for water safety instruction" and "the findings of this survey indicate that there is considerable scope for extension of provision for instruction in swimming and water safety in Irish primary schools."

Other findings were that the percentage of pupils (25% or less) that availed of instruction outside of school is not very large. Pupils in about half (45%) of schools travel up to five miles to a pool; pupils in a further third travel from five to ten miles.

The Survey found that schools reported considerable variation in the cost of a swimming session (that is, in terms of pool hire, transport and tuition) but averaging at £75 per swimming session. Schools pay slightly more for transport than for pool hire or tuition. For one session per week, the annual school cost of swimming instruction would vary considerably, but averaging £3,000 per annum – "these costs met practically in their entirety by parents." The total cost of a swimming pool session per pupil was estimated to be just under £1.50 per pupil. (From the Questionnaire to local authorities, the cost in 2003 to parents per pupil under the "learning to

²² Provision of Instruction in swimming and water safety in Irish Primary Schools during 1995/96, published by the Educational Research Centre, October, 1997 on behalf of the National Safety Council.

swim" category is €3.00 to €3.50). The survey concludes that "cost figures as an important reason given by schools for not providing swimming instruction."

The survey showed that more than half the schools which did not provide swimming instruction cited cost of provision of transport with more than a quarter citing the cost of hiring a pool, as reasons for not providing swimming instruction. A significant number (four in ten) also said that swimming instruction was not provided because of insufficient time followed by cost (specified by a third of schools).

The survey found that larger schools on the whole seem to be in a better position to provide instruction in swimming due, probably, to economies of scale and the fact that, since such schools are located in urban areas, a pool is likely to be within a reasonable travelling distance. The findings are that smaller schools, especially if located in rural areas, would find it more difficult to provide instruction in swimming.

New participation rate data based on these findings and using 1996 as the base-line could usefully be gathered in the future as one form of indicator of the effectiveness of access to public swimming leisure facilities.

7.2 QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS

Local authorities with new pools opened in the last five years were invited to provide statistics in relation to pool visits to their facilities by the general public. The information being sought has been grouped into categories (recommended by ILAM arising from its 1999 Survey of pools). The categories are described as Recreational, Learning to Swim, Competitive, Therapy and Water Sports.

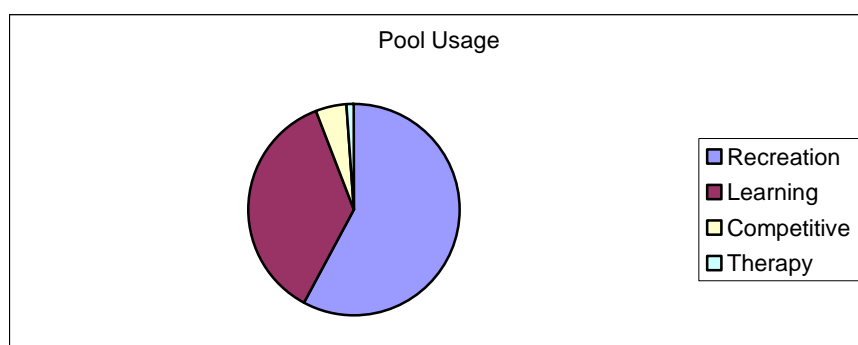
As far as can be ascertained the information in the **Table 7.2** hereunder constitutes the first public survey of public pool usage to have been collated.

Table 7.2 below shows the overall number and breakdown of categories of visit in relation to eight pools opened since 2000 and which have been open for a minimum of twelve months. All

of the pools are outside the greater Dublin area. It should be noted that pool operators count numbers of pool visits rather than numbers of visitors, so it is the case that the number of visitors is much lower than the number of pool visits because of multiple visits by the same user.

Table 7.2: Breakdown of Categories of Visit

Categories of Visit	Recreation	Learning	Competitive	Therapy	Water Sports	Total
Number of Visits	700,541	439,966	55,248	14,269	3,241	1,213,265
Usage as a %	58%	36%	5%	0.09%	.01%	



The predominant category is Recreational, followed by Learning, accounting for some 94% of all activity, with Competitive and Other forming only a small part of the spectrum of pool activity. While further questions were asked in the Questionnaire the findings are considered either too incomplete to be useful and in some cases the data appears simply not to be available. This shows a need for the collection of more detailed and robust data by local authorities in order to establish usage and trends by gender, age, etc.

All but one of the pools surveyed falls within the above general distribution pattern. The exception relates to a pool where the ratio of Recreational to Learning is reversed. It is understood from some further follow-up in this case that the pool caters for over 40 schools and teaches up to 6000 pupils per annum in swimming lessons. A view has been expressed by the management of the pool that the emphasis on learning is creating a vibrant and strong market for swimming in the area.

Four of the pools surveyed were where there had been pools previously on the same or nearby site. Of these two reported that there had been a "significant improvement" in the numbers visiting their pools but there are no back-up figures. One reported a fourfold increase in the numbers of visits, from 44,000 to 151,000 per annum. The fourth pool reported that numbers of visitors had remained approximately the same.

The other four pools surveyed related to new pool developments on green-field sites. Collectively, these attracted some 588,000 visits to the new facilities.

Four of the pools are located in or near RAPID areas and account for about half of the total number of such visits in 2003.

The numbers of visits show a variance from 136,000 visits per annum to 185,000 visits per annum with a mean in the region of 150,000 visits per annum. The number of visits would also seem to be related to the size of the pool – 5 or 6 lanes and the existence of a children's learner pool. However this aspect was not specifically evaluated in the Questionnaire.

Responses to the Questionnaire give statistics in relation to number of opening hours and price of admission – summarised in **Table 7.3** hereunder.

Table 7.3: Availability of pool and admission costs in 2004

	Usage – weekly average (includes groups & pay and play)	Hours per week - Pay and Play (Adult)	Hours per week - Pay and Play (Child - under 16)	Price per person (Adult)	Price per child (under 16)	Student Price	Price per person (over 60)
A	107	42	28	€3.50	€2.75	€3.25	€3.00
B	90	70	70	€6.00	€3.50	€6.00	€4.50
C	87	63	56	€6.00	€3.50	€6.00	€6.00
D	90	84	70	€5.00	€3.00	€3.00	€3.20
F	94	84	91	€4.25	€2.00	€2.50	€2.00
G	97	63	35	€5.00	€3.00	€3.50	€3.50
H	90	84	84	€5.00	€3.00	€3.00	€3.20
I	Not available	91	91	€5.00	€3.00	€5.00	€4.50
J	90	63	56	€5.50	€3.00	€5.50	€4.00
K	85	84	70	€5.50	€3.50	€5.50	€5.50
Average	92	73	65	€5	€3	€4	€4

As can be seen, in 2004, the average number of public hours is 92, 73 excluding Groups, the average adult admission charge is €5 and €3 for a child.

7.3 CATCHMENT AREAS

Attempts were made in the Questionnaire to relate the number of persons within the "catchment" area (taken as being within 15 minutes travelling time of the facility) to the level of visits to pools. However, not enough data from a sufficient number of pools has been received to be useful for research purposes.

It would seem that a reluctance to offer a view as to the size of catchment stems either from doubt as to what is regarded as a realistic catchment area or simply that the data does not exist. There is difficulty in ascertaining this information accurately and precisely – as with certain types of social inclusion data. Nonetheless, a definition used in the leisure trade in the U.K. (and used by SportsScotland) is, as follows –

"Catchment Areas

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."²³

In practical terms, however, the number of people in a catchment has to be determined on some reasonable basis if an assessment of business feasibility is to be attempted. 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."²⁴

Since a catchment area can be seen as an administrative measurement tool to be utilised to plan various levels of service, the concept can be used to give some sense of the level of service that is currently being provided at "macro" level within the State. Accordingly, therefore, if one divides the number of indoor public pools into the population of the State a sense of the overall provision distributed throughout the State can be ascertained. The National Development Plan 2000-2006 provides for two main regions in Ireland – the Border, Midlands and Western Region (BMW) and the Southern and Eastern Region (S&E). However, for purposes of more accurately analysing pools per head of population, this Report further divides the S&E Region into the Southern Region and the Dublin and Mid East Region. The results are shown in the following table.

²³ Excerpt from Ice Rinks and Swimming Pools 2nd Edition, Geraint John/Kit Campbell

²⁴ Excerpt from Sports Council SASH Design Guide 2

**Table 7.4. Population catchment²⁵ of existing public indoor pools (as of end 2006)–
by Region**

	Population	No. of indoor pools	Pop. Per pool
Border, Midland and West	1,132,000	26	43,538
Southern Region (Mid-West, South West, South East)	1,442,000	27	53,407
Eastern Region (Dublin and Mid-East)	1,661,000	20	83050
Total	4,235,000	73	58,014

It can be seen that there is a marked differential in terms of pool provision between the Regions with the Border Region faring best and the Eastern Region least so. However the differential, while still significant, becomes a little less marked when factoring in new projects currently in the Programme yet to be built and this is reflected in Table 7.5 under.

**Table 7.5: Upon completion of current round of programme - impact on population
catchment – by Region**

	Population	Number of Indoor Pools	Pop. Per pool
Border, Midland and West	1,132,000	29	39,034
Southern Region (Mid-West, South West, South East)	1,442,000	29	49,724
Eastern Region (Dublin and Mid-East)	1,661,000	24	69,208
Total	4,235,000	82	51,646

²⁵ Census 2006 Preliminary Report, see Table 6 Components of population change for each Regional Authority Area, 2002-2006

It would be possible, of course, to make a further breakdown on a county basis. However this could give a distorted result as many local authority pools are located at the borders of their counties, where much of the catchment would come from neighbouring counties.

The above analysis could and should lead to the establishment of National and Regional targets. While somewhat crude, they would represent the first step in an increasing strategic approach in developing public swimming pool policy.

In summary, therefore, the National and Regional indicators mentioned above should be adopted and appropriate targets established. From this, local authorities might then be required to establish local indicators based in usage by various groups i.e. school children, over 50's, competitions etc.

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8 CHAPTER EIGHT: APPROACHES TO FUNDING

8.1 THE PUBLIC CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The annual Public Capital Programme (PCP) details capital investment by the State. The PCP provides for investment in areas "vital to national and regional competitiveness and to the promotion of social policy." The main areas of investment relate to productive infrastructure, social infrastructure and sectoral economic investment. Within the main investment area of social infrastructure, there is a broad heading "government construction etc." and a subheading "recreational facilities." The latter is further explained as meaning the provision of "grants for the refurbishment of existing pools and the construction of new pools" under the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme. This Programme is the only item under "recreational facilities."

Multi Annual Capital Envelopes were introduced in the 2004 Finance Act. Capital envelopes are rolling multi-annual capital allocations for Government Departments covering a five year period. They comprise a mixture of Exchequer and Public Private Partnership/National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) capital allocations for public capital investment and are revised annually as part of the Estimates exercise. Departments are allowed to carry over from one year to another unspent capital monies up to a limit of 10% of each year's capital allocation.

The purpose of the multi-annual envelopes and the carryover facility are to give Departments and agencies more certainty about the resources to be available to them in the medium term and more flexibility to plan and manage their capital programmes. It also addresses the difficulties associated with timing and delivery of capital projects.

The multi-annual capital envelopes initially covered the period 2004-2008 and the current envelope covers the period 2006-2010.

The multi annual capital envelopes are complemented by a revision of the 1994 Department of Finance's "Guidelines for the Appraisal and Management of Capital Expenditure Proposals in the Public Sector" which have been updated. It is a requirement of the multi-annual investment

framework agreement that Departments and agencies, and this would include local authorities, comply with the new Guidelines and more information on the performance of capital programmes is published.

The advent of multi-annual financial projects is of considerable assistance to the Pool Programme. The progress of projects depends on the speed at which local authorities progress their projects and construction times usually straddle at least two calendar years. The new system makes planning easier as there is some assurance as to the scale of monies to be available over a five-year period thereby permitting an orderly regime for approval of earlier stages. Ultimately, as indicated earlier it is the speed at which local authorities progress projects and submit claims that will ultimately dictate drawdown timescales.

In addition, the Government's recently published National Development Plan, 2007 – 2013, setting out as it does a 7 year timeframe and capital budget, further enhances the Department's ability to plan a programme of capital expenditure for public swimming pools, providing as it does a seven year capital budget of some €184m, which at today's grant rates would provide an additional 48 pools over the next seven years.

8.2 IMPACT OF REQUIREMENT FOR PRIOR LOAN APPROVAL

In general terms, section 106 of the Local Government Act, 2001 provides for the borrowing of money by a local authority subject to Ministerial sanction. Section 106 defines the appropriate Minister by reference to the purpose of the borrowing. In the case of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme, local authorities require the approval of the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism for borrowings. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government advises Departments as to the ability of a local authority to service borrowings. In 2004, the Government introduced a cap on the level of local authority borrowing. Under arrangements for administering the cap an annual loan amount is set for DAST to cover all local authority loans in the arts, sport and tourism areas. When the requirement was first introduced in Autumn 2003 the provision caused some difficulties for local authorities trying to finalise their financial packages for projects. However, short-term problems have been overcome and projects

have been able to proceed. Thus far, the cap on borrowing has not proved insurmountable as new projects progress but this is partly because local authorities have spread their loans over a number of years to fit within the annual cap.

8.3 FUNDING ROLE OF PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Over the past years, the Government has developed the concept of Public Private Partnerships, which sees a contractual arrangement between the public and private sectors, with clear agreement on shared objectives and risk, for the delivery of an asset and/or service that would otherwise have been provided through traditional public sector procurement. Rather than simply providing an upfront asset to the specifications of the public sector, the private sector becomes responsible for various elements of the project such as designing, building and financing the asset, operating and maintaining the asset, and providing a long term service relating to the asset. This arrangement involves a transfer of risk to the private sector, and allows the local authority to draw on economic and other resources that might not have been otherwise available.

The Government has adopted the PPP approach to help provide many infrastructural developments in the country, with projects at various stages of procurement in national roads, public transport, environmental services, housing and education. Public Private Partnership (PPP) is an established method for funding large-scale public sector infrastructure projects in many European countries with recognised advantages in the following areas: acceleration of infrastructure provision, faster implementation, better risk allocation and improved quality of service. Within the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism remit, the PPP model is being used in the procurement of the National Conference Centre, the redeveloped National Concert Hall and the redeveloped National Theatre.

In order to assist in the assessment of what projects are most appropriate to the PPP process, the Government established the National Development Finance Agency [NDFA]. The NDFA provides financial advice to public bodies entering into PPPs. Its functions include assessing the optimal financing for major infrastructure projects set out in the National Development Plan and other infrastructure priorities.

The State Authorities (Public Private Partnership Arrangements) Act, 2002 facilitates the fullest possible participation by Irish State Authorities in the PPP process. The Act provides certainty as to the powers of Irish State authorities to enter into PPPs and gives local authorities the power to enter into joint ventures. It strikes a balance between the needs and interests of the public sector, and ultimately those of the Exchequer, and the private sector. The purpose of the Act is to contribute to the creation of an environment in which Public Private Partnerships can flourish as a method of public procurement. The powers contained in this Act supplement existing powers already provided under legislation relevant to local authorities. One important effect of the above provisions is to require that local authorities contemplating larger scale multi-use facilities will now have to seek, a priori, the advice of the NDFA.

8.4 INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP ON PPPs for SWIMMING POOLS

In Autumn, 2000, an Inter-Departmental Working Group was established to develop guidelines and advise on other key issues for the operation of a public private partnership approach in relation to public swimming pools. The Group, which included representatives from the Departments of Finance and Environment and Local Government, OPW and three local authorities, met on a number of occasions and teased out various issues in relation to the PPP approach and how best to proceed.

The Group acknowledged from the outset that what was involved was not a ‘real’ PPP in the accepted sense as the State i.e. this Department was putting up a substantial amount of grant funding. At that time, it was accepted that all Departments were on a ‘learning curve’ where PPPs were concerned and that a number of issues remained to be teased out by the Department of Finance and the various Working Groups that had been set up i.e. legal and technical issues. However, it was noted that it would not be possible to follow a PPP approach with individual local authority pools because of their low capital cost relative to the administrative costs associated with the PPP model and the fact that the location and site restrictions might not be attractive to private developers. These pools often served a very important ‘social’ function in

the communities in which they are located and the need to maintain and guarantee social access provisions to pools was highlighted by the Group.

The Group felt that an overall objective of maximising spending under the newly expanded Swimming Pool Programme by attracting private sector investment and management expertise to supplement public investment could be worthwhile. Benefits of contracting the operation of a swimming pool to the private sector were also identified.

On an overall level, the Working Group identified advantages and disadvantages in adopting the PPP approach in relation to swimming pools. The advantages would include access to private sector finance and management/technical advice/expertise, the transfer of risk from local authorities for the day to day management and maintenance of the facilities, a more cost effective approval over the lifetime of the facilities - say 20/25 years and the fact that local authorities were getting used to this new approach as they were using it elsewhere for water/waste management, roads, etc.

On the other hand, the Group saw drawbacks, including the fact that it would take longer to get construction/refurbishment up and running, it introduced complexity to the process and it might be difficult to attract private investment given the small financial scale of the proposals.

Over recent years, the issue of the suitability of the formal PPP process for the local authority swimming pool programme has been raised. The reality, as more expertise in the area has been developed in the State Sector, is that the various arrangements and accompanying guidelines in place for formal PPPs are geared towards major and complex capital projects with significant ongoing maintenance requirements, i.e. projects having a capital cost of €20 million or more. Advice is that the PPP model should only be used where it is appropriate and where it can deliver value for money. Conversely, the model would not be appropriate where the transaction costs of pursuing a PPP are disproportionate to the value of the project or compared to the value of the project or where fast-paced technological change makes it difficult to establish requirements in the long-term.

The Policy Framework for PPPs in the local government sector issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in November 2003 and the Implementing guidelines from the Department of Finance are detailed and complex, in implementation terms. From the Department's perspective, the cost of an individual project in the Programme is now in the region of €7-€10m and would not be seen, therefore, as being of sufficient scale to justify the resources involved in pursuing a formal PPP approach. On the other hand, the Department has no objection to the involvement of the private sector provided the generally accepted operational considerations of a public pool form part of the project. These considerations would involve, for example, non-membership "pay per swim" access, concessionary rates as part of social inclusion measures etc. It has also been suggested that "bundling" of pool projects on, say, a regional basis might create a sufficiently large "project" to interest the private sector. Notwithstanding, however, there have been cases of successful involvement of the private sector in the delivery of the programme. The Department is aware informally of an initiative by Leitrim County Council – originally as part of a much larger development including housing - to have a public pool constructed and financed in Carrick-on-Shannon with private sector involvement under local authority Planning and Development legislation. This project was not grant aided under the current round of the Pool Programme. The facility is now open to the public. The Department is also informally aware of another example of a local authority pool project constructed without funding from the Pool Programme and funded in co-operation with the private sector - the Markievicz pool in Tara Street, Dublin opened in 2000.

As the formal PPP option is not appropriate to individual public swimming pool projects, local authorities are left at present with only one option insofar as engagement with the private sector is concerned – contracting with a developer who perceives an opportunity in providing a public/private facility either as a commercially viable stand alone project or as part of a much bigger complex. A specific set of circumstances must exist to allow such a project to develop and where they might not exist in a county, the local authority is left with no option but to "go it alone". However, there may be an opportunity to enhance the provision of public swimming pools through a type of PPP arrangement involving the "bundling" of a number of pools. There may be private sector interest in the idea of a number of local authorities joining together to contract for the construction of say a number of pools in a particular region although there might

not be any great enthusiasm for a coordinated private sector management role given the diverse locations likely to be involved. There could be considerable savings to local authorities in design costs. Such a "bundled" project would appear to have attractions but there are numerous issues that would have to be addressed to move it forward in any meaningful way. At the outset, it would appear that the only way which such a project could be progressed would be if it was centrally managed with one body undertaking a co-coordinating role with the relevant local authorities and, in effect, managing the PPP process. This might be undertaken by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism in conjunction with the OPW but the Department is not staffed to undertake such a diverse €80/100m construction project. Other important issues arise. How would local authorities be selected to join the "consortium"? While criteria for ranking bundled public swimming pools on a national or regional basis would have to be devised, robust and open, would "regionalisation" of groups of projects confer advantages for one region over another and penalize worthwhile individual projects. Informal soundings with potential developers to ascertain the level of interest in such a scheme would suggest that construction companies with national coverage might not be interested in having to service a multiplicity of sites spread throughout the country. Regional/local builders would probably not be interested in projects outside of their base region. However, despite these difficulties the basic concept presents a possibility of increasing the stock of public swimming pools in the country.

8.5 FUNDING FROM VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

A feature of pool projects has been the involvement of voluntary bodies which have engaged in fund-raising, often very successfully, in order to achieve a significant contribution towards the costs of a pool. However because the projects often take so long to come to fruition the monies can be left unused for years at a time and the monetary value becomes less as the project costs escalate. This has been a cause of frustration for local groups. To the extent that the Programme can support such applications led by voluntary groups, the impression given is that if monies are collected, then a pool project will be supported by the State both at central and local authority levels. The rules of the programme, however, are very clear that the full support of the local authority must be forthcoming and the project has to be promoted and effectively "guaranteed" by the local authority. There can be a problem for local authorities with projects coming from

the voluntary and business areas for a location for the facilities which may be less than ideal, not addressing social inclusion issues, a liability in the longer term and constitute an obstacle in the context of a local authority's planning of, say, clustering of recreational and sporting facilities. However, it is considered that, in the event of the Programme being re-opened, it should be re-affirmed that public pool projects can only be led by the local authority itself. However in so doing a role for the voluntary sector should still be encouraged, as a way through which to reduce some of the capital costs involved as well as conferring a sense of ownership by the local community of the project.

8.6 PRIVATE SECTOR POOL PROVISION

A development which can impact on public swimming pool provision and profitability is the high number of leisure complexes containing pools that have been or are being built in the State funded entirely by the private sector. The Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (ILAM) conducted a survey on private sector provision in 1999. At that time ILAM identified 20 private leisure clubs with pool facilities and 125 accommodation based private leisure clubs with pools. In an updating survey exercise commissioned for this Review ILAM have identified 76 private leisure clubs and 202 accommodation based private leisure clubs with pools. This represents an overall increase of 133 facilities - nearly a doubling of provision in five years. If nothing else, this points to the huge demand for such facilities.

Table 8.1 that follows sets out an estimate of the current distribution of *all* indoor swimming pools by county based on ILAM's 2004 estimate of both "private" and "public" pool provision (Note ILAM's estimate in Column C of the number of "public" pools – the Review's estimate of the basic number is 71 while ILAM's is 104 – see discussion on this issue in Chapter Two).

TABLE 8.1: ILAM Survey results by county

A. Commercial/ Private		B. Hotels		C. Pools providing public access		
County	Number	County	Number	County	Number	Overall Total
Carlow	0	Carlow	2	Carlow	2	4
Cavan	1	Cavan	4	Cavan	2	7
Clare	1	Clare	8	Clare	3	12
Cork	4	Cork	28	Cork	10	42
Donegal	0	Donegal	20	Donegal	4	24
Dublin	41	Dublin	15	Dublin	19	75
Galway	1	Galway	14	Galway	4	19
Kerry	2	Kerry	21	Kerry	2	25
Kildare	4	Kildare	9	Kildare	2	15
Kilkenny	0	Kilkenny	6	Kilkenny	1	7
Laois	1	Laois	2	Laois	3	6
Leitrim	0	Leitrim	2	Leitrim	2	4
Limerick	6	Limerick	11	Limerick	7	24
Longford	0	Longford	1	Longford	1	2
Louth	1	Louth	4	Louth	2	7
Mayo	2	Mayo	6	Mayo	8	16
Meath	4	Meath	1	Meath	3	8
Monaghan	0	Monaghan	3	Monaghan	1	4
Offaly	1	Offaly	2	Offaly	3	6
Roscommon	0	Roscommon	1	Roscommon	4	5
Sligo	1	Sligo	6	Sligo	2	9
Tipperary	3	Tipperary	6	Tipperary	9	18
Waterford	1	Waterford	7	Waterford	2	10
Westmeath	1	Westmeath	4	Westmeath	2	7
Wexford	0	Wexford	10	Wexford	5	15
Wicklow	1	Wicklow	9	Wicklow	1	11
Total	76	Total	202	Total	104	382

In its submission ILAM say that many of these pools would not be open to the public and are accessible by annual membership only, do not provide for school usage and otherwise have restrictions on use by children. Many would require that the visitor be staying at the hotel housing the pool. A number would permit public access but at prices somewhat in excess, often double, of what would be charged in a public pool. ILAM emphasise that the membership pricing puts these clubs out of reach of many people on low incomes. Nonetheless, the private sector does contribute a major input into swimming pool provision and would suggest a dearth of attractive public sector facilities. The subject, while not at the core of this Review, merits analysis and comment in its own right.

In Chapter Seven the number of person per public pool was set out in **Table 7.4** and **Table 7.5** and showed differing ratios of indoor pool per number of persons in a region.

However if the same calculation is made taking into account all pool facilities, both private and public, then the statistics shown in **Table 8.2** hereunder shows very different results –

Table 8.2 Population catchment of all ILAM identified public and private indoor pools – by Region

	Population	Number of pools	Pop. per pool
Border, Midland and West	1,132,000	143	7,916
Southern Region (Mid-West, South West, South East)	1,442,000	130	11,092
Eastern Region (Dublin and Mid-East)	1,661,000	109	15,239
Total	4,235,000	382	11,086

Taking these results at face value then the ratio of number of pools per person is dramatically reduced. In an interesting comment on the growth of private leisure facilities the Irish Water Safety Association have submitted that, in relation to pools in hotels, that "these tend to be small

and of limited value for the teaching of water safety and lifesaving. These leisure clubs have small memberships and normally no public access, save for hotel residents."²⁶ In its summary of feedback from Local Sports Partnerships the Irish Sports Council has chosen to highlight the views of one Partnership which expressed the view that "many local authorities, in the absence of a major building grant scheme, see the provision of future swimming pools being done as part of leisure centre expansion of the hotel/tourist industry. This in itself may be unwelcome, socially divisive and geographically imbalanced as is the hotel/tourist industry itself."²⁷

The very high number of private pools – it appears, located in prosperous and tourist areas - indicates that the construction of new public pool facilities in such areas, should be especially scrutinised by the local authorities to ensure a suitable "catchment" of say school children exists.

The imbalances further points to the importance of concentrating on those areas of specifically identified disadvantage, as in and adjacent to RAPID areas, so as to ensure that all sections of the community can obtain access to pool facilities at reasonable cost and at reasonable times and to achieve an equality of pool provision throughout all of the community.

The significant number of private pools does not mean that the existence of a public pool alongside, is wasteful. It has been suggested that the advent of a new public pool facility had an impact on the prices at competing private sector leisure facilities. Conversely officials in one County Council believe that the opening of a private facility had an adverse effect on business in the public pool but this was primarily because the standard of the public facility had fallen considerably. It could be argued that competition is, of course, of advantage to the customer in the short term but that the viability of both types of competing facility might be affected in the medium to long term. However, as per comparison with provision in Scotland there appears to be room for both to compete quite successfully.

The scale of the private sector provision is such that it would be of interest for local authorities to explore further as to whether arrangements could be entered into, for, say, rent of time in a private sector pool – instead of the construction of additional public pools. The development of

²⁶ Submission from Lt. Cdr. John F.M Leech, CEO, Irish Water Safety Association, dated 29th April. 2004

²⁷ Submission from John Treacy, CEO, Irish Sports Council, dated 26th April, 2004

joint ventures should be seen, not simply in sharing the capital costs, but in terms of shared usage, particularly at times required by local schools where these coincide with slack usage hours in a private pool. However, it would appear that many private pool operators are keen to maintain the "private" aspect of their facilities and are not keen to open them to the general public or, say, school children.

In summary, therefore the advent of multi-annual capital envelopes and the National Development Plan 2007 - 2013 will make easier the planning of approval of pool projects as the lead-in and construction times are so spread out over 2 to 3 years. In order to promote joint venture type arrangements, in areas where there is significant and suitable private pool provision in situ, time-share arrangements should first actively be pursued by local authorities with the private sector before pressing ahead with the provision of green-field site public pool facilities and this should be a requirement for any new application for funding from the Department. The scale and location of private sector pool provision further strengthens the need to create equality in terms of public access at reasonable cost in areas of significant disadvantage in, or adjacent to, RAPID areas.

While PPPs, in the formal sense of the term, are not appropriate in respect of single swimming pool projects, the idea of "bundling" a number of projects through a design and build type PPP process has possibilities and might be explored.

9 CHAPTER NINE: INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

In considering the operation of the Irish Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme, it was felt that swimming pool provision in Northern Ireland and Scotland and relevant funding mechanisms should be examined in detail.²⁸

9.1 SCOTLAND & N. IRELAND

In Scotland, local authorities are the providers of public swimming pools, in line with their statutory responsibilities. Their role includes providing services designed to generate broader benefits including individual and community development, relief of urban deprivation, fitness health and well-being.

Due to the funding structure of local government in Scotland and N. Ireland (where domestic rates are applied) an extensive network of municipal leisure facilities exists, meeting the day to day swimming and leisure needs of individuals who wish to visit their local pool, without having to be a member of a club. Scotland has about 340 public pools for a population of about 5 million persons, that is, one local pool for every 15,000 persons. In N. Ireland the equivalent figure is one public pool for every 32,000 persons. While both N. Ireland and Scotland have an excellent infra-structure of public swimming pools, Sports Scotland²⁹ emphasises considerable sums will be required over the coming years to maintain and upgrade/replace the existing stock and that local authorities there have yet to provide anything like sufficient resources to meet the emergent need.

²⁸The researcher for this Review, under the international heading, examined initiatives in Scotland and N. Ireland and the immediate contextual framework of "sports related" bodies. However, it is worth noting that there is also an inspection infrastructure in place by way of the Audit Commissions in each province of the U.K. These statutory based Commissions are independent bodies responsible for ensuring that public monies are spent economically, efficiently and effectively. Their work covers, inter alia, local authorities. Within that grouping of public bodies, inspectors have published reports commenting on the size, distribution, quality etc. of sports facilities including swimming pools and their reports are available through www.audit-commission.gov.uk.

²⁹ SportsScotland is the national body for sport development in Scotland. Otherwise known as the Scottish Sports Council it was established in 1996 under Royal Charter. SportsScotland is constituted as a non Departmental public body, works closely with the Scottish Executive, advising Scottish Ministers and implementing Scottish executive policy for sports and physical recreation.

9.2 FUNDING FOR LOCAL POOLS

There have been strategy documents produced in both the UK and Northern Ireland in respect of lottery funding for sport including swimming pools, following consultation with sporting groups and community organisations. In the United Kingdom Lottery receipts peaked in 1997/1998 and funding for the programmes has reduced significantly since. In the period from 1999 to 2003 only £3.4 million was spent by Sports Scotland on pools. In their 2003 Strategy statement covering the period to 2007 a sum of £3.5 million was provided to "kick start reinvestment in our deteriorating stock of swimming pools." The very small amount of funding available from Sports Scotland reflects the fact that the bulk of funding for local swimming pools is raised by local authorities themselves. The role of Sports Scotland, in local pool facilities matters, is geared primarily towards advice rather than as the main provider of funding. The very small amounts of funding for the construction of swimming facilities available from lottery programmes is targeted primarily at enhancing the funding for a local authority swimming pool project and as a vehicle for requiring local authorities to tap into the Sports Scotland's in-house technical expertise. Sports Scotland have made an estimate of the cost of refurbishing or replacing the local authority stock of pools in Scotland - approximately £544 million over the period 1998 to 2020. Thus it refers to a commissioned report on the maintenance, upgrading and refurbishment of Scotland's public pools as "the ticking time bomb." Sports Scotland says that this report has contributed to heightening an appreciation amongst public pool providers of the level of investment needed to keep the pools open and to ensure that whatever funding is generated, is utilised in the most effective and efficient way possible. It is understood that the issue as to how the estimated expenditure need is going to be found, is unresolved.

Since the funding for public swimming pools is almost all generated by local authorities rather than by central Government Departments or through the Sports Councils in N. Ireland or Scotland, statistics are not compiled to give a regional figure for annual capital expenditure on public pools.

In both Northern Ireland and Scotland, there is an initial application at official level, which effectively screens applications. This is broadly equivalent to our feasibility report, the material for inclusion in which is assisted through the expertise provided by SportsScotland itself.

While in theory, the N. Ireland Sports Council can accept applications in respect of pools, in practice, there have not been any in recent years. The Sports Council in Scotland has pool project experience and applications are dealt with as part of the broader sports capital lottery funding scheme. Applications can be submitted quarterly. In terms of pool applications, there is one dedicated pool expert with a professional swimming background and he is resourced to "tap into" the expertise of the others, as needed, for instance, in respect of Sports Scotland's "Scottish Facilities Planning Model," known as the "FPM".³⁰ Each application is assessed having regard to the findings of the FPM which gives detailed information about the demographics in the catchment to be served by a proposed facility. The turnaround time is about 3 months. The decision is in the form of an opinion that sets out whether the project is likely to compete. At any time the applicant may submit a further application for consideration at the second stage of the process. A greater level of detail and accompanying documentation is required at this juncture – broadly equivalent to the level of detail in our preliminary report. A recommendation by the officials will then be made to the Board of the Council and it will decide on the project in the light of all the applications before it and the amount of monies available. In the event that an application at second stage is turned down, the applicant may not make an application again for another two years. In practice it is understood that, due to the rigorous examination of applications, only projects "likely to compete" are actually submitted for approval of the Board. After an allocation has been made by the Board many technical requirements come into play, not unlike those checked by this Department, (planning permission, title, contract details, etc...). The process of checking and monitoring is quite rigorous and is designed to ensure that the details of projects are not changed after allocation approval. It is understood that this process cuts down considerably on the number of final applications being assessed, the bulk of the work having occurred at the initial screening phase. Lottery awards are normally decided by SportsScotland,

³⁰ This is a computerised planning tool to inform decisions about the provision of community sports facilities. The Model provides an objective assessment of the relationship between the likely demand for sports facilities in an area and the actual supply. It takes into account the distribution of the local population and its demographic structure, as well as the capacity and availability of facilities in the area and their catchment areas. The U.K. Government's planning advice for sport, physical recreation and open space advises local councils to take account of the FPM in assessing levels of provision of sports facilities appropriate to their area.

which meets 2-3 times a year. As a result the timeframe from application to final decision can take a year to 18 months.

Comprehensive Guidelines/digests have been produced by the Northern Ireland and Scottish Sports Councils covering technical aspects of swimming pools which are available to any applicant. In Scotland, the staff processes several pool projects each year. About 150 capital projects are under consideration in any one year (including sports halls, outdoor pitch development etc...) as compared with the Republic where some 1600 applications, both sports and swimming facilities, were processed last year. To manage the Scottish projects, there is a staff of 20, of whom 17 are professional staff working on the technical aspects of projects, guidelines and legislation issues.

In summary terms Sports Scotland's procedural requirements show similarities with our Programme in terms of eligible projects, title requirements and detailed application forms with supporting documentation. Selection criteria includes such areas as

- ❑ Impact on participation
- ❑ Location, scale and content
- ❑ Design
- ❑ Management plan
- ❑ Environmental impact
- ❑ Technical aspects of project, including timescales
- ❑ Financial viability
- ❑ Social inclusion aspects
- ❑ Meeting identified need
- ❑ Relationship to other community programmes

9.3 MEETINGS WITH OFFICIALS OF NORTHERN IRELAND AND SCOTTISH SPORTS COUNCILS

Given the similarities that exist north and south of Ireland and in Scotland in terms of sporting traditions and small size, meetings took place with the Sports Councils in both jurisdictions who administer lottery funding for sports capital projects.

Both Sports Councils have been managing lottery funding for sports capital projects since 1995 having built up considerable experience and expertise in overseeing public capital funding of sports facilities prior to this. In Scotland its swimming pool programmes have evolved from a basic one type-funding programme into different schemes covering local, regional and national projects along with specialised pool needs.

It is clear from these discussions that a more hands on approach is adopted in both jurisdictions with considerable interaction with any prospective applicant and detailed examination including site visits of every proposed project. However it should be noted that the numbers of applications is considerably less while the levels of staffing which include those with specialist expertise in areas such as engineering, architecture, financial management and sports facility construction are much higher.

The view of Sports Scotland is that their close hands-on approach to the development of applications and projects while requiring significant resources, helps to ensure that good projects come to fruition having come through a rigorous assessment process measuring demand, viability, impact and technical merits of proposed facilities. As a result it is understood there is a high satisfaction rating among applicants that applications are seriously considered and carefully examined even where projects do not succeed in receiving funding.

There is also a strong emphasis in Sports Scotland on setting operational targets in relation to completed projects in the key indicator areas of visitor participation, access to facilities, and new

customer development. There are monitoring procedures in place to receive feedback on impact of the projects with a view to encouraging achievement of visitor targets set and there are periodic follow up visits to projects as part of the process in Scotland. Monitoring of performance utilises a standard questionnaire sent to local authorities after a facility has been two years in operation, comparison with visitor number estimates made in the application, a follow-up site visit and another survey after seven years have elapsed. Part of the evaluative process which focuses on numbers of visits, participation by gender, age etc. involves use of operational business planning performance indicators as follows -

Staff Costs as a percentage of income
Income per square metre
Subsidy per square metre
Income per visit
Subsidy per visit
Catering Net Margin

These indicators apply to all sports projects, not just swimming pools.

9.4 MEETINGS WITH OFFICIALS OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL AND GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL

In 2004, Belfast City Council made decisions in relation to the future of swimming pools in the Belfast area that would see a very old pool closed, to be replaced in a new location, a new one opened in the north part of the city and handed over to the community. Implementing the decision is proving slow as there are still local interests vying for location of pools in their areas. The Orange/Green divide in the City continues to pose an obstacle to progress. There is also a shortage of capital monies for the works being mooted. By contrast the position in Glasgow has been a success story. A Strategic Plan approved about 14 years ago has been implemented in full – helped by strong and consistently applied political backing at Council level. The Plan involved closing inappropriately located pools, their replacement elsewhere and radical changes in

municipal work-practices. Implementation of the Strategy was helped by the existence of enough in-house professional sport expertise, architects, etc. In Glasgow there is now an impressive mix of different types of leisure facilities, all of a multi-use nature. In one of these a common reception area houses the entrance to the local pool and to the local library/museum. The Council has a pro-active active leisure promotion policy in operation and this has contributed to an increase in those participating in leisure activities cited by officials as increasing from 1.2million in 1990 to about 4million now. It is understood that certain pools are even open at midnight to encourage young people from wandering the streets at that hour.

9.5 QUEST, THE UK QUALITY SCHEME FOR SPORT AND LEISURE

QUEST was launched in 1996. Before then, there was no agreed quality standard against which managers and the organisations they represented could assess their own operation and make informed judgements about the quality of service they delivered. In QUEST, sports and leisure facilities have industry agreed quality standards. The Scheme is targeted towards public leisure facilities and has been endorsed by the four Sports Councils of the U.K who provided financial support to manage it.

Both the officials in Glasgow and Belfast highlighted the usefulness of QUEST as a Charter Mark for Quality Service, which provides a "Best practice" guide for the operation of swimming pools/leisure centres and an assessment of how a facility is faring in relation to such aspects as management, promotion, safety, access etc. This is regarded as being successful in providing quality assessments of a public leisure facility's level of service.

The officials in Glasgow stress that their efforts have been helped considerably by there being one administrative authority for the development of all the leisure facilities in the City and by the clear public service ethos which places the emphasis on "public service" performance indicators (e.g. accessibility achieved, best practice) as distinct from an ethos focused narrowly on profit.

As an alternative approach, ILAM, in its submission, draws attention to the White Flag Award, the only Irish standard award. ILAM has made a comparison between the two schemes and this is reproduced in **Appendix J**. The Irish Hotels Federation recently endorsed the White Flag as

the standard for all hotel leisure facilities to strive to and Fáilte Ireland are including the White Flag as a condition of grant aid for spa facilities. The U.K. QUEST is seen as geared towards specific U.K. circumstances. However it would be useful to compare the two schemes to focus QUEST's evaluative criteria in relation to usage and participation to see if there is merit in transposing this to Irish public pools.

- In summary, therefore, in N. Ireland and Scotland, the main thrust of facility planning funding and provision is delivered via local government structures with technical advice and decisions from a central source (SportsScotland) concentrating on projects of national/regional importance or of a specialised nature. In terms of interaction with local authorities the role has been more advisory in nature. This has helped to ensure local decisions based on local information and priorities. The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism might consider strengthening its role in terms of large scale national and regional projects rather than letting local authorities initiate and plan such facilities independently of each other.

In addition mandatory participation in the White Flag Award should be considered for all local authority pools with additional requirements relating to reporting of participation levels etc. to the Department.

10 CHAPTER TEN: OTHER RELEVANT STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMMES

10.1 INTRODUCTORY

The existence, location and resource represented by a network of local authority swimming pools is of special interest to other Departments, agencies and bodies in the contexts of their various strategies. Within the social sphere these may be grouped under social, physical education, health and safety, spatial and regeneration headings. While the progress of the pool programme is not absolutely key to general health, spatial and children's strategies, etc. nonetheless, the location, number, distribution, accessibility and attractiveness of public pools are all important in contributing to the performance aims and targets in all of these strategies. The reasons can be readily seen. Public swimming pools offer an exceptionally high degree of accessibility – with the capacity to open 18 hours a day, 360 days per year, weather independent, minimum personal equipment required and utilisable by both genders, from the very young to the very old. As Swim Ireland puts it, in its submission, "swimming is a unique sport in a number of sublime ways. It is a true physical activity for life – a sport which encourages involvement from the cradle to the grave. Age is not a barrier to participation." It is, in fact, difficult to conceive of a more effective investment in sports facilities given the accessibility and broad clientele base, provided of course the facility is of a reasonably high standard. The progress of the pool Programme is also seen as especially important to the social development of areas coming within the ambit of RAPID Programme. There is some relevance too where projects have both a local and domestic tourism element, such as at popular sea-side resorts. The effectiveness of the Programme is certainly going to be crucial to the implementation of the Aquatics strand of the national education curriculum. The degree to which the Pool Programme can be successfully implemented can be influenced too by the advent of the County Development Boards, the co-ordinating bodies for development at local level. Swim Ireland, in its submission to the Review, places a special emphasis on the above points stating "with prudent usage and a coordinated approach, a wide variety of objectives can be achieved with the provision of government monies for the development of swimming pools in Ireland." The establishment and development of local sports partnership (LSP) network throughout the country also offers a potential avenue for the promotion, at local level, of the use of swimming pools targeted at any age or social group.

10.2 HEALTH PROMOTION STRATEGIES

The second National Health Promotion Strategy, originally to cover the years 2000-2005³¹, was designed to fulfil the commitment to health promotion set out in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness. In introducing that strategy the Minister for Health lays stress on "the inter-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach to put health promotion on everyone's agenda." One of the strategic aims of health promotion is "to increase participation in regular, moderate and physical activity," the objectives being "to identify models of good practice which encourage young people (especially young girls) and older people to participate in regular, moderate physical activity." Part of the overall strategy involves production of reliable base-line data for a representative cross-section of the population to inform planning and policy development. Of interest in the present context are a number of important reports published in recent years.

The 2004 Report entitled Sports Participation and Health Among Adults in Ireland³² highlights that "swimming " is amongst the most popular sports, that "wider provision of swimming pools might encourage more people to swim." At the same time, however the Report warns that "policy initiatives which focus on the provision of sports facilities (*that is, on their own*) would be unlikely to have a major impact on raising levels of sports participation in the population." In other words it is not enough simply to provide the facility. Its use has to be promoted as well. In relation to older people, the Report includes "swimming" as the most common physical activity and asserts that this form of activity may be easier to promote among the inactive than team-based or contact sports.

The data in the National Health and Lifestyle Surveys [comprising the second phase of the linked National Health and Lifestyle Survey, (SLáN), and the Irish Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Survey (HBSC)] published in April, 2003.

This highlights –

".....social variations in health and lifestyle behaviours between the lower and higher socio-economic groups. The challenge for health promotion is to narrow this gap. It is

³¹ The Strategy is still operative and now comes under the remit of the Health Services Executive.

³² See Executive Summary, Sports Participation and Health Among Adults in Ireland by Tony Fahey, Richard Layte and Brenda Gannon, published by Economic and Social Research Institute, 2004.

apparent from these surveys that participating in healthier choices and healthier lifestyle behaviours may not be an easier option for those in lower socio-economic groups."

In its submission to this Review the Department of Health and Children, in general terms, draws attention to the fact

"that physical inactivity is one of the determinants responsible for the increase in obesity in Irish society. It is also recognised that we need to address the issue of creating social and physical environments that will make it easier for children and adults to eat more healthily and to be more active on a regular basis. In this regard the Department of Health and Children strongly supports initiatives that will increase and improve public access to facilities which promote physical activity. The benefits of even small increases in the amount of physical taken by the population, results in a corresponding reduction of many of the associated diseases such as diabetes and stroke."³³

The Department also calls for a prioritisation in this Review to "consider the health promotion dimension to participation rates of swimming," suggests links with Health Promotion Departments as has occurred with the North Eastern Health Board, and the development of a future indicator based on the health gain of swimmers.

The Department of Health's submission highlights the degree to which the pool programme is seen as an important instrument of public social policy – for the achievement of healthy lifestyles is seen as requiring, as one major component, the ability and willingness of everyone to participate and enjoy to some degree, water activities, and in that context, therefore, the facilities have to be in place and readily accessible, for all.

10.3 NATIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) launched by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) towards end of 2002 is a 20-year planning framework for all parts of Ireland. It aims to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development across Ireland, supported by more effective planning. The commitment to prepare the NSS was

³³ Submission from Chris Fitzgerald, PO, Department of Health and Children, dated 11th June, 2004

included in the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006. In order to drive development in the regions, the NSS requires that areas of sufficient scale and critical mass be built up through a network of gateways and hubs. The role of gateways acting at the national level, together with hubs acting at the regional and county levels is envisaged to be partnered by the county towns and other larger towns as a focus for business, residential, service and amenity functions. The NSS also identifies an important need to support the role of smaller towns, villages and rural areas at the local level. Spatial considerations are also set out for other key areas of infrastructure. The Strategy is being implemented by the DEHLG through the translation of its policies into regional and local planning by regional and local authorities and uptake of its approach into the plans and programmes of Government Departments and agencies, particularly in their investment and other plans as they relate to regional development. It is clear that this strategy will have to form a significant element of location considerations in any future round of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme.

10.4 NATIONAL CHILDREN'S STRATEGY

The Government has committed itself to co-ordinating all its services to children. This is to be achieved through the development of the National Children's Strategy launched in 2000. The Strategy provides, through the objectives set out under each National Goal, a co-ordinated plan for action and the means of monitoring progress. One of the National Goals is that children receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development. Amongst the objectives associated with this Goal are that "all children have a basic range of needs", one of which is that children "will have access to play, sport, recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood." Examples of recent initiatives to meet this objective are cited including "the commencement of a programme of refurbishment of local authority swimming pools." Commenting on the initiatives the view is set out that "more needs to be done at local level to provide a greater range of experiences and opportunities for children in the wider context, in addition to sport, in the areas of play, leisure and cultural activities." Amongst further actions proposed are "that local play and recreation needs will be incorporated into the Strategies

for Economic, Social and Cultural Development being developed by each County and City Development Board."

10.5 NATIONAL RECREATION POLICY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Office of the Minister for Children is at present working to finalise a National Recreation Policy, the overall objective being to provide appropriate publicly funded recreational opportunities for young people between the ages of 12 and 18. The main thrust is to include "the development of youth friendly and safe facilities and environments" In this regard this will "incorporate a series of corresponding actions for priority implementation by various Government Departments and Agencies who will have a crucial role to play in their delivery within the framework of the national policy". It is reasonable to surmise that the provision of physical recreational facilities will form an integral part of the implementation of this strategy and that well located public swimming pools will be one of the physical recreation requirements.³⁴

10.6 STRATEGIES FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT – INCLUDING COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLANS

A key objective of the Government's Programme for Local Government Renewal is closer partnership between local authorities and local development bodies (Area partnerships, LEADER Groups and County/City Enterprise Boards) operating at local level. This has led to the establishment of County/City Development Boards (CDBs) in each of the 29 county councils, and in each of the 5 major cities to bring about an integrated approach to the delivery of both State and local development services at local level. Each CDB is required to prepare and oversee the implementation of a ten year county/city Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development, which is to provide the template guiding all public services and local development activities locally; in effect bringing more coherence to the planning and delivery of services at local level. All thirty-four Strategies for Economic, Social and Cultural Development have now

³⁴ Briefing note to this Department from Office of the Minister for Children dated 25th October, 2006. Policy is envisaged to be published in the near future.

been published and there is an emphasis on counteracting social exclusion as well as on economic and cultural development.

The Irish Sports Council, in its submission, emphasises the need for pools "to be seen as relevant to the local communities, that they serve" and that the large capital investment can only be "fully capitalised on if the pools are in constant use by as wide a variety of age and social groups as possible." The Council draws attention to the "importance of developing proper programming for pools linking in with local groups such as schools, active age groups etc. in partnership with Local Sports Partnerships and Local Authority Sports Development Officers." Handing over a pool for community use at reduced or no fee is recommended. This, it is argued, would boost the usage of the pool by encouraging visitors to use ancillary services such as gym, exercise classes, even coffee shops. Development of family friendly policies, developing school-club links, facilitation training for voluntary groups other than clubs e.g. special needs groups, are also recommended.

10.7 RAPID (REVITALISING AREAS BY PLANNING, INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT)

The RAPID programme is aimed at improving the quality of life and the opportunity available to residents of the most disadvantaged communities in Irish cities and towns. It is focused at reducing the deprivations through targeting very significant state resources at the needs of disadvantaged areas. The Programme is the result of a commitment made within Framework III of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness to target investment in disadvantaged areas. In 2001 the Government agreed 25 target areas in the main urban areas and in 2002 added 20 provincial centres. Responsibility for the administration of the RAPID programme rests with the agency, Pobal (formerly Area Development Management (ADM) Ltd.) under the aegis of the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The main programmes operated by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism where a particular focus exists on RAPID areas relate to the provision of recreation and sport facilities, through the the local authority swimming pool programme and the national lottery-funded sports capital programme. While there is no specific allocation of staff involved solely in dealing with applications from RAPID areas the officers of

the Department who have responsibility for the administration of the pool programme have ongoing contact with Pobal. In addition, the Department is represented by a senior official on the RAPID National Monitoring Committee

While the RAPID Programme is reflected in the LASPP through a higher rate of grant assistance, this higher rate has tended to become irrelevant of late because of increasing capital costs combined with a monetary cap on grants.

10.8 PRIMARY EDUCATION CURRICULUM – AQUATICS

From 2004 onwards the Department of Education and Science is introducing on a phased basis a revised physical primary education curriculum to "provide opportunities for children to learn through the medium of movement." The physical education curriculum "outlines a balanced range of activities for children and allows schools considerable flexibility in planning a programme that meets the needs of the school." The curriculum is divided into six strands and one of them includes Aquatics. The Aquatics programme is described as involving "not only teaching children how to swim but also promoting enjoyment of water-based activities. The revised curriculum stresses the importance of play in the development of competence in the water." Swimming had been part of many schools' activities as early as the 1960s and became part of the formal primary school curriculum in 1971, but there, emphasis had been laid on swimming instruction - whereas "aquatics" is seen as a more broad based, holistic way for introducing children to the principles of water safety. It is understood that the revised curriculum is also to change the standard course duration of swimming classes - instead of a twelve month long block of swimming instruction as heretofore, rather class graduated short blocks of 6/8 weeks will be sought for children on a yearly basis from 7/8 years upwards.

Overall, physical education" is described as "an integral part of the educational process and, without it, the education of the child is incomplete" and elsewhere "provides a framework for encouraging children to pursue healthy life-styles and to develop positive attitudes towards physical activity."

Building on this initiative the Irish Water Safety Association – which teaches swimming and lifesaving courses to children and adults - are designing a P. E. Programme for all schools with a view to providing resources and training for teachers delivering the Aquatics part of the revised P.E. Curriculum.

In its submission to this Review the Department of Education and Science confirm that training for primary school teachers in the PE Curriculum commencing in 2004 that aquatics will be included in this Programme although it is acknowledged that they will be working "alongside relevantly qualified personnel at poolside."³⁵ That Department summarises its perspective, in relation to this Review, that "in order for the curriculum to be implemented in full, teachers need access to swimming pools. Anecdotally, teachers report that cost and accessibility, particularly transport costs, are significant facts in a school's ability to pursue a programme in aquatics. Obviously, the more schools having access to swimming pools, the more effective the curriculum can be implemented." In an interesting observation that reflects upon the above point, one of the submissions from one of the Local Sports Partnerships points to the potential of the Rural Transport Initiative, subsidising school programmes, booking of public sessions in private pools as ways of overcoming cost and accessibility problems. Swim Ireland, in its submission also emphasises the importance of all the various component parts being in alignment -

"A major issue for us in this regard is the swimming infrastructure in place in this country. The sport of swimming needs to be made as accessible as possible. The primary aspects of this are providing quality teachers who can teach the sport of swimming to children (at an affordable price) and ensuring that both those teachers and children have access to swimming pools."

There is a convergence of interest between the needs of local authorities to have an ongoing sustainable level of custom at their swimming pools and the requirements of the Aquatics Programme. For the purpose of maximising participation of those in the Aquatics programme at the most cost effective prices for all concerned, a formal Forum for regular liaison and dialogue between the operators of public pools, the Department of Education, the Irish Water Safety Association and Swim Ireland would offer an opportunity for future co-operation and for

³⁵ Submission from Doreen McMorris, Assistant Chief Inspector, Department of Education and Science, dated 18th May, 2004

improving pool usage. In this regard, it might be appropriate that the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism take the lead in providing and sustaining this Forum to facilitate dialogue and co-operation between the "learning to swim" constituencies and the pool operators. Swim Ireland, in its submission draws attention to the type of co-operative actions that could be achieved by such co-ordination –

"....various different programmes can be catered for to ensure all persons are considered, for example, aquafit, pre and post natal aid, parent and child, personal training in the water and indeed competitive swimming programmes - we could liaise with respect to the type of pool facility required to implement such programmes. This also incorporates the user friendly aspect of the facility – Swim Ireland could have an input with respect to access needs for all, depth of water (children), temperature of water (senior citizens). We would also recommend the implementation of a National Learn to Swim programme which would provide a national standardization of swimming programmes across the spectrum of local authority swimming pools."

10.9 WATER SAFETY

In 1999, the Irish Water Safety Association formerly part of the National Safety Council was separately established by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government by way of Statutory Instrument.³⁶ Its services to the public are to include "the promotion of measures, including the advancement of education, related to the prevention of accidents in water" and "the provision of instruction in water safety, rescue, swimming and recovery drills." The need for these activities are highlighted by the number of drownings in the State – upwards of 150 each year. The Association depends on a large number of voluntary activists organised into county based water safety communities to give effect to its mandate to instruct people in swimming and lifesaving. The IWSA is funded through the Department of the Environment and this is supplemented by funding raised locally by the area communities.

In its submission, the Irish Water Safety Association are naturally supportive of the aims of the Aquatics strand of the national primary school curriculum, going on to state its vision that "now more than ever in the history of this State we require swimming pools to allow our communities learn to swim on this island nation that boasts some of the most valuable inland waterways in the world." The Association asserts that "every able-bodied person should be able to swim and those who may be disabled should be able to enjoy aqua fitness and develop their water confidence."

In further explanation the Association points out that our "temperate climate" allows only a short season where the public can enjoy our open water" and therefore "an alternative needs to be found." The creation of a network of local public access pools is seen by the Association as central to achievement of its overall goals.

10.10 ACCESS FOR THE DISABLED

The ability to use public swimming facilities is particularly attractive to the disabled. Buoyancy in water enhances ease of movement as it counteracts strain on muscles and joints caused by gravity. Local authorities have been cognisant of the requirements on them to provide disabled access to their facilities. They will point to car park spaces for the disabled and ramp access to buildings. However, while there might be such access to reception areas etc., standard designs and construction present obstacles for swimming pool use by people with disabilities. For example, standard changing cubicles are not sufficiently wide to take a wheelchair: wheelchair progress from the changing facilities to the pool is often obstructed by a footbath: entry to the pool is invariably by way of a ladder. However, relatively small changes in design and construction could enhance access for the disabled enormously. Changing cubicles could be widened and extended. Footbaths could be modified to allow wheelchairs by. Access to the water in the main pool could be by a series of steps rather than ladders.

Accordingly, in order to enhance access for the disabled, two actions are now required. Firstly, the proposed technical committee should be asked to recommend a redesigned standard swimming pool/changing facility along the lines of the above in consultation with people such as the Irish Wheelchair Association, the Ashling Foundation and the National Disability Authority. Secondly, regardless of when the next round of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme is launched, a new Access for the Disabled grant of up to €150 k. should be made available immediately to permit local authorities to adapt existing facilities to enhance such access.

10.11 SWIMMING POOLS WITHIN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

³⁶ The Irish Water Safety Association (Establishment) Order, 1999

Swimming pools provided by schools and colleges have traditionally been regarded as being outside the scope of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme. This was understandable given that they were effectively privately owned and privately run for the benefit of students. However, presumably because of ever increasing running and maintenance costs, school pools have increasingly been made available for public use, usually outside of school hours. Combining this public availability with the Government's health promotion strategies, National Children's Strategy, National Recreation Policy for Young People and the Aquatics programme within the primary education curriculum, would suggest that consideration should be given in any future round of the Local Authority Swimming Pool programme to allowing such pools to benefit from grant aid under the programme.

In summary, therefore the provision of sufficient public swimming pools throughout the country catering for both current and potential demand is essential to broader societal goals for healthy adult lifestyles and the promotion of all aspects of children's development. The provision of a reasonable public pool infrastructure is needed if the goals of the new Aquatics strand of the national primary school curriculum are to be met.

By their nature, public pools are ideal in providing access opportunities for the widest possible participation by the population in physical activity all year round.

The development of indicators assessing the linkages, in an Irish context, between participation in active lifestyles, such as swimming, and good health, need to be further developed by the Department of Health, with the assistance of local and regional health promotion units. Any reconsideration of where to locate new pool facilities under new rounds of the Pool Programme should have regard to the National Spatial Strategy, with locations focused more closely (albeit not an exclusive basis – depending on other criteria as well) on identified areas for significant population growth under the National Spatial Strategy and the construction and targeting of new pool developments in or adjacent to RAPID areas is necessary if social inclusion objectives are to be met. Swimming pools within the education sector should be considered eligible for grant aid under any future round of the programme, under appropriate conditions.

A Forum for regular dialogue and liaison between pool operators, the Department of Education (in the context of furthering outturn of Aquatics Curriculum), Irish Water Safety Association, Swim Ireland, coordinated by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, should be established. In addition the developing framework of Local Sports Partnerships should explore avenues through which to promote swimming pool use. Finally, disabled access should be approved through a redesign of new facilities and by additional grant aid to address deficits in current facilities.

11 CHAPTER ELEVEN: LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE SPORTS CAPITAL PROGRAMME

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Operating parallel to the LASPP has been the Sports Capital Programme. This Programme was responsible for grant aiding a number of public swimming pool projects in the past. In addition, in the early 1990s a number of local authorities were able to avail of other significant funding sources under Major Facilities Schemes, part of Capital Development Programmes administered by the Department of Education (Leisureland in Galway, Sligo Regional Sports Centre, Sean Kelly Sports Centre in Carrick-on-Suir, Bishopstown in Cork and the Athlone Regional Sports Centre). All of these pools are now open to the public and would be described as local authority pools.

11.2 FUNDING OF "DRY" FACILITIES

The Sports Capital Programme no longer funds local authority pools but does fund local authority projects involving sports fitness/exercise facilities adjacent to or part of public swimming pools, known as "dry" facilities. It is useful to look at this evolution as Sports Capital Programme funding for "dry facilities" has become increasingly important in the realisation of larger integrated public swimming pool projects. The impact of this funding is likely to increase as more and more pool projects come to include "dry" facilities to ensure business viability and seek to bridge gaps in capital funding.

By the early 1990s the strict adherence to pool only features for eligibility for funding and, by extension, exclusion of funding for "dry" facilities at swimming pools, was increasingly identified as a key contributory factor in public swimming pool operations being run at a loss, the conclusion being that "it is not reasonable at this time to continue to provide pools which are assuredly destined to be loss-makers for the want of these facilities."³⁷ As a result in 1993 the then Minister for the Environment approved, in principle, funding for up to 80% of modest

³⁷ Internal Departmental minute dated 5th May, 1993, Local Services Section, DoE.

ancillary facilities in swimming pools - children's pool, sauna, gymnasium, steam room, crèche, and cafeteria ³⁸ but each application was to be dealt with on its merits. In practice, due to the shortage of available funds, the "eligible" funds applied to "wet" facilities only, meaning toddlers pool, sauna and steam room only. However, lack of dry facilities was not the only reason for poor financial performance. Experience suggests that management/staffing and operational procedures were not as financially resilient as they might have been. Recognising the specialist nature of the facilities, many Councils now manage their public pools through independent companies, controlled by the Councils, employing specialist staff.

It was agreed that "dry" facilities in pool projects, such as indoor exercise and fitness facilities, should be eligible for grant assistance under the Sports Capital Programme. Accordingly, from 2000 onwards allocations have been made under the Sports Capital Programmes for such facilities attached to a number of pool projects – e.g. in respect of leisure centre projects involving refurbishment/construction of pools in Letterkenny, Churchfield in Cork city, Ballymun, Finglas in Dublin, Tullamore, Ballyfermot and Killarney.

In the cases of the leisure complexes in Finglas in Dublin, Ballymun, Letterkenny and Ballyfermot, the costs of the projects have approached €20 million and there are other projects in preparation that may approach this scale of cost.

In the case of Finglas and more recently in relation to Ballyfermot, the costs of the leisure complexes encompass not just swimming pools and fitness centres but also crèche facilities, multi-purpose youth centres and outdoor sports facilities, as well as providing for common car-parking and security on site.

The Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme is entirely Exchequer funded, intended primarily for local authorities but also open to voluntary groups that run pools. At the same time voluntary groups are precluded from applying for funding for pools under their control to the

³⁸ A decision not to issue a formal circular was made, in order not to create a situation of competition with leisure centres being funded at that time by the Department of Education under its Sports Capital Programmes.

SCP since their pools are not eligible and all such applications have to be made under the Pool Programme. At the same time such voluntary led projects are not always of top priority interest to local authorities.

11.3 CO-ORDINATION IN PROCESSING APPLICATIONS

Where pool projects are the subject of funding requests from both the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme and the Sports Capital Programme the timing of approvals on the "pool" side of the Department is affecting the possible timing of allocation decisions arising on the "sports" side. It is also noted that the financial estimates for the same project but in the separate applications has not always tallied (usually on account of having being calculated at different dates) and that detailed work has been needed in the Department to reconcile what would be two sets of estimated figures for the project. The requirements for Deeds of Covenant Charge are different in the two Programmes reflecting the fact that grants under the pool programme are paid to the local authority whereas the majority of grants under the SCP are paid to private organisations.

The process of co-ordination within the Department is now much improved and the objectives of the current Department Business Plan includes provision for closer co-operation between the two programmes. Nonetheless there is currently no single administrative stream in place to assess such "mixed" projects, which in effect, still reflects the separateness of the two funding schemes.

11.4 SPORTS CAPITAL PROGRAMME REVIEW

In taking an overview of the report of the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) Expenditure Review attention is drawn to the issue of local authority multi-use sports complex applications and makes a number of observations and recommendations that are also relevant to this Review. In the SCP Report it is highlighted that –

"there is a need to address the need for large Municipal multi-sport facilities in a more focussed and strategic manner with greater interaction and consultation required with local authorities in light of the high costs of construction and operation. Possible funding alternatives such as Public Private Partnership should be examined in this regard. The

future funding of all projects is of course dependent on the availability of adequate financial resources."

In summary terms, again in the context of what is relevant to the Pool programme, there is seen to be

"an increasing demand in recent years for large municipal type multi sport facilities for public use to be developed by local authorities.....Part of the reason for this may be the establishment in 2000 of the County and City Development Boards that have engaged in developing long-term strategic development plans for the next ten years. This is seen as a positive development as in many cases local authorities are in a good position to determine the areas in greatest need of facilities and in the case of larger facilities, their involvement in running the facilities may be central to their on-going sustainability.....as a result careful consideration is required as to the level and source of these additional monies to avoid placing an inordinate burden on public expenditure."

The SCP Report highlights the trend towards seeking support for provision of "dry" facilities in swimming pool projects and the implications in capital outlay terms –

"In the context of the local authority swimming pool programme operated in the Department of Arts, Sport & Tourism, there is an increasing demand for funding to establish dry facilities as part of the swimming complex to help towards meeting the high running costs associated with swimming pools. This has resulted in a trend towards the establishment of large sports centres beside swimming pools, which in addition to providing an integrated sporting facility also improves the chance of financial viability. However this involves major financial implications in terms of capital outlay and associated running costs. "

At the same time attention is drawn in the Report to the strategic implications of the establishment of large multi-purpose sports complexes -

"While these type of facilities may offer, in many instances, the best chance of providing access for people who otherwise would not participate in recreational sport, careful consideration should be given to the location of such centres, taking into account existing facilities in an area, population growth, proximity to public transport services, the demand and likely usage to justify the large financial investment they require. There may be possible funding alternatives to these types of projects, which need to be looked at, and this will be one of many issues, which will be considered as part of the sports facilities strategy to commence after completion of this review. The proposed national audit of sports facilities and associated planning model which will also be overseen as part of that exercise, will help to identify strategic locations for such facilities to maximise usage and improve access to recreational sporting facilities for everyone."

The SCP Report concludes that " the establishment of large Municipal multi-sports facilities in strategic locations is an opportunity to provide access for people of all ages to engage in recreational sport in a non-competitive environment at a non-prohibitive cost and open at times convenient to potential users." At the same time the Report refers to the "large costs associated with building such facilities and operating them thereafter which makes it essential that they are located in the optimum locations with careful consideration being given to how the running costs will be met."

In corroboration of the importance of the concept of the multi-use facility ILAM, in its submission expresses the view that the inclusion of "dry" facilities are essential "both for viability and also in the light of growing levels of obesity and lack of physical activity" and that therefore "it is more economic to build a good mix of facilities on one site rather than risk a facility mix being compromised due to lack of funding. This also adds value to the "leisure experience" of the average Irish family and their needs," in ILAM's view.

At the official opening of the Finglas Civic Centre in April, 2004, the Minister set out the basis for his support for this type of mixed civic development. He pointed to the funding coming from various public sources for the Centre as an example of "joined up government." Other sources of funding for the project includes monies from the Young Persons Facilities and Services Fund administered by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs³⁹ and from the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme.⁴⁰

The Minister went on to articulate a policy that endorses the observations of the Sports Programme Expenditure Review, saying that –

³⁹ The aim is to attract "at risk" young people in disadvantaged areas into facilities/ activities to divert them away from the dangers of substance abuse. The fund assists in the development of targeted preventative strategies, such as youth facilities, (e.g. for sport and recreation), and services in disadvantaged areas. Primary areas targeted include 14 Local Task Force Areas of Dublin, Bray and Cork, where a significant drug problem exists or has the potential to develop.

⁴⁰ The aims include improving the quality of childcare and to maintain and increase number of childcare facilities. The capital part of the scheme applies to community based/not for profit organisations and provides support towards building, refurbishment of community based childcare facilities. The Programme runs to end 2006.

" the development of an increasing number of municipal projects like this that cater to a range of sporting activities under one roof, is being encouraged by my Department and it is working closely with a number of local authorities around the country in promoting the development of such multi-purpose facilities. The purpose is to build upon and enhance the sense of community engendered by sporting clubs and through shared use of local facilities to make an area more pleasant to live in."

The arrival of the local authority led multi-use leisure facility in Ireland – apart from those already being constructed, others at an advanced stage of planning are known to include Athy, Naas, Dundrum (Co. Dublin) and Kilkenny - means that there needs to be a structured co-ordinated approach in relation to assessment of such local authority projects. This is particularly relevant now that grants or approvals for loans are being sought from a number of different sources at the same time in relation to the one project. It is accepted as inappropriate that each funding Department and agency providing grant assistance should not be cognizant of what another Department or agency is funding in relation to the same project and what the timescales are for draw-down of funds. For instance, a delay in the project due to one form of approval not being forthcoming may jeopardise grant funding from another source and endanger the viability of the whole project. There is a danger of double funding arising (if even in perception terms only). At the very least, co-ordination of responses to multiple grant applications for the one project needs to be in place to avoid overlap and to aid synchronisation of effort by all the entities involved. This is consistent with the provisions of the Local Government Act, 2001 whereby the taking of one Ministerial overview is a necessity if the cost of a project includes a requirement for a loan approval by the "appropriate" Government Minister.⁴¹ Section 106 of that Act provides that "borrowing by a local authority under this section shall only be with the sanction of the appropriate Minister." ⁴²

⁴¹ This would be in accord with the recommendation made in the Review of the Jeanie Johnston Project undertaken by Mr. Sean Cromien, former Sec-Gen., of the Department of Finance and Mazars Consultants, published in June, 2003 by Department of Communications. In this Review Mr. Cromien joins with the view of the Comptroller and Auditor General, in criticising "subsidy shopping" and recommends "the need for one State agency to be given responsibility" where public funding for a project is proposed to come from several sources. The Report was forwarded to Departments and State agencies involved to follow up on the recommendations. The **Report into the Jeanie Johnston Famine Ship Project** comprises two complementary reports, one by Mazars consultants and one by Mr. Cromien.

⁴² The "appropriate Minister" means "if the relevant borrowing or lending is in respect of matters which relate to the responsibility or interest of only one Minister of the Government other than the Minister (*of the Environment*), that Minister of the Government."

Clearly, it is necessary that this Department take a lead, at least in co-ordination terms, where the dominant elements in a project relate to sport and recreation.

The co-ordination role should entail interaction with all those Departments which have been asked to contribute to the pool project for example, Department of Justice, Equality and law Reform, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

In conclusion continuing and close co-operation in the operation of the Pool and Sports Capital Programmes is seen as necessary. Consideration should be given to the establishment of one Unit within the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism to deal with applications for funding for sport (including pool) facilities applications coming from local authorities.

The Department should take the lead role in co-ordination in respect of public pool projects receiving monies from several Government Departments, where the pool part of the project forms the dominant feature of the project.

12 CHAPTER TWELVE: FINDINGS .

This Chapter attempts to bring together the main findings from each of the preceding Chapters, grouped under the following headings –

- Findings from earlier rounds of the Programme
- Findings from current round
- Efficiency of the administrative processes in place,
- Programme performance and effectiveness,
- Performance indicators,
- Conclusions

12.1 FINDINGS FROM EARLIER ROUNDS OF THE PROGRAMME

The experience of the LASPP from its inception in the early 1970s up to 1998 shows

- the importance that local communities place on having a local public pool
- that prioritisation by local authorities of proposed new pools can be improved
- the need for much greater focus on sustainability of pool operations by local authorities
- the need for local authorities to provide an ongoing system of funding as older pools need refurbishment or replacement
- the need for the Guidelines to respond to technical innovation on an ongoing basis and changing administrative environment.
- Closure of the programme for an extended period can lead to a shortage of pools in urban areas where the population has increased significantly.

12.2 FINDINGS FROM CURRENT ROUND

- By their nature, public pools are excellent in to providing opportunities for the widest possible participation in physical activity.
- There is a significantly insufficient number of public pools throughout the country catering for both current and potential demand in comparison to Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- The provision of a strong public pool infrastructure is needed if the goals of the Aquatics strand of the primary school curriculum, are to be met.
- In the future, the location of new pool developments should be focused more closely on identified areas for significant population growth under the National Spatial Strategy.
- The continued construction and targeting of new pool developments in or adjacent to RAPID areas is necessary if social inclusion objectives are to be met.
- The advent of multi-annual capital envelopes under the National Development Plan, 2007 – 2013 will make easier the planning of approval of pool projects as the lead-in and construction times are spread out over 2 to 3 years.
- A PPP, in the formal use of the term, is not a practical proposition for the usual scale of a public swimming pool project. However, the "bundling" of say 10/15 projects many offer opportunities for design and construction cost savings.
- In areas where there is already significant and suitable private pool provision in situ, time-share arrangements should first actively be pursued by local authorities with the private sector before instead pressing ahead with the provision of green-field site public pool facilities.
- The scale and location of private pools strengthens the need to create equality in terms of public access at reasonable cost in areas of disadvantage, as in, or adjacent to, RAPID areas.

12.3 EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES IN PLACE

- In the devising of parameters for future rounds of the Programme, a greater targeting of areas where the injection of new pool resources can be shown as producing maximum

impact, in terms of improved levels of usage/participation, is needed. To this end the Department should develop, in-house, specialist expertise on spatial matters.

- Close co-operation in the operation of the Pool and the Sports Capital Programmes is necessary and co-ordination on the funding of large scale municipal multi-use sports facilities critical.
- The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism should be taking the lead role in co-ordination in respect of pool projects receiving monies from several Government Departments, where the pool part of the project forms the dominant feature of the project.
- The number of procedural steps, amount of time and resources devoted to taking projects from application to decision on allocation needs to be rationalised.
- Stronger post construction monitoring/reporting by the local authorities to the Department is required.
- Identified changes to the terms and conditions of approvals are useful in strengthening the effectiveness of the Programme.

12.4 PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS

- As of 2000, the then Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation set itself an ambitious programme of work to bring forward 50 projects, in the process spending €57 million in the first three year period, targeting the pools identified by ILAM in the 1999 Conditions report, provide for a reasonable balance as between new and existing pools, provide for social inclusion and develop a role for the private sector in the work.
- As of mid March 2007, the number of pool projects completed (23), under construction (17), at tender stage (3), preparing contract documents (7), shows an increasing and satisfactory rate of progression of projects.
- Goals to see the pools referred to in ILAM's 1999 "Conditions" report upgraded,/refurbished/replaced, shows good results in the period to end 2005, with 23 of the 31 cited pools either having been funded or with projects at an advanced stage of preparedness.

- Goals to see pools located in, or adjacent to, RAPID areas (18 out of 22 projects in RAPID areas grant aided thus far) shows highly satisfactory results in the period to mid 2007.
- The objective of seeing commercially viable facilities established and the promotion of operational "best practice" within the local authorities has led to well thought out proposals.
- The majority of the facilities currently open to the public are being operated at present at a broadly breakeven level. However, there may not be a sufficiently high return in the trading position to cover unforeseen maintenance or replacement costs
- There is a need for focus on refurbishment/replacement of public pools built in the 1970s and now reaching the end of their envisaged life-span.
- Consideration should be given to the restructuring of the Work Units within the Department so that one Unit will have responsibility for dealing with applications for funding for large scale municipal multi-use sports facilities coming from local authorities.

12.5 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Targets need to be developed, based on the number of persons per public pools, on a national and regional basis.
- Performance indicators, ideally developed locally but capable of being applied nationally, should be established covering broad levels of usage/participation i.e. hours open per week, overall visitor numbers, participation rates for different categories of user etc.
- Performance indicators should attempt to quantify, on an ongoing basis, the numbers of primary school children both receiving and not receiving water safety and learning to swim tuition.

12.6 CONCLUSIONS

12.6.1 The findings show that there are significant recreational, sporting, health and social cohesion reasons for continuing the Local Authority Swimming Pools Programme into the medium term.

One of the striking conclusions from an examination of various strategies that have been developed and outlined in Chapter Ten is the degree to which they overlap at certain junctures, particularly in relation to the focus on the provision of quality leisure facilities including swimming pools. Thus, the Strategy for Children sees swimming as an important life skill to be learned; so too is this recognised in the Aquatics strand of the Primary School Curriculum. The Health Strategy sees swimming as important in sustaining good health and avoiding obesity. Social strategies see the provision of leisure facilities as enhancing societal well-being and combating disadvantage. Elements of these strategies coalesce, in implementation terms, within the strategic focus of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. It is clear that a commonality of view would be that everyone should have the opportunity to learn to swim and thus be enabled to practice this skill as a recreational activity throughout their lives. It is beyond the remit of this Review to examine in detail or make a recommendation on this strategic point but it is appropriate that attention be drawn to the high degree of cross strategic convergence that is apparent from the description of the interlocking strategies already in place.

It can be seen that the Programme originated with the then Department of the Environment over 50 years ago because of its role in overseeing the work of local authorities and on account of that Department's expertise in relation to water management. The transfer to this Department indicated that other strategic issues were now coming to the fore - such as how to co-ordinate the provision of sport and leisure facilities so as to make a real and substantial contribution to the social fabric of the country. There would also appear to be scope for co-operation with the Arts side of the Department in relation to any arts projects being developed under the ACCESS programme where these might be planned to be part of a cluster of public amenities on one site. Application of the Per Cent for Arts Scheme to pool projects helps the process of interaction between the different sides of the Department, as envisaged in the Department's 2005-2007 Statement of Strategy.

12.6.2 The Pool Programme in the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism

An issue that might be addressed is the optimum arrangement for the administration of the LASPP. While the Programme had been administered by the Department of the Environment in the past, the position now is that the Government has decided that the Department of Arts, Sport

and Tourism has the primary responsibility for supporting the provision of sporting facilities throughout the country. Although most local public pools are predominantly used for recreational purposes – only 2% of visitors use pools for competition training – the fact is, a strong pattern has been emerging in recent years of pools being located as part of larger multi-use sporting facilities, where outdoor pitches and other indoor sporting amenities are also available. There is a need for continued close liaison between those at central level engaged with supporting the development of local authority sporting facilities. Accordingly it is clear that the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme should continue to be administered by that Department As the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism.

12.6.3 A New Round of the Programme – parameters

Bearing in mind likely future demand for swimming facilities due both to the deterioration in the older stock of pools and significant population changes over the past few years and likely in the future, consideration must be given as to the likely parameters to govern any new round of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme which may be launched in the future. The fact that local authorities, despite some intense local pressure, have not proceeded with projects without grant aid would suggest that there is no deadweight in the programme. Any new round might be configured with eligibility criteria targeting key strategic objectives. As with the current round, normal financial and managerial/operational criteria might continue to apply, that is, to establish the sustainability of the project. Emphasis should now be placed specifically on:

- National Spatial Strategy recommendations;
- Size of local catchment;
- Support for disadvantaged areas;
- Proximity of primary and secondary schools in the catchment;
- Proximity of other public swimming facilities;
- Proximity of other large-scale public sporting facilities.

In the event of a new round being launched, local authorities might be advised that they must prioritise projects within their area, including, if necessary, projects which might have been submitted under the current round but which might move down the priority given the lapse of time. In addition, swimming pools within the education sector, which provide a reasonable level of public access, should be eligible under the programme for grant aid towards the cost of

refurbishment, on similar conditions as apply to other refurbishment projects being promoted by/through local authorities.

12.6.4 Level of Grant

Another issue to be considered is the level of the grant which has not changed since 1993. In 1993 the level was regarded as sufficient to pay for the full cost of one pool but, over time, the value of the grant has been eroded. At present the level of grant equates to about 50% of the eligible costs of the pool. This has not however been a disincentive to the number of pools being promoted by local authorities. Nonetheless, the level of about 50% should be regarded as the lowest amount that might be contributed from central level, if the influence of the Department, from an overall planning and setting of parameters perspective, is to be secured. At the same time, what is regarded as "eligible" expenditure has not changed over the last 20 years, even though expectations of what might be regarded as eligible, is now wider than it was then. Over the years there have been various calls from local authorities for support items such special hoists for the disabled, water flumes, slides, wave machines etc. as part of a pool's "basic kit." Accordingly, there is a case for accepting the merit of a modest increase in the size of the grant, not least to address the changing level of expectation as to what is to be regarded as "eligible." With building inflation between 1997 and 2005 running at over 60%, any modest increase in the present grant level (set at €3.8million in 1997 and pitched to coincide with the total eligible cost of a single pool) would easily be justified. The current maximum grant of €3.8m does not now match the percentage rates quoted in the programme (80%/90%). In any revision of the monetary grant rate, it is unlikely that such percentage grant rates would be reachable in monetary terms. Accordingly in order to ensure positive discrimination in favour of RAPID areas, a monetary differential might apply between the grant rates available in RAPID and non RAPID areas.

12.6.5 Structure of grant

At present, the structure of the grant does not discriminate between refurbishment and replacement/new pools. It is in the long-term interests of the pool programme that pools should be clearly located in the optimum locations and that a refurbishment should only take place when

it is established that a pool's present location is the optimum one and when a refurbishment is demonstrated to be the more economic option. Were the grant levels to remain at the same level for both refurbishment/new pools then there would be no particular incentive to examine the issue of the optimal location. As important, it would be expected that a refurbishment would last at least 10 years – whereas a new pool could be expected to last at least 25 years. Therefore the level of grant for a refurbishment might be set at a more modest level than that for a new /replacement pool.

Finally, the question of a special grant to improve disabled access might be addressed regardless of whether a new round of the programme is to be opened.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 OVERARCHING

13.1.1 The Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme should continue as a significant element of the Government's sporting infrastructure programme. From the limited data available, it is seen to be effective in generating high and increasing levels of participation and efficiency in operation through stronger viability testing and design applied by local authorities.

13.1.2. The following definition of a public pool is recommended:

Any swimming pool, or proposed swimming pool, to which the general public has or will have a significant degree of public access, which addresses local social inclusion issues, which is supported by the relevant local authority and whose access arrangements are consistent with the relevant objectives of the County/City Development Board.

13.1.3 The existing Programme, and any new round of this Programme scheme should continue to be administered by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, as an integral part of the Department's overall sporting infrastructure programme.

13.1.4 The objective of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme should be:

"to provide high quality public swimming facilities on a national basis by encouraging and supporting the establishment and maintenance by local authorities, either by themselves or in conjunction with others, of high quality well managed swimming pools and associated facilities in appropriate locations, open to the public, at reasonable prices and times. Local authorities should specifically promote and maximise the usage of such facilities by children for water safety and swimming as a sport and leisure activity within a social inclusion environment".

13.1.5 Given the length of time which has elapsed since the closure of the current round of the programme, a new round should now be opened rather than awaiting the completion of the current round.

13.2 GRANT LEVEL AND STRUCTURES

13.2.1 Subject to the approval of the Minister for Finance

- the maximum level of grant should be increased from €3.8 million to €4.5 million in, or very adjacent to, and servicing RAPID areas and to €4 million in non RAPID areas
- in the case of the refurbishment of an existing pool, a grant rate of 80% (90% in RAPID areas) should be subject to a maximum grant of €2m
- swimming pools within the education sector which provide a reasonable level of public access should be eligible under the programme for grant aid towards the cost of refurbishment, under conditions which apply to other refurbishment projects being promoted by/through local authorities.
- a specific grant should be established in respect of existing public pools for enhancing access for the disabled subject to a maximum grant of €150,000.

13.2.2 As discussed in Paragraph 8.4, the "Bundling" of potential projects in a public private joint venture project may be worth investigating.

13.3 FRAMEWORK

13.3.1 While closer collaboration and co-ordination between officials dealing with the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme and the Sports Capital Programme has been established, consideration should be given to establishing a dedicated Unit within the Department for sports/pool applications from local authorities.

13.3.2 A Forum for regular dialogue and liaison between pool operators, the Department of Education (in the context of helping to roll out the Aquatics strand of the Curriculum), Irish Water Safety Association and Swim Ireland, representatives of local authorities and chaired by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism should be established.

13.3.3 A standing Technical Group should be established under the Chairmanship of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, with representatives from OPW, D/EHLG, representatives of local authorities together with nominations from Swim Ireland, the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management, the RIAI, and from any other body considered appropriate by the committee. The purpose of the Technical Group would be to facilitate the provision of up to date information to local authorities on technical matters. One of the primary tasks would be to update the technical guidelines which set minimum standards for a public swimming pool.

13.4 PROCEDURAL

13.4.1 The administration of the programme should be improved with less "stages" in the approval process. Specifically, the Feasibility Report stage and the Preliminary Report stage might be combined as the initial application under a new round; at the time of approval of Contract Documents, the Minister might also approve the grant leaving the Tender stage to be completed and approved by the local authority itself.

13.5 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

13.5.1 An overall performance indicator of the ratio of persons per public pool at national and regional levels (and sub-regional if necessary), should be adopted. The ratios should reduce over time reflecting a higher degree of public access to such facilities.

13.5.2 The effectiveness of the Programme as a whole should be assessed, on an annual basis, in relation to usage/participation rates on the basis of data provided by local authorities.

13.5.3 The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism should devise a robust method of aggregating and analysing data on levels of swimming participation captured locally. Specifically, local authorities should demonstrate that grant aid has generated an increase in participation rates and should provide annual statistics to the Department on usage, broken down by category.

13.5.4. Local performance indicators for individual public pools should quantify annually the numbers of primary school children receiving water safety and learning to swim tuition and the number of primary schools involved.

13.6 TARGETS, CRITERIA AND PRIORITISATION

13.6.1 Over the next five years, including 2007, the national target for the programme should be to reduce the number of persons per pool from the current figure of about 58,000 persons to 50,000 persons at end of 2011. Assuming population is some 4,469,000⁴³ by end 2011, this target will require a growth in the basic stock of public pools from 73 at end 2006 to 89 at end 2011 i.e. an increase of 16 *new* pools. The early part of the current round of the programme produced a ratio of refurbishment to new build of the order of 2:1 but it was tending more towards 1:1 in recent times. To reach this target and working on the basis of a 1:1 ratio, the construction of local authority pools would have to reach 32 over the next 5 years, i.e. an average of 6 constructions per year. The grant cost of such a programme would be of the order of €27m per annum or €135m over the five year period. In this regard, it is noted that the Department's capital allocation for this programme over the period of the National Development Plan (2007 – 2013) is some €184m. See **Appendix K** for projection of construction starts 2007-2011.

13.6.2 National spatial strategy considerations, catchment usage and social inclusion criteria should be applied by the Department when assessing applications for grant aid involving

⁴³ Projected population is 4,469,000 in 2011 – Source, table M Variant F1, headed Projected Population 2006-2011, extracted from **Population and Labour Force Projections 2006-2036**, CSO.

construction of public pool facilities, specifically such issues as size of local catchment, numbers of primary and secondary schools in the catchment; addressing local disadvantage; proximity of other large-scale public sporting facilities etc – see Paragraph 12.6.3.

13.6.3 Where a local authority is involved in the development of more than one pool within its area of administration the promoting Council should be asked to prioritise its pool projects.

13.6.4 The relevant City or County Development Board should be consulted by the local authority in the prioritisation of pool projects and in providing advice on how best to meet the Board's obligations in meeting its social inclusion obligations.

13.7 QUALITY ASSURANCE

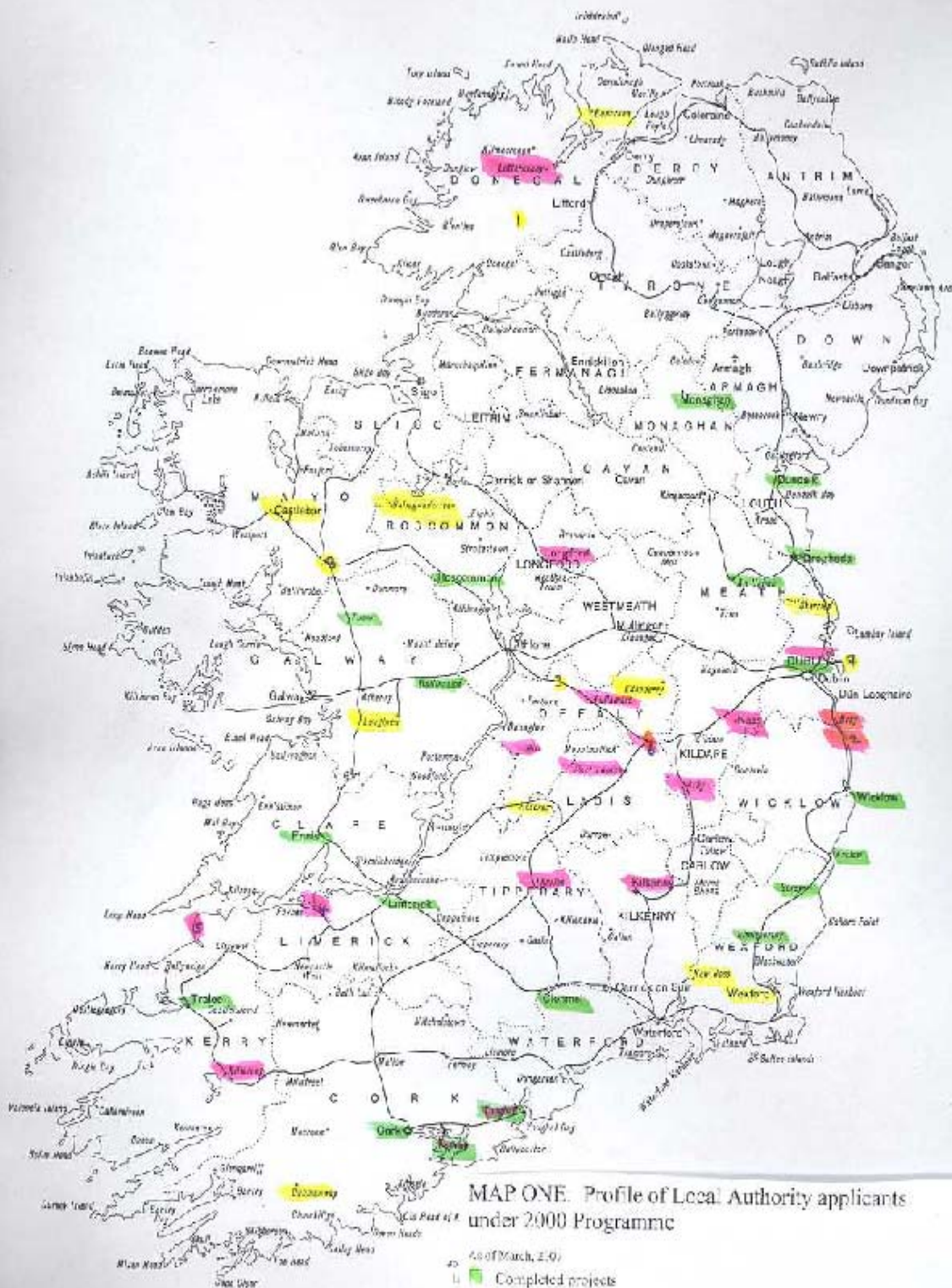
13.7.1 Participation by local authorities in the White Flag Award scheme should henceforth be a condition of grant aid under the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme.

13.7.2 The UK Charter mark "QUEST" should be examined by the Technical Group to see if aspects of it might usefully be adopted in the context of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme.

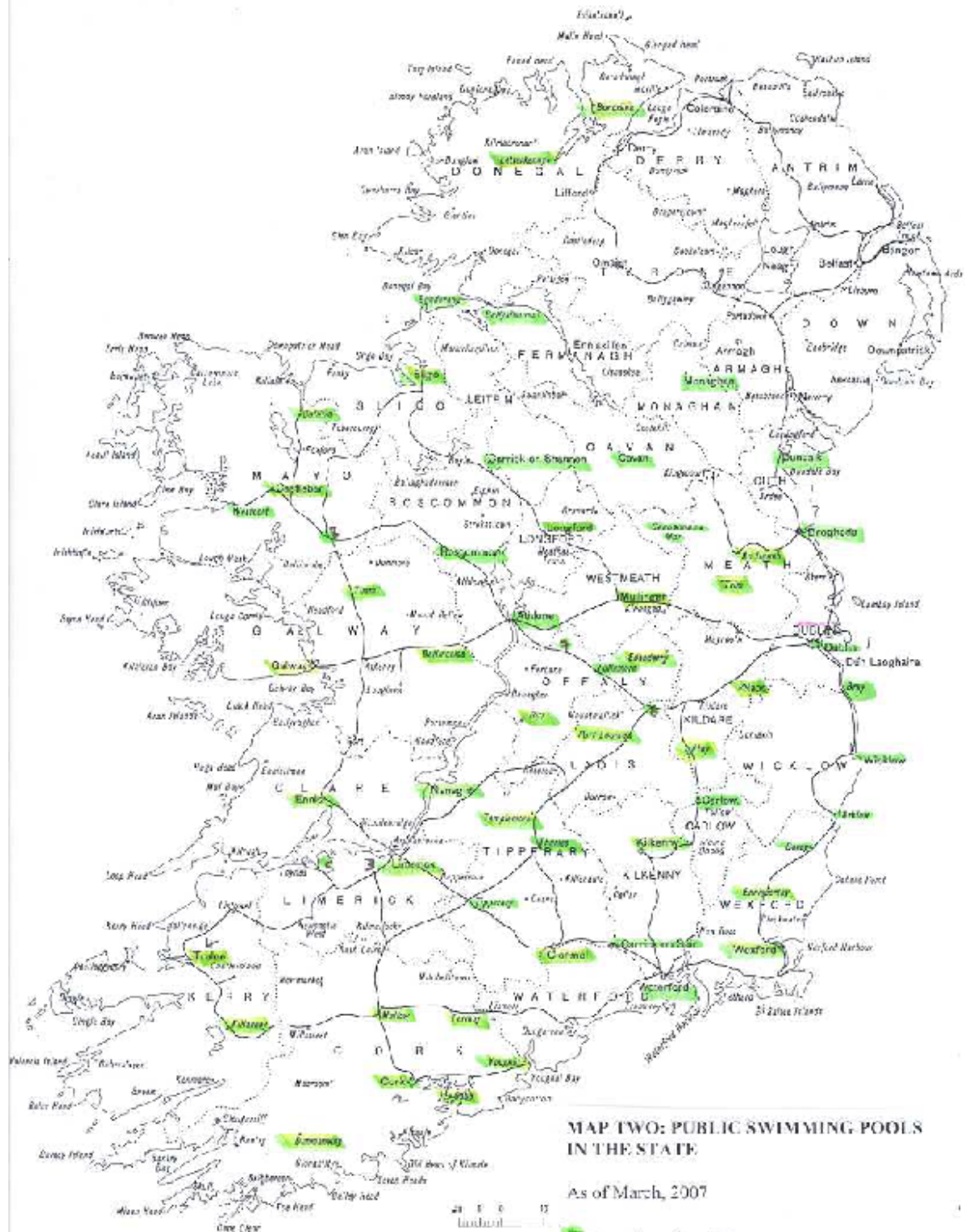
13.8 TIMESCALES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

13.8.1 These recommendations, if agreed, should be incorporated into the annual Business Plans of the Department.

IRELAND



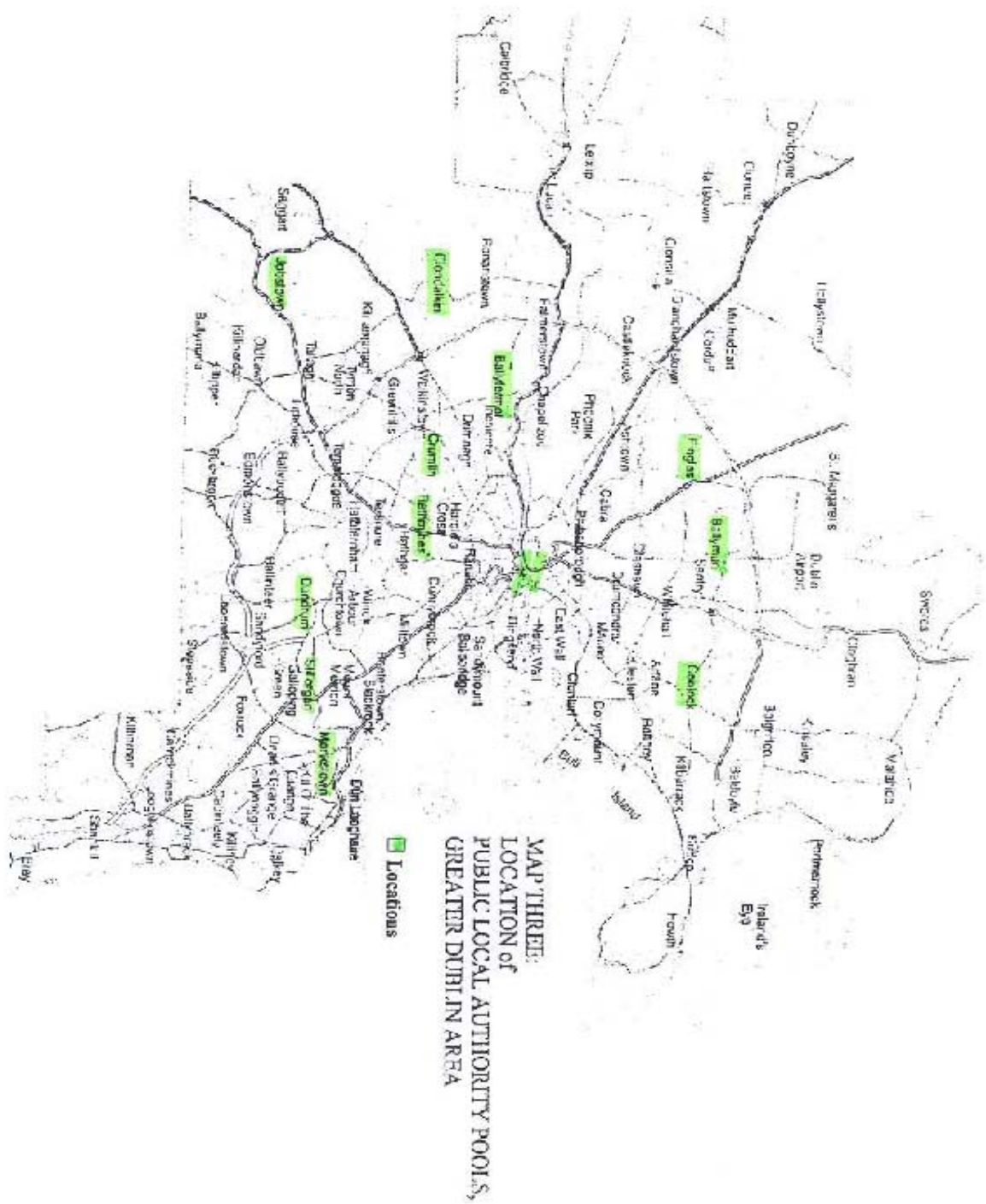
IRELAND



S.D. Dublin

Location of pool where not otherwise specified

1. Dublin City - Ballyfermot, Ballymun, Finglas, South Dublin - Clonsilla, Jobstown, Dan Loughlin - Glendalough (Sillagh), Dundrum, Monksland
2. Cork City - Bishopscourt, Churchfield, Douglas
3. Limerick City - Grove Island, Roxboro
4. Tralee - Clonsilla, Aquadome
5. Askeaton, Co. Limerick
6. Poulislington, Co. Offaly
7. Carr, Co. Offaly
8. Clonsilla, Co. Mayo



LOCAL AUTHORITY SWIMMING POOL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE REVIEW – APPENDICES & REFERENCES

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APPENDIX B	<i>List of Local Authority Swimming Pools</i>
APPENDIX C	<i>Procedures for Planning, Approval and Financing of Swimming Pools and Technical Guidelines</i>
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APPENDIX K	<i>Projected number of pool construction starts 2007-2011</i>
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APPENDIX A

Summary of legislation governing local authority involvement in swimming pool provision.

The original basis for local authorities to provide publicly accessible swimming pools related to the Baths and Wash Houses (Ireland) Act, 1846. This *".....empowered Local Authorities to erect buildings for Public Baths.....and make charges for their use of or admission to...employ life-guards and arrange for the giving of instructions in swimming....make bye-laws in respect of public bathing and the regulations of swimming baths"*, the first public swimming pool or bath was built in the late 1800's. From that time until the mid 1960's a modest number of additional indoor and outdoor public pools were built by Local Authorities and a number of colleges and schools throughout the country.

In 1948 the Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act was introduced which recognised the need to provide additional *".....conveniences for bathers (including dressing accommodation, sanitary conveniences, shower baths, First-Aid equipment and refreshments)"*. It also provided use *"....for swimming practises, swimming contests, galas or other entertainment's."* The 1948 Act also recognised the role of Local Authorities in the ongoing maintenance of such facilities, but critically *"....with the consent of the Minister for the Environment to improve or extend it"*.

But until 1994, all planning of Local Authority pools was on the basis of this Act, but in that year, this was subsequently repealed by the Local Government Act (Amenity, Recreation, Library and other functions). This broadened greatly the scope of Local Authorities in their ability to construct and operate "Recreation Amenities" including partnerships with outside agencies.

The Local Government Act, 2001 consolidates and updates the 1994 provisions. Under section 67 of the 2001 Act a local authority is empowered to *".....engage in such activities or do such things (including the incurring of expenditure) as it considers necessary or desirable to promote the interests of the local community....."* and in this context *"the matters"* shall also include *"sports, games and similar activities"* cited in Schedule 13 to the Act, and also *"the provision....ofswimming pools."* Section 67 has to be read in conjunction with section 66 of that Act, which sets out that the functions of local authorities can be limited by way of statutory regulation by the Minister, with the consent of the Minister for Finance. This section also empowers the Minister to prescribe by regulation the amount of expenditure by local authorities.

APPENDIX B – List of Local Authority Pools

Appendix B - List of Local Authority pools										
Local Authority Indoor pools	Local Authority	Earliest Construction	Most recent refurbishment / replacement	2000 LASPP project	National Development Plan	Outdoor Pools	Local Authority	National Development Plan	Pools in LASPP but not constructed	National Development Plan regions
1 Craiguecullen	Carlow County Council				Southern	Baginbato	Carlow County Council	Southern	Youghal	Southern
2 Drumalee	Cavan County Council	1995			BMW	Ballinakill	Laois County Council	BMW	Jobstown	Eastern
3 Ennis	Clare County Council	1967	2001	yes	Southern	Drumshanbo	Leitrim County Council	BMW	Loughrea	BMW
4 Dunmanway	Cork County Council	1978	1991	yes	Southern	Carrick-on-Shannon	Leitrim County Council	BMW	Ballyunion	Southern
5 Buncrana	Donegal County Council		1990	yes	BMW	Belmullet	Mayo County Council	BMW	Killamey	Southern
6 Ballyshannon	Donegal County Council	1974	1997		BMW	Ballyhaunis	Mayo County Council	BMW	Skerries	Eastern
7 Clondalkin	South Dublin County Council			yes	Eastern	Charlestown	Mayo County Council	BMW	Roscrea	Southern
8 Dundrum	Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Co Co	1971		yes	Eastern	Castlereagh	Roscommon County Council	BMW	Ballybofey/Stranorlar	BMW
9 Monkstown	Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Co Co	1974	1996		Eastern	Borrisokane	North Tipperary County Council	Southern	Bray	Eastern
10 Glendalough	Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Co Co	1966		yes	Eastern	Ballina	North Tipperary County Council	Southern	Greystones	Eastern
11 Tuam	Galway County Council	1971	2006	yes	BMW	Kilmavee	Mayo County Council	BMW	Ballaghaderreen	BMW
12 Naas	Kildare County Council	1971		yes	Eastern				St Michaels	Eastern
13 Athy	Kildare County Council	1977	1995	yes	Eastern				St Josephs	Eastern
14 Portlaoise	Laois County Council	1971		yes	BMW					
15 Portlannington	Laois County Council	1974		yes	BMW					
16 Askeaton	Limerick County Council		1997	yes	Southern					
17 Longford town	Longford County Council	1968	1991	yes	BMW					
18 Edenderry	Offaly County Council	1972	1998	yes	BMW					
19 Clara	Offaly County Council	1973	1998	yes	BMW					
20 Birr	Offaly County Council	1971	1998	yes	BMW					
21 Ballina	Mayo County Council		1989		BMW					
22 Castlebar	Mayo County Council	1981		yes	BMW					
23 Claremorris	Mayo County Council	1978		yes	BMW					
24 Westport	Mayo County Council				BMW					
25 Trim	Meath County Council	1972			Eastern					
26 Kells	Meath County Council	1972			Eastern					
27 Navan	Meath County Council	1973	2000	yes	Eastern					
28 Roscommon town	Roscommon County Council	1972	2002	yes	BMW					
29 Tipperary town	South Tipperary County Council	1973	1998		Southern					
30 Carrick-on-Suir (sean kelly)	South Tipperary County Council		1994		Southern					
31 Gorey/Courtown	Wexford County Council		2001	yes	Southern					
32 Douglas	Cork City Council	1976			Southern					
33 Bishopstown	Cork City Council	Feb, 1997			Southern					
34 Churchfield	Cork City Council	1976	2005	yes	Southern					
35 Ballyfermot	Dublin City Council	1974		yes	Eastern					
36 Townsend Street	Dublin City Council	1967	2000		Eastern					
37 Crumlin	Dublin City Council	1970			Eastern					
38 Coolock	Dublin City Council	1978			Eastern					
39 Ballymun	Dublin City Council	1976	2005	yes	Eastern					
40 Finglas	Dublin City Council	1974	2004	yes	Eastern					
41 Sean McDermott Street	Dublin City Council	1978			Eastern					
42 Rathmines	Dublin City Council	1978			Eastern					
43 Salthill	Galway City Council	1972	1993		BMW					
44 Grove Island	Limerick City Council		2004	yes	Southern					
45 Roxboro	Limerick City Council	1972	1996		Southern					
46 Waterford Crystal	Waterford City Council	1999			Southern					
47 Emmet St, Clonmel	Clonmel Borough Council	1973	2004	yes	Southern					
48 Rathmullen, Drogheda	Drogheda Borough Council	1979		yes	BMW					
49 Greensbridge, Kilkenny	Kilkenny Borough Council	1970		yes	Southern					
Local Authority Indoor pools	Local Authority	Earliest Construction	Most recent refurbishment / replacement	LASPP project	Development Plan regions	Outdoor Pools	Local Authority	Development Plan regions	Pools in LASPP but not constructed	
50 Cleveragh Pool, Sligo	Sligo Borough Council		1994		BMW					
51 Ferrybank, Wexford	Wexford Borough Council	1974	1993	yes	Southern					
52 Ferrybank, Arklow	Arklow Town Council		1999	yes	Eastern					
53 Retreat Road, Athlone	Athlone Town Council	1974	2002		BMW					
54 Cleaghmore, Ballinasloe	Ballinasloe Town Council	1972	2003	yes	BMW					
55 Bundoran	Bundoran Town Council	1975	1992		BMW					
56 Carrignafay, Cobh	Cobh Town Council	1975		yes	Southern					
57 Dundalk	Dundalk Town Council		2002	yes	BMW					
58 Templeshannon, Enniscorthy	Enniscorthy Town Council		1999	yes	Southern					
59 Fermoy Park	Fermoy Town Council		1993		Southern					
60 High Road, Letterkenny	Letterkenny Town Council		1989	yes	BMW					
61 New Road, Mallow	Mallow Town Council		1997		Southern					
62 Clones Rd, Monaghan	Monaghan Town Council	1976+1964	2000	yes	BMW					
63 Mullingar	Mullingar Town Council	1971	1998		BMW					
64 Dublin Road, Nenagh	Nenagh Town Council	1973	1992		Southern					
65 Barrack Lane, New Ross	New Ross Town Council	1975		yes	Southern					
66 Town Hall, Templemore	Templemore Town Council				Southern					
67 Thurles	Thurles Town Council	1974		yes	Southern					
68 Clounalour, Tralee	Tralee Town Council	1974	2004	yes	Southern					
69 AquaDome, Tralee	Tralee Town Council	1994	2003	yes	Southern					
70 Tullamore (outdoor being converted to indoor)	Tullamore Town Council			yes	BMW					
71 Wicklow	Wicklow Town Council		1999	yes	Eastern					

APPENDIX C

Procedures for the Planning, Approval and Financing of Swimming Pools and Technical Guidelines

Memorandum LSS 1/98

**January, 1998
Department of the Environment
and Local Government**

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Checklists for completion at various stages

Appendix 2 – Revised Technical Guidelines

1. GENERAL BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The purpose of this Memorandum is to make local authorities aware of the Department's requirements in relation to the planning, approval and funding of swimming pool projects; and to ensure a uniformity of approach by all local authorities when formulating and submitting relevant proposals.

The procedures outlined in the Memorandum also apply to the provision of new pools or the refurbishment of existing facilities by voluntary organisations – where the application for capital funding is supported by the local authority.

- 1.2 The principal stages involved in seeking approval and getting a commitment of funding from the Department for the provision of and refurbishment of swimming pools are described in the Memorandum, together with details of the necessary documentation which should accompany each submission to the Department. These stages may be summarised as follows:

- Preliminary Report, including prior feasibility study and market research
- Contract Documents
- Tender Stage
- Construction Stage

Particular attention is drawn to the Check Lists to be completed, at each stage (Appendix 1).

- 1.3 Local authorities or voluntary bodies should not progress to the next stage of a project unless and until specific approval, in writing, has been received from the Department for all previous stages. Given the limited funding made available annually for the swimming pool programme and the competing demands from local authorities for these scarce resources, local authorities must adhere to the procedures set out hereunder to ensure the orderly management of the swimming pool programme by the Department and that expenditure on the programme is kept within the annual capital provision in the Department's Vote.
- 1.4 The Department's Technical Guidelines for Swimming Pool Construction have also been updated and revised to bring them more into line with modern practices and are incorporated in this Memorandum (Appendix 2). The Guideline Specifications should be adhered to in the planning/design of all swimming pool projects for which grant assistance is sought from the Department.

2. PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS **Feasibility Study**

- 2.1 As a first step, where it is proposed to provide a new pool, it is essential that the local authority or voluntary body should prepare a detailed Feasibility Study for submission to the Department.
- 2.2 In particular, the Study should cover

- the location of the proposed pool, and its proximity to other recreation and leisure facilities in the locality
- estimated cost and suitability of the site with particular reference to its known geological structure, its access to
 - a) public water and sewerage services
 - b) public roads
 - c) public car parks, and
 - d) its zoning under the planning code.
- the economic viability of the proposed pool, including market research to establish the demand for the proposed facility. It is essential that swimming pools meet the established needs of their areas and avoid overcapacity.
- the estimated likely effect on other swimming pools within the catchment area of the proposed pool
- an up-to-date estimate of the overall capital cost of the proposed pool, inclusive of VAT, site costs, Consultants fees, etc., together with an outline of how the project will be funded.
- projected annual operational/maintenance costs and projected annual revenue for new pool.

2.3 A Feasibility Study, suitably adapted, should be prepared in connection with the refurbishment of an existing pool in order to consider the various options and to determine the optimum approach to be adopted. Where major refurbishment works are being considered for an existing pool the costs of refurbishment as compared with the cost of providing a new pool in a different site, should be considered in the Study.

2.4 The Feasibility Study should be submitted to the Department for assessment and approval. The local authority should not proceed with the next stage of a project until the Department has conveyed formal approval, in writing, to the Study.

Use of consultants for Feasibility Study

2.5 Where it is proposed to engage Consultants to carry out a Feasibility Study in respect of a new pool, the local authority should make it clear that, if the project proceeds, the Consultants may not necessarily be engaged on later stages of the proposal.

The local authority must ensure that the Feasibility Study is done on an objective basis and not as a "case-making" exercise.

The local authority should note that if the project does not proceed, the costs of the feasibility study will not be recoupable by the Department.

Appointment of Consultants for Preliminary Proposals, Design and Construction Stages

2.6 To analyse and co-ordinate the design/costing evaluation, the appointment of consultants should be considered where the relevant expertise is not readily available from their own staff.

- 2.7 Where a local authority propose to engage Consultants in relation to the provision of a new pool or the refurbishment of an existing facility, their appointment must be in accordance with the Department's Circular B.C. 5/87 of 23 December, 1987 on Procedures for the Engagement of Consultants and Settlement of Fees on Public Construction Contracts, as updated and amended by Circular B.C. 9/93 of 13 December, 1993 and subsequent circulars.
- 2.8 The local authority should invite outline proposals from at least three consultants, each of whom should preferably have specific experience in designing swimming pools – which requires a special expertise to ensure the optimum design solution in terms of (a) initial construction costs (b) lifetime operational and maintenance costs and (c) energy saving and recycling. Prospective consultants should be asked to list any previous pool(s) designed by them. Enquiries should be made of the relevant client(s) who commissioned these pools as to the outcome in terms of building the pools to budget, on time, and to the required standard; and subsequent experience in terms of cost effective and reliable operation of the pools.
- 2.9 The local authority is required to seek the prior approval, in writing, of the Department to the appointment of Consultants. When seeking approval, the local authority should submit details of the consultancy services to be provided, the level of fees negotiated and the Design Brief prepared by the local authority, which sets out the terms under which the consultants will develop the proposals for the project.

Design Brief

- 2.10 A comprehensive design brief by the local authority is of fundamental importance to the preparation of a Preliminary Report by the Consultant. Inadequate briefing leads to poor planning, changes in requirements, revision or updating of design – with consequential delays and substantial additional costs for all concerned. All of the client's requirements must be fully thought out and clearly set out in reasonable detail, a tentative programme for the completion of the Preliminary Report should be supplied and all relevant information should be given in a clear concise form.

The Consultant's Brief should include advice to the local authority on the steps needed to comply with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 1995 [S.I. No. 138 of 1995] – for which a checklist is incorporated in DOE/LG Circular Letter B.C. 1/97 of 7 March 1997 as amended by Circular B.C. 8/97 of 14 May 1997. The Brief should also request the Consultant to confirm competence and willingness to act as Project Supervisor (Design Stage) for the purposes of S.I. 138 of 1995)

- 2.11 The service to be provided by the consultants must be properly identified and the standard conditions of engagement should be modified where necessary.
- 2.12 The Preliminary Report should include the following:
- a general description/specification of all construction works proposed in relation to the project.

- A comparison with the Department's Technical Guidelines, highlighting and justifying any differences, and the cost implications involved.
- Dimensioned cross-section, elevation and floor plan drawings, plant layout drawings and a site location map.
- An updated estimate of all-in-cost of the project, broken-down over the different elements (i.e. site purchase, site development, construction costs, additional facilities, consultants and legal fees, VAT etc.).
- A cost analysis, carried out in accordance with the national Standard Building Elements and Design Cost Control Procedures (3rd edition, 1993).
- A Financial Plan showing the proposed source(s) of funding for the project including, in the case of new pools, how the minimum local contribution (see paragraph 6 below – DOE grant assistance) will be raised.
- In the case of refurbishment proposals, a set of "as constructed" drawings of the existing swimming pool facility should also be provided in addition to the documentation listed above.
- Updated budget for annual operational/maintenance costs/revenue for the new/refurbished pool.

2.13 Most swimming pools which experience serious financial problems do so at the operational stage, not at the construction stage. It is therefore vital that the preliminary planning and design stages of the swimming pool complex should give priority to effective management, efficient staffing and optimal operation and maintenance. It is recommended local authorities obtain the advice of suitable professional consultants, such as the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (ILAM) in this matter.

2.14 It is essential that the full extent of the works proposed be determined at this time and that the estimate of costs be as accurate as possible.

3 **CONTRACT DOCUMENTS**

3.1 On receipt of Departmental approval to the preliminary report, local authorities may then proceed to the preparation of contract documents, as follows:

- a) detailed Specifications of all works to be carried out
- b) fully dimensioned floor, cross section and elevation drawings
- c) plant layout drawings
- d) Bill of Quantities
- e) Any additional documentation necessary to enable the tenderer to submit a firm price for the project
- f) General conditions of Contract.

Note: The GDLA General Conditions of Contract are considered to be the most suitable and should be used where possible. However, the General Conditions of Contract for Civil Engineering Contracts could alternatively be used. In such cases the "Instructions to Tenderers" set out in CONDOC need not be applied (see Par. 4.3 Conditions of Contract in Public Procurement Booklet, 1994 edition).

- 3.2 The Contract Documents should be prepared as accurately and comprehensively as possible and be in conformity with the Planning Acts (and related Regulations), the Building Regulations, 1997, (and related Technical Guidance Documents parts A to M – 1997 edition) and the Fire Services Act, 1989 (and related Regulations).
- 3.3 The Specifications should be in conformity with the Department's Guideline Specifications. Any variation from the Guideline Specifications should be clearly identified, justified, and the cost/benefits quantified. The Specifications should not be specified. Where Irish or British standards are called up, the specification should also recognise "equivalent standards of a member of the European Economic Area"
- 3.4 A Bill of Quantities should always be prepared and should be submitted to the Department when seeking approval to the contract documentation.
- 3.5 The overall cost estimate for the project, together with the Financial Plan should also be updated.

4 **TENDER STAGE**

Tender Procedures

- 4.1 All swimming pool projects should be sought by two-stage selective tendering:-
Stage 1 – pre-qualification of not less than 5 and not more than 8 contractors, ideally with proven capability of building swimming pools.
Stage 2 – seeking of tenders from pre-qualified contractors.

 Further Procurement guidance/rules are contained in "Public Procurement" (1994 Edition) available from the Government Publications Sales Office, price £2.
- 4.2 Where the construction costs or the consultants fees are likely to exceed the thresholds in force for the Works Directive (93/37/EEC) or the Services Directive (92/50/EEC) respectively, the procedures set out in the Public Procurement Booklet referred to above should be followed. The relevant thresholds for 1998 and 1999 are £3,903,443 in the case of the Works Directive and £156,138 in the case of the Services Directive.

4.3 Tenders – Submission to DOE/LG

When seeking the approval of the Department to the recommended tender proposal, the following documentation should be submitted:

- copy of the actual tender being recommended to the Department for approval
- the relevant priced Bill of Quantities
- the Consultant's Report on the tenders received
- the County Engineers Report, endorsing the Consultants recommendation on the tender proposed for approval; and
- Manager's Order confirming acceptance by the local authority of the recommended tender.

- 4.4 The Financial Plan for the project should be updated to reflect the tender sum, inclusive of VAT, being submitted for approval and any consequent revisions to the different elements which constitute the overall project costs.
- 4.5 The local authority should ask the successful tenderer to quote a lump sum for the "buying out" of the Price Variation Clause. Depending on the competitiveness of the quotation, it may be worthwhile to buy out the Price Variation Clause and sign a Fixed Price Contract (CFPC), thereby giving a measure of stability to the projected construction cost budget for the project. The lump sum should be added to the tender price and be payable pro rata with the basic tender price over the life of the contract.
- 4.6 When conveying approval to the recommended tender, the Department will also formally notify the local authority of the amount of the capital grant being allocated to the project. It should be noted that there is no commitment, express or implied, to increase the allocation in the event of construction cost increases for any reason (unforeseen ground conditions, PVC clause etc.).

5 CONSTRUCTION STAGE

Project Monitoring and Cost Control

- 5.1 All public contracts should be monitored carefully and effectively during execution. Proper supervision of the works during construction is essential to ensure that the works are being carried out as required under the specifications and within the time and costs limits for the contract.

The Consultant should furnish monthly reports to the client (local authority or voluntary committee). The Reports should highlight any increases in cost (post tender) and the causes thereof.
- 5.2 In any case, where it appears that increased costs may arise, the project should be examined immediately with a view to reducing costs or reallocating resources elsewhere, in order to ensure that there is no overall increase in the cost of the project. Qualitative factors should not be neglected in any such reallocation.
- 5.3 The amount of the accepted contract sum should not be altered, except in accordance with the PVC or other relevant clause of the Conditions of Contract or as a result of a variation. In order to minimise variations, it is essential that local Authorities (or voluntary groups) be satisfied with every aspect of the design before tenders are invited. There should be no question of client-inspired design, or other changes which would involve increased costs after a contract is signed. If a change is unavoidable, any increased costs resulting from it should be offset by reducing costs on another part of the contract. The Department reserves the right to refuse to sanction or fund client inspired variations – particularly where these have not been sanctioned prior to execution.
- 5.4 Unavoidable changes should not be dealt with in such a way as to open the way for "disruption or delay" claims by the Contractor (which is a frequent cause of cost over-runs). Local authorities should be alert to this problem and unavoidable

changes should be identified and dealt with expeditiously and as economically as possible. Responsibility for changes resulting in additional costs should be clearly identified and a full explanation for the necessity of such changes should be furnished.

- 5.5 No increase in wage costs should be recoverable unless in accordance with a National Wage Agreement or, in the absence of such an Agreement, with Government guidelines on pay. The Department of Finance should be consulted regarding the interpretation of such guidelines.

6 GRANT ASSISTANCE¹

- 6.1 The Department currently provides capital grants of up to 80% of the cost of swimming pools provided by local authorities, with the remaining 20% being financed by way of local contribution. Swimming pool must be constructed in accordance with the Department's Technical Guidelines
- 6.2 The Department funds 100% of the approved costs of refurbishment works to existing facilities constructed in accordance with the Department's Technical Guidelines.
- 6.3 The Department also funds up to 80% of the approved cost of modest ancillary facilities such as children's pool, sauna, steam room.
- 6.4 At the start of each year (not later than 31 January), local authorities should submit a realistic projection of grant allocation draw downs during the year. Local authorities should ensure that applications to draw down the grant allocation for a project to meet expenditure arising are submitted to the Department on a regular basis e.g. at least one claim per quarter.
- 6.5 The Final Account for a project should be submitted to the Department for payment as soon as possible but in any event not later than eighteen months after practical completion of the project.

¹ Grant structure and levels revised as follows by way of notification to every County Secretary, City Manager and Town Clerk of each County Council, County Borough, Borough Corporations and Urban District Council on 7 June, 2000, changes effective from end July, 2000: *Grants of up to €3.809m are to be made available towards **both** the refurbishment of existing pools and the provision of new pools, subject in **both** cases to the total grant not exceeding 80% of the eligible cost of the project or, in the case of projects located in designated disadvantaged areas, 90% of the eligible cost. These revised grant levels will operate to the end of the current three-year programme in 2002. Support will continue to be available towards the cost of the swimming pool, toddler pool, sauna and steam room. Grants will also continue to be allocated when tenders have been received for the project and will be capped at the time of allocation.*

6.6 Deeds of Trust – Voluntary Groups

Where the application for grant-aid for the provision or refurbishment of a swimming pool is by a voluntary organisation supported by a local authority it is imperative that the public investment involved be safeguarded by the inclusion in the conditions of payment of a provision for grant repayment in the event of the facility ceasing to operate for the purposes grant-aided. This should be done by way of the execution of a Deed of Trust agreement between the local authority and the body receiving the grant.

7 OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

- 7.1 Local authorities or voluntary bodies must meet the costs of normal maintenance and the annual operational costs of swimming pools from their own resources. There is not grant-aid or subsidy available from the Department to assist with these costs. Five (5) critical factors have been identified for the successful operation of swimming pools:
1. facilities must meet the realistic needs of the area they propose to serve and avoid overcapacity;
 2. the design/layout of facilities must be conducive to minimising energy consumption and staffing levels/costs;
 3. a professional management structure should be in place;
 4. the use of the pool must be effectively marketed;
 5. a depreciation/repairs fund must be established and built up to cover (a) regular servicing of plant at intervals recommended by manufacturers (planned preventative maintenance); (b) necessary repairs as soon as they arise (neglect will increase the cost of repairs); and (c) replacement of plant/equipment after its expected life (continued use of very old equipment may not be cost effective).
- 7.2 It is vital that local authorities and voluntary bodies adopt a business like approach to the effective management of swimming pools. In consultation with bodies such as ILAM, many local authorities and voluntary bodies have been reviewing the operation of their recreation and leisure facilities with the view to achieving this objective. It is essential that local authorities consider the recruitment of professional managers with proven experience and skills in the leisure management area.
- 7.3 The certified training or retraining of staff to ensure the efficient and safe operation of pools, including full time pool supervision, life saving skills, reliable and safe operation of treatment plant (including the handling of chemicals and electrical safety), the drawing up and testing of pool evacuation plans including regular fire/emergency drills, checking of emergency exits, emergency lighting, emergency signage, etc.
- 7.4 Retention of professional marketing consultants may also be justified in individual cases – at least during the launch/initial phase of the operation of the pool.
- 7.5 In the case of projects initiated by voluntary bodies and supported by local authorities there should be adequate local authority representation on the Board of Management.

8 PROJECT REVIEW

- 8.1 Not later than two years following the date of practical completion, the local authority should prepare a short Report, reviewing their experience of all aspects of the project's design, construction, management and maintenance. The Report should generally accompany the Final Account submission to the Department, and include the authority's views regarding their satisfaction with the design and management of

the facility, incorporating any ideas which might be useful to improve same, and any lessons learned in the operation of the facility, which they consider may be relevant, in advising the Department, for future projects. The following information should also be supplied:

- (i) approximate number of pool visits per annum;
- (ii) details of jobs created or lost following refurbishment/construction of pool. Please state whether these are permanent or temporary, part-time or full-time positions;
- (iii) details of operating profits/losses pre-refurbishment /construction versus post-refurbishment/construction.
- (iv) Details of price structures; e.g. for swim, for swim plus sauna etc.
- (v) Any other comments/information the authority consider to be relevant.

MEMORANDUM LSS /95: SWIMMING POOLS

Checklists for completion at the various stages of swimming pool projects

These checklists are intended as a quick reference guide for local authorities of the principal matters to be taken into account and the documentation to be submitted to the Department by local authorities for each of the principal stages in the planning, approval and funding of swimming pools.

1. **Preliminary Proposals**

(i) **Feasibility Study**

- The location of the proposed new pool
- The suitability of the proposed site
- A realistic projection of pool usage
- The likely economic effect on other pools
- An up-to-date estimate of the overall project costs and how project will be funded
- The ongoing economic viability of the project (post construction).

(ii) **Appointment of Consultants**

- Appointment must be in accordance with DOELG Circulars BC 5/87 and BC 9/93
- Prior approval of DOELG required to appointment
- Submission to DOELG for approval to appointment should include
 - Details of consultancy services to be provided
 - Level of fees negotiated
 - Design Brief for Consultant

(iii) **Preliminary Report**

- General description/specification of proposed works
- Comparison with DOELG Guideline Specifications
- Dimensioned cross section, elevation and floor plans, plant layout drawing and site location map
- Details of all-in-costs of project
- Financial Plan showing sources of funding for project.

2. **Contract Documents**

- Detailed Specifications
- Fully dimensioned drawings
- Be in conformity with DOELG Guideline Specifications, Planning Acts and Building Regulations, and Fire Services ct.

- Up-dated all-in-cost of project and
- Financial plan
- A cost analysis, carried out in accordance with the national Standard Building Elements and Design Cost Control Procedures (3rd edition, 1993).

3. **Tender Stage**

- Two-stage Selective Tendering to be used in all cases.
- Contracts to be awarded on the basis of either
 - The lowest suitable tender, or
 - The Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT)
- Check compliance with EU law – reference (DOELG Circular BC 4/94 re. EU Directive on Public Procurement

The following documentation to be submitted to DOELG:

- Copy of recommended tender
- Priced Bill of Quantities for the recommended tender
- Consultants' report on tenders
- County Engineer's report on tenders
- Manager's Order on recommended tender
- Updated Financial Plan.

4. **Construction Stage**

- Proper supervision during construction phase essential
- Prior DOE/LG approval should be sought to increased costs under contract excluding increases under PVC or other relevant clause of contract.
- Projected annual drawdown to be submitted to Department (not later than 31 January) each year.
- Claims for payment of grants to be submitted quarterly to Department as work progresses.
- Final Accounts to be submitted to Department not later than eighteen months after practical completion of the project.

**REVISED DOE/LG
TECHNICAL GUIDELINES
FOR SWIMMING POOLS**

Department of the Environment and Local Government

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1.00 - SITE

1.01 - Site Selection

Generally, sites which are located within, or close to, centres of high population, and which have convenient access by public transport, adequate parking facilities, etc., should be favoured in selection, other considerations being equal.

In determining the suitability of any site, a thorough investigation should be undertaken to establish that the sub-strata have an adequate load bearing capacity at moderate depth. Sites with a high water table, obstructions, or other unsuitable conditions should be avoided.

See paragraph 2.2 of Main Document for additional requirements.

1.02 - Public access

All pool projects should be readily accessible (by public transport where available) to enable children to reach the pool easily. Adequate car parking should be created for pool staff and potential users.

Provision should also be made to allow for easy parking and access by people with disabilities and full compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations 1997. Ramps should be provided to the public entrance, and at other changes in level, to allow wheelchair access. In this regard, consultation with the National Rehabilitation Board is advisable.

1.03 Landscaping

In general, the landscaping criteria for new and existing facilities should be kept simple and be designed so as to avoid high maintenance and/or replacement costs.

In the selection of materials for hard landscaping, preference should be given to those which are easy to maintain and are not vulnerable to vandalism. Regard should also be had to their potential life-cycle costs.

The judicious use of tree/shrub planting can do much to improve the visual impact of exposed car and coach parking areas.

Care should be taken to avoid the creation of safety hazards for children and vulnerable users from over-screening of access areas, or the creation of unsupervised car parking space.

2.00 - BUILDING DESIGN AND MATERIALS

2.01 - Overall Design

In view of the high proportion of children using such facilities, they should be designed so as to ensure that the safety needs of children, during and after school hours, are fully met.

2.02 - Materials

The materials used should generally be manufactured to recognised standards, be appropriate to their location, and be chosen with an overall view to economy regarding their initial cost, cost in use, maintenance costs, expected life and durability. Non-slip materials should be used for floors in wet areas, for safety reasons.

2.03 - Safety in Use

The design should facilitate the operation of the requirements of the Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act, 1989 and the related Regulations. A Safety Statement should be developed and carefully followed during the course of the project. Copies should be displayed at the pool and given to all staff.

3.00 - POOL DESIGN

3.01 - Dimensions and Markings

The needs of most areas will be best served by a pool providing a large area of shallow water and with dimensions approved for championship swimming purposes. A 25 metre pool is considered adequate and is regarded as the standard pool.

The dimension should be as follows:

Length - 25M

Width - 9M

Water depth - shallow end 1M

- deep end 2M

The floor should slope uniformly from the shallow end to a depth of 1.3M at a distance of 15M from the shallow end. The 2M depth should extend for a distance of 5M from the deep end.

Where extra capacity is required it should be provided by increasing the width of the pool.

The varying depths of water should be clearly marked, on each side of the pool, and should be readily visible from the water level and the pool surround.

3.02 - Swimming Lanes

Tiled lane guides should be provided in the centre of each swimming lane. On the pool floor, the centre line guides should extend to a distance of 2 metres from the end walls and terminate in a T shape. In the pool end walls, the line guides should extend from pool floor to deck level.

For a 9-metre-wide pool 5 swimming lanes should be provided. This will allow for competitive events better than if the number of lanes were to be restricted to four.

In larger pools, lane guidelines should be provided to indicate the outside limit of the edge lanes.

Pole sockets should be provided in the surround deck for:

- (i) the recall rope at the centre line, and
- (ii) the back-stroke distance indicator ropes at 5 metres from each end.

4.00 - CONSTRUCTION AND FINISHES

4.01 - Construction Standards

The standards applied in the design and construction of the facility should be such as will enable compliance with the Building Regulations 1997.

Vapour barriers should be incorporated in the structure where necessary, and the levels of thermal transmittance should not exceed those applicable for highly insulated buildings, viz., for walls 0.4 W/sq. metre/degree C., and for roofs 0.35 W/sq. metre/degree C.

4.02 - Pool

The pool(s) should be constructed in reinforced concrete in accordance with the British Standard Code of Practice for the structural use of concrete for retaining aqueous liquids: B.S. 5337 or equivalent standard of a Member State of the European Economic Area.

The main pool should be lined internally with high-glazed ceramic tiling specifically suited for use in a swimming pool and should be water resistant, easily repairable and replaceable. All junctions should be rounded.

In the main pool area, the amount of glazing should be consistent with the provision of adequate natural lighting. To reduce heat loss, windows should be double glazed and be placed at high level to reduce glare, reflection and the risk of being broken. Safety glazing should be used where appropriate.

The use of materials with good sound absorbency and damp resistance qualities is important in the pool hall, particularly for finishes at the ceiling/roof level. To provide a minimum degree of comfort, it is desirable that reverberation times should not exceed 2.0 seconds at 500 Hertz.

4.03 - Pool access

Steps to facilitate entry to the water should be provided at each corner of the pool and should be recessed or removable.

The pool should be finished in non-slip coping with hand-grip edge.

Handrails suitable for teaching purposes should be provided at both sides of the pool.

The rail fixings should be such as to provide support, and the top of hand-rails should be shaped to prevent their use for diving or gymnastics.

Their construction should be of non-corrosive material such as stainless steel or its equivalent. A hoist, to facilitate entry to the water from a wheelchair, should be provided at the shallow end of the pool. The hoist should be removable.

4.04 - Surround

The pool surround should have a minimum fall of 1 in 25 for drainage purposes and should be finished in non-slip tiling or other suitably profiled and/or textured surface which offers a safe grip to wet feet.

The tiling pattern or other finish should be laid in a manner that will assist drainage and cleansing.

5.00 - ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION

5.01 - Public Entrance

The public entrance should be welcoming and easily visible to the public, and should provide the opportunity to display information about current activities, classes, sporting and social events.

5.02 - Changing Rooms and Toilets

A minimum of 165M² should be provided for the entrance foyer and the dressing-room accommodation.

Changing accommodation can be designed as either separate rooms for males and females or as a "changing village".

Separate toilet accommodation should be provided for male and female users. The layout of such areas should enable easy control and supervision. Floors should be finished with non-slip tiling and fall to drainage channels with a minimum gradient of 1 in 25.

A separate dressing room for use by people with disabilities and wheelchair users should be provided. In this regard, consultation with the National Rehabilitation Board is advised. Access from the changing rooms to the pool surround deck should be through a footbath. The showering area and toilet accommodation should preferably be adjacent to this access area.

5.03 - Sanitary Requirements

The following minimum sanitary accommodation should be provided:

Male

2 No. W.C.s one of which should be suitable for use by people with disabilities and wheelchair users.
3 No. Stall Slab Urinals
2 No. Wash-hand basins
2 No. Electric hand driers
3 No. Showers

Female

3 No. W.C.s, one of which should be suitable for use by people with disabilities and wheelchair users.
2 No. Wash-hand basin
2 Electric hand driers
3 No. Showers

All fittings should be designed so as to minimise damage by vandalism. In particular, pipe work should be concealed in the structure.

To reduce energy losses, hot-water taps should be self-closing after a pre-set time interval.

The minimum number of cubicles should be five in the male section and ten in the female section, with one in each section being suitable for use by a person with disability. The cubicles should be not less than 0.9 metres square. A hard-wood seat and clothes-hanging facilities should be provided. The floor in the changing rooms should be non-slip tiles with a minimum fall of 1 in 25 to drainage channels.

5.04 - Spectator Provision

Seating space for spectators can be provided either along one side or at the end of the pool area.

The spectator space should be separate from and in addition to that required for the pool surround deck. Seating provision should be made for from 80 to 100 spectators, with dedicated toilets.

The spectator seating should be designed so as to:

- (i) be self draining and
- (ii) allow an unobstructed view of the pool area to each spectator.

5.05 - Pool Supervisor/Manager's Office

A small office should be provided for the pool supervisor/manager, and this should be adjacent to the entrance control desk.

5.06 - First Aid Room

The First Aid room should be located so as to be readily accessible from both the pool and the main entrance, and should be equipped at all times with a first aid kit, fully stocked.

5.07 - Canteen/Restaurant Facilities

Canteen/restaurant facilities are expensive to build, equip and operate and should be kept to the minimum. They should be justified by projected usage/revenue on a cost/profit centre basis.

5.08 - Gymnasium/Training Facilities

Ancillary sports facilities can help to improve the operational viability of a pool but should be carefully designed, equipped and costed so that they are fully justified in a profit/cost centred budget for each ancillary facility. The overall cost of such facilities should not exceed 20% of the cost of the pool.

Where separate facilities are being provided for athletic sports training equipment, e.g. a gymnasium, squash courts, etc., these should be designed and located in a manner that allows their independent use without impinging on the service areas for the pool facility.

Whenever such facilities are approved for a public facility, the provision of the equipment should be in accordance with the latest relevant safety standards for their use.

5.09 - Storage and Equipment

Personal belongings/clothing storage for at least 200 bathers should be provided by either the basket or the locker system.

Adequate storage spaces for all the equipment associated with the safe management, operation and running of the facilities should be provided, in appropriate locations.

The following additional equipment should be provided:

- (i) Non-corrosive flush anchor bolts for racing lanes, etc., and for a lifeline at changes of floor level.
- (ii) Racing lane ropes with plastic floats.
- (iii) Two lifebelts, a life line rope with plastic floats and a rescue pole with attached ring.

6.0 PLANT AND SERVICES

6/01 - Water Treatment – Circulation

The pool water should be treated on a continuous purification system. The turnover period should not be greater than four hours. Pipework and fittings should be adequately

sized to avoid unnecessary head loss. Two circulating pumps should be provided (having the specified turnover rate when operating together) together with a stand-by pump.

The inlet and draw-off system should be such that there is a uniform circulation of water to all parts of the pool. End-to-end flow should not be used in combination with ozone disinfection. Draw-off may be a combination of bottom and surface outlets or all-surface outlets. A bottom drainage outlet should be provided at the lowest point.

Scum troughs should extend along all four sides of the pool. They should be built flush with the walls and should be of the anti-wave deep flow channel type with a suitable hand-grip edge. In addition, there should be two floor draw-off points in the deep section of the pool.

Underwater vacuum points should be provided on each side of the pool.

6.02 - Water Treatment – Filtration

The filtration plant should normally be conventional pressure sand filters. Where appropriate, the filter shell may include a contact tank, de-ozonizing filter, etc. The rate of filtration should not exceed 20 m³/m².h. Filters other than conventional pressure filters should have a guaranteed efficiency and durability; the cost of operation and maintenance should be taken into account in deciding on the type of filter to be used.

Provision should be made for the automatic dosing of chemicals for coagulation and pH correction: pH should be kept within the range 7 to 8.

6.03 - Water Treatment – Disinfection

Disinfection should be by means of sodium hypochlorite, ozone or other approved method. Gaseous chlorine disinfection should not be installed in new pools. Any dosing based on chlorine compounds should be capable of maintaining a free chlorine residual of 2 mg/l. Where ozone is used, the treated water should be de-ozonised before return to the pool and dosed to maintain a free chlorine residual in the pool in the range 0.1 to 0.5 mg/l, preferably aiming at the 0.5 mg/l level to ensure safe bathing conditions.

Disinfection plant should be housed in a separate room which should be well ventilated, naturally or mechanically, but not connected to the main ventilation system. Where pipes pass through the walls of the room, they should be permanently sealed. The room should be equipped with outward opening doors fitted with panic bolts but capable of being securely locked from the outside when not occupied by the plant operator. The room should be well away from public areas and remote from the air intakes or outlets of the main ventilating plant. Where gaseous chlorine is used, the room should be kept at a temperature of approximately 15°C. In addition, fume detection equipment, together with an electrically operated extraction fan, should be provided to enable automatic extraction of gas in the event of an accidental leakage. Storage and day tanks for chemicals should be bunded, and where sodium hypochlorite is used there should be no possibility of that chemical and the hydrochloric acid, used in association with it to maintain the correct pH, of combining, even in the drains, and reacting to give off gaseous chlorine. The installation of an automatic detection and alarm system to reduce any risk to staff or pool users arising from the treatment plant should be considered.

6.04 - Heating and Ventilation

Heating should be provided by a low-pressure hot-water system. The heating unit should be capable of maintaining the pool water at a temperature of 27°C when the temperature outside is 0°C.

The ventilation system should be on the plenum system of ducted warm air with low level inlet grilles and high-level extraction points. It should provide a minimum of four air changes per hour in the pool hall and changing rooms. A pool cover with a handling system that can be operated by one person should be provided.

Equipment should be installed for energy conservation, in particular to recover the sensible and latent waste heat from the air extracted from the pool hall. Where the air is not recirculated, the ventilation fan motor should be variable speed, controlled by the relative humidity of the air in the pool hall.

The overall design of the plant for the pool should aim at an energy consumption not exceeding 3,000 kWh/m² per year.

7.0 LIGHTING/SECURITY

7.01 - Pool Lighting

The lighting installation should provide a minimum illumination of 300 lux at the water surface. It should be divided into two sections served by separate cables and fuses. All fittings should be resistant to corrosion. The installation should comply with current E.S.B. regulations. The fittings should be so positioned that bulbs, etc., can be replaced without difficulty. Automatic emergency lighting should be provided of a level sufficient to enable the pool hall to be cleared in the event of a power failure, and this lighting should be checked daily.

7.02 - Public Lighting

All public space and car parking areas should be provided with public lighting adequate for the safety of persons and property during late evening use of the facility.

7.03 - Emergency Phone

A telephone should be provided in the Pool Supervisor/Manager's Office, for use in emergencies. The phone numbers of the nearest services, e.g. Ambulance, Doctor, Hospital and the Gardaí should be clearly displayed on a suitably-protected index adjoining same.

7.04 - Clearance Alarms

Consideration should be given to the installation of clearance alarms to alert staff and pool users in the event of an emergency.

7.05 - Fire-fighting

The provision of appropriate fire-fighting precautions and protection equipment should be decided in consultation with the authority's Chief Fire Officer.

7.06 - Signage

High quality, durable signage of routes to all exits, including emergency exits and of summary Pool Rules ("No Running", "No Diving", etc.) should be installed.

APPENDIX D

LIST OF POOLS TARGETTED IN 1999 ILAM POOLS "CONDITIONS" SURVEY

Those yet to be grant aided under Pool Programme as of end 2006

- 1. Glenalbyn, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown**
- 2. Dundrum, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown**
- 3. Castlebar**
- 4. Claremorris**
- 5. Ferrybank, Wexford Town**
- 6. New Ross**
- 7. Dunmanway, Co. Cork**

Those not in Pool Programme

- 8. Coolock, Dublin**
- 9. Sean McDermott Street**
- 10. Crumlin, Dublin**
- 11. Rathmines, Dublin**
- 12. Douglas, Cork City**
- 13. Kells**
- 14. Trim**
- 15. Roxboro, Limerick City**

Those funded under the Pool Programme as of end 2006

- 16. Finglas, Dublin**
- 17. Ballymun, Dublin**
- 18. Ballyfermot, Dublin**
- 19. Churchfield, Cork City**
- 20. Roscommon**
- 21. Tuam**
- 22. Ballinasloe**
- 23. Tralee Regional Sports Centre**
- 24. Clondalkin, Dublin**
- 25. Longford**
- 26. Portlaoise**
- 27. Portarlington**
- 28. Thurles**
- 29. Athy**
- 30. Naas**
- 31. Kilkenny**

APPENDIX E

TABLE SHOWING THE STAGE THAT A PROJECT HAS REACHED – AS OF

END DECEMBER, 2006

PROJECTS COMPLETED (23)

1. Arklow (Refurbish) – official opening January 2000
2. Courtown/Gorey (New) – official opening 2001
3. Dundalk (New) – official opening March 2002
4. Ennis (New) – official opening September 2003
5. Enniscorthy (New) – official opening January 2000
6. Monaghan (Refurbish) – re-entered programme for replacement
7. Navan (New) – official opening August 2000
8. Wicklow (New) – (Sept 99) official opening June 2001
9. Roscommon (Refurbish) – official opening April 2002
10. AquaDome, Tralee (Refurbish) – opened 2003
11. Ballinasloe (Replace) – official opening October 2003
12. Finglas, Dublin (Replace) – opened 04
13. Grove Island, Limerick (New) – opened 04
14. Sports and Leisure Centre, Tralee (Refurbish) – opened 04
15. Clonmel (Refurbish) – opened 04
16. Churchfield, Cork City (Refurbish) – opened 05
17. Ballymun, Dublin City (Replace) – opened 05 (limited opening)
18. Tuam, Co Galway (Replace) – opened Sept 05
19. Drogheda, Co Louth (Replace) –opened May 2006
20. Monaghan town (Replace) – opened 19 August 2006
21. Cobh, Co Cork (Replace) – opened 30 August 2006
22. Youghal, Co Cork (New) – opened 18 September 2006
23. Jobstown, South County Dublin (New) – opened 13 November 2006

UNDER CONSTRUCTION OR ABOUT TO START CONSTRUCTION (15)

1. Ballyfermot, Dublin City (Replace)
2. Letterkenny, Co. Donegal (Replace)
3. Ballybunion, Co Kerry (New)
4. Clondalkin, South County Dublin (Replace)
5. Killarney, Co Kerry (New)
6. Askeaton, Co. Limerick (Replace outdoor pool)

7. Portlaoise, Co. Laois (Replace)
8. Portarlinton, Co. Laois (Refurbish)
9. Longford, Co. Longford (Replace)
10. Thurles, Co. Tipperary (Replace)
11. Michael's House, Dublin (New)
12. Athy, Co. Kildare (Replace)
13. Birr, Co. Offaly (Refurbish)
14. Naas, Co. Kildare (Replace)
15. Kilkenny City (Replace)

OUT TO TENDER (5)

1. Claremorris, Co. Mayo (Replacement)
2. Tullamore, Co. Offaly (Replace outdoor pool)*
3. Bray, Co. Wicklow (Replace)*
4. Roscrea, Tipperary, NR (New)
5. Greystones, Co. Wicklow (New)*

CONTRACT DOCUMENTS STAGE (8)

1. Skerries, Fingal (New)
2. New Ross, Co. Wexford (Replace)
3. Buncrana, Co. Donegal (Refurbish)
4. Glenalbyn, Co. Dublin (Refurbish)
5. Castlebar, Co. Mayo (Replace)
6. Dunmanway, Co. Cork (Refurbish)
7. Ferrybank, Co. Wexford (Refurbish)
8. Dundrum, Co. Dublin (Replace)

PRELIMINARY REPORT STAGE (6)

1. Edenderry, Co. Offaly (Replace)
2. Clara, Co. Offaly (Refurbish)
3. Ballybofey, Co. Donegal (New)
4. Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon (New)
5. Loughrea, Co. Galway (New)
6. St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys

(*since grant aided in 2007)

APPENDIX F

LIST OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES WITHOUT A PUBLIC POOL AND NOT IN 2000 POOL PROGRAMME

	Local Authority	County	Location of nearest public pool
1	Carrickmacross	Monaghan	Dundalk
2	Cashel	Tipperary	Tipperary town or Thurles
3	Castleblayney	Monaghan	Monaghan
4	Clonakilty	Cork	Dunmanway
5	Clones	Monaghan	Monaghan or Cavan
6	Dungarvan	Waterford	Youghal
7	Kilrush	Clare	Kilkee
8	Kinsale	Cork	Douglas in Cork City
9	Listowel	Limerick	Tralee or Ballybunion
10	Macroom	Cork	Dunmanway
11	Skibbereen	Cork	Dunmanway
12	Ardee	Louth	Dundalk, Kells or Navan
13	Balbriggan	Fingal	Skerries
14	Ballybay	Monaghan	Monaghan
15	Bantry	Cork	Dunmanway
16	Belturbet	Cavan	Cavan
17	Boyle	Roscommon	Carrick-on-Shannon
18	Cootehill	Cavan	Cavan
19	Droichead Nua	Kildare	Naas
20	Granard	Longford	Longford
21	Leixlip	Fingal	Abbotstown/Clondalkin
22	Lismore	Waterford	Youghal
23	Mountmellick	Laois	Port Laoise
24	Muinebheag	Carlow	Carlow (Graigcullen), Kilkenny
25	Passage West	Cork	Douglas in Cork City

APPENDIX G

LOCAL AUTHORITY SWIMMING POOL PROGRAMME

Project Questionnaire 2004 Expenditure Review

A. PROJECT DETAILS

1. Our File Reference: _____

2. Your File Reference: _____

3. Direct overseeing Local Authority: _____

4. Facility Name: _____

5. Facility Address: _____

6. Refurbishment: ☐ Replacement Pool: ☐ Greenfield Site Development: ☐

7. Date of approval of Grant: ____/____/____

8. Grant Amount: €_____

9. Amount of Grant Paid	Date of Payment
-------------------------	-----------------

€_____	____/____/____
--------	----------------

€_____	____/____/____
--------	----------------

€_____	____/____/____
--------	----------------

€_____	____/____/____
--------	----------------

€_____	____/____/____
--------	----------------

€_____	____/____/____
--------	----------------

Amount left to be paid €_____

Does the outstanding amount represent the final 5% due? Y ☐ N ☐

Disadvantaged Area Y ☐ N ☐ RAPID Area Y ☐ N ☐

(Above to be completed by Department prior to issue)

The following sections to be completed by Local Authority

B. PROJECT DETAILS:

1. Contact Name _____
Grade _____
Address _____
Telephone (0): _____ (Mob): _____
3. Details of the facility:
Size of pool e.g. 25m x 9m _____
No. of Lanes _____
Sauna/steam room Y ☐ N ☐
Kiddies Pool Y ☐ N ☐
Jacuzzi Y ☐ N ☐
Water Slide Y ☐ N ☐
Other "dry" facilities on site
gym Y ☐ N ☐
fitness studio Y ☐ N ☐
meeting room Y ☐ N ☐
indoor sports hall Y ☐ N ☐
dressing rooms Y ☐ N ☐
outdoor sports facilities Y ☐ N ☐
crèche Y ☐ N ☐
other, please specify _____
4. Completion Date ____/____/____
5. Date of Opening ____/____/____
6. If a refurbishment or replacement Pool
i) when was previous pool first opened? ____Year
ii) How long had the previous pool been closed? ____Years

C. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

1. Please set out under

(a) Name of owner of the facility : _____

Address : _____

(b) Name and address of entity with power to decide the operational management of the facility. If a company or committee is involved please set out the names and representative functions of the directors/committee members :

(c) Name and address of the day to day manager of the facility

(d) To whom does (c) above report

(e) Does an licensing/franchising arrangement apply? Y ☐ N ☐

If Yes please attach a copy of the agreement in place or explain details of the arrangements :

2. Have any particular problems/ issues arisen with the ownership/management arrangements (e.g. non-completion of terms of a licensing agreement)?

Please set out details in summary form :

3. Is any change to the current ownership or management arrangements envisaged (e.g. transfer of ownership to a company; transfer from a voluntary committee) ?

Y ☐ N ☐

If yes, please set out full details for what is planned and why :

4. Date of opening to the public of additional (e.g. dry) facilities (if different from pool opening date): ____/____/____

5. If the facility is not yet opened to the public, please give expected date of opening :

____/____/____

6. Where applicable, why has the final 5% amount not yet been claimed?

7. (a) Is a Deed of Trust is in place? Y ☐ N ☐

- (b) Have all the legal procedures been completed? Y ☐ N ☐

If not, please explain what is holding up completion?

D. PROJECT FINANCING OPERATION

1. Please set out the total capital cost of the project :

- (a) as a whole € _____
- (b) "wet" facilities only € _____
- (c) "dry" facilities only € _____
- (d) the overall % cost of the consultants' fees _____ %

2. Please provide a breakdown as to how the project was financed :

- (a) amount of Department grant € _____
- (b) % of total project cost _____ %
- (c) local authority loan € _____
- (d) Other € _____
- (e) local contribution (please specify whether donations, levies involved) _____

3. Any comments on the financing package

4. Please fill in the annual Financial Operating Profile as set out in the following two Tables since 2000, as appropriate:

€	2003	2002	2001	2000
Wet facilities income				
Dry facilities income				
Wet facilities Total expenditure				
Dry facilities Total expenditure				
Net Result				

	2003	2002	2001	2000
Total expenditure (Wet + Dry) €				
% Wet facilities Payroll				
% Dry facilities Payroll				
% Energy expenditure				
% Amount expended (or set aside) for maintenance				
% Other				

5. If operating at a loss, please set out proposals envisaged to offset these :

6. Are further developmental phases to the facility planned? Y ☐ N ☐

If Yes, please give details:

7. Please set out the Price Structure currently in place in accordance with the format in the following two Tables :

Table A : "Pay and Play"

Category per person	No. available days per week	No. available hours per day	Peak Price per person	Median/Average price per session*
Adult swim				
Adult Gym				
Adult swim&gym				
Child swim (under16)				
Student				
Over 60				

* Average over the most recent 12 month period, factoring in reduced costs due to, for example, family price, off-peak, monthly membership or other equivalent type concession.

Table B : Where dedicated sessions are provided, the Price per Person per Category of Use (explanation of terms "learning to swim, competitive" etc.. contained in section E):

Category per person	No. available days per week	No. Available hours per day	Price per session
Learning to swim (under 16s)			
Learning to swim (over 16s)			
Competitive swimmers			
Water Sports participation			
Therapy Swimming			

E. RECORD OF USAGE

1. Please insert information in the four Tables hereunder, and attach specimens of key reporting data including time-tables. In providing the information please attempt, as far as possible, to segment where asked by age and gender. If not, aggregate figures will suffice.

Table A : Visits Profiles

	2003	2002	2001	2000
Average No. of pool hours in use per week				
Catchment population (up to 15 minutes travel time)				

Table B : Visits Profiles

	2003 Males Females		2002 M F		2001 M F		2000 M F	
No. under 16s pool annual visits								
No. over 16s pool annual visits								
No. combining pool & other visits								
No. other (e.g. gym) visits								

Table C : Visits Profile, by type of use

Adults (Over 16s)

Estimate of Number per Category	2003 M F		2002 M F		2001 M F		2000 M F	
Recreational swims								
Competitive swims								
Water sports participation								
Learning to swim								
Therapy swimming								

Table D : Visits Profile, by type of use

Children (Under 16s)

	2003 M W		2002 M W		2001 M W		2000 M W	
*Recreational swims								
*Competitive swims								
*Water sports use								
*Learning to swim								
*Therapy swimming								

Recreational use

Recreational
Keep Fit
Swimmers
Aquarobics

Therapy swimming

Therapeutic, disability
Injury recovery

Competitive use

Swimming club
Triathletes,
pentathletes etc...
Swimmers with
disabilities

Learning to swim

Pre-school, school age
Swimming instruction
Life saving

Water Sports Use

Out door pursuits (e.g.
water polo, wind surfing)
Sea and Sub Aqua

2. Please set out in the following format the type of use of the pool in the 12 months in 2003 (recreational, competitive, water sports participation, learning to swim, therapy swimming). Enter number of visits :

2003	Recreational	Competitive	Water Sports Participation	Learning to Swim	Therapy Swimming
January					
February					
March					
April					
May					
June					
July					
August					
September					
October					
November					
December					

Please comment on any significant seasonal variations :

3. Where a replacement pool project is involved, please provide information, in the following format, from Business Plan projections submitted as part of your feasibility or preliminary reports under the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme procedures.

Projection	First operational year
Average number of pool hours in use per week	
Number of pool annual visits	
Number of Recreational	
Number of Competitive	
Number of Water Sports participation	
Number Learning to Swim	
Number Therapy Swimming	

4. If the project was a replacement or refurbishment, please indicate under the various headings how current pool usage compares with previous usage?

	Recreational	Competitive	WaterSports participation	Learning to swim	Therapy swimming
Less than before					
Broadly the same					
Modest Improvement					
Significant Improvement					

5. Please back up your assessment at (4) above, if possible, with figures in the following format.

Previous pool usage	Year_____ (final 12 months of operation)
Average number of pool hours per week	
Number of annual pool visits	
Number Recreational	
Number Competitive	
Number Water Sports	
Number Learning to Swim	
Number Therapy Swimming	

6. Please set out how you anticipate usage patterns to develop over the coming 3 to 5 years.

Number of swims	% increase	% decrease
Recreational		
Competitive		
Water Sports		
Learning to Swim		
Therapy swimming		

F. FEEDBACK FROM LOCAL AUTHORITY ON OPERATION OF THE GRANT SCHEME

1. Please rate the impact of the Local Authority Swimming Pool programme since 2000 insofar as your authority area is concerned.

Very positive Y ☐ N ☐

Positive Y ☐ N ☐

Negligible Y ☐ N ☐

Negative Y ☐ N ☐

Very negative Y ☐ N ☐

Please expand as desired

2. Please set out any comments on

(a) the administration by the Department of the swimming pool programme

(b) the Department's Guidelines - Procedural aspects (e.g. usefulness of, and number of stages, workability in context of mixed projects)

(c) the terms and conditions applying to projects that have been allocated monies (e.g. Deed of Charge, meeting of social inclusion objectives)

3. Where projects have been completed, please identify areas where the overall project capital cost involved in developing project might have been reduced:

Finance/Project development aspects

Areas	Yes	No
Structure of project leadership		
Stages for Departments approvals		
Timing of tender approval		
VAT registration by promoters		
Sale of land		
Borrowing		
Recourse to development levies		
Level of Consultants fees		
Involvement of Consultants		

Where you have answered "yes" to any of the categories above please explain (e.g. if "yes" to fewer stages –which should be dropped and why?) and, if possible, put an approximate estimate of the capital and current cost saving involved

Physical Infrastructure

Areas	Yes	No
Location of building		
Facilities provided in building complex		
Layout and features of pool		
Design of pool hall, dressing rooms reception area (s)		
Energy saving measures		
Building materials		
Other (please specify)		

Where you have answered "yes" to any of the above categories please explain (e.g. if "yes" to features of pool, please specify the features) and, if possible, put an approximate estimate of the capital and current cost saving involved

4. Do you see any significant involvement by the private sector in the provision or refurbishment of swimming pools in the future? Y ☐ N ☐

If "N" please set out your reasons

If "Y", please cite preferred form of private sector involvement – in order of your preference

Category of Private Sector Involvement	1st	2nd	3 rd	4th
Operation of pool facility – commercial company				
Operation of pool facility – non-profit making private company or voluntary committee				
Participation in Joint Venture company involving share in ownership of capital development.				
Participation in Joint Venture company comprising joint ownership of capital development and share in profits of operation of facility.				

Please give reasons for your preferences:

5. Is there a policy in relation to swimming pools in your local authority area as set out in the relevant County Development Plan?_____

6. To what extent does the current project meet the objectives, as set out in that Plan?_____

7. In relation to the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme please give your general views on the future, for example, grant levels, prioritisation, between and within counties, administration of the Scheme_____

APPENDIX H

Local Authority Swimming Programme - Administration Costs 1999-2002

Staff Costs - Salaries		Salary			Salary			Salary	
Grades		1999	midpoint	Totals	2000	midpoint	Totals	2001	midpoint
Clerical Officers		0.5	17,459	8,730	0.5	17,634	8,817	0.5	20,644
Executive Officers		0.5	21,589	10,795	0.5	21,805	10,903	0.5	25,016
Higher Executive Officers		1	31,859	31,859	0.75	32,173	24,130	0.75	36,888
Assistant Principal Officers		0.2	42,585	8,517	0.2	43,011	8,602	0.15	47,673
Principal Officers		0.15	56,238	8,436	0.15	56,801	8,520	0.15	62,957
Assistant Secretary		0.05	65,000	3,250	0.05	73,396	3,670	0.05	84,438
Sub-Total				71,586			64,641		
PRSI	2.01%			1,439			0		
Pension Costs	16.67%			11,933			10,776		
TOTAL SALARY COSTS				84,958			75,417		
Staff Costs (light, accom etc)	47%			39,930			35,446		
TOTAL STAFF COSTS ON A YEARLY BASIS 1999 2002				124,888			110,863		
TOTAL STAFF COSTS				488,582					

Local Authority Swimming Programme - Administration Costs 2003-2006

Staff Costs - Salaries		Salary			Salary		
Grades		2003	midpoint	Totals	2004	midpoint	Totals
Clerical Officers		0	0	0	0	0	0
Executive Officers		0	0	0	0	0	0
Higher Executive Officers		1	38,896	38,896	1	42,052	42,052
Assistant Principal Officers		0.5	54,195	27,098	0.8	59,544	47,635
Principal Officers		0.15	71,638	10,746	0.15	77,981	11,697
Assistant Secretary		0.05	99,695	4,985	0.05	102,685	5,134
Sub-Total				81,724			106,519
PRSI	2.01%			0			0
Pension Costs	16.67%			13,623			17,757
TOTAL SALARY COSTS				95,347			124,275
Staff Costs (light, accom etc)	47%			44,813			58,409
TOTAL STAFF COSTS ON A YEARLY BASIS 1999 2002 2003-2006				140,161			182,685
TOTAL STAFF COSTS				709,871			

APPENDIX I
Tables indicating activity in/progress of Pool Programme

(i) Position on Programme's progress from 2000 - 2006

	2000 to End 2001	End 2002	End 2003	End 2004	End 2005	End 2006
No. projects "being dealt with"*	54	45	44**	41	38***	34****
Completed projects (pools opened in that period)	7(5)	9(2)	11(2)	14 (3)	18 (4)	23 (5)
*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****
Construction stage	7	3	4	10	11	15
Tender document stage		4	5	3	5	5
<i>No. seeking tender approval</i>		2	4	1	3	1
<i>No. out to tender</i>		2	1	2	2	5
Contract document stage	3	19	20	13	15	8
<i>No. seeking contract approval</i>		5	12	9	4	1
<i>No. preparing contract approval</i>		14	8	4	11	8
Preliminary stage	44	19	15	15	7	6
<i>No. seeking approval Prelim. Report</i>		8	4	8	1	0
<i>No. permission to prepare revised Prelim.</i>		1	1	0	0	0
<i>No. preparing Prelim. Report</i>		4	6	2	3	3
<i>No. seeking Feasibility Report approval</i>		6	4	5	3	3

*meaning all projects accepted into the current round of the Programme including 6 projects under construction or nearly complete before 2000 and still receiving payments from grant.

** Monaghan added to Programme in 2003.

***2005 Budget item - St. Michael's House added to Programme in 2005.

****2006 Revised Estimates – S. Joseph's House added to Programme in 2006.

(ii) Approvals to proceed to next principal stage inc. approval of feasibility reports

	July,2000 to end 2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Tender report stage	3 (Dundalk, Roscommon, GoreyCourt)	2 (Ballinasloe, Finglas)	4 (AquaDome, Tralee, Clounalour,Tralee, Clonmel, Grove Island)	9 (Tuam, Churchfield, Ballymun, Cobh, Youghal, Drogheda, Ballyfermot, Jobstown, Letterkenny)	5 (Monaghan, Ballybunion, Clondalkin, Killarney, Askeaton)	9 (Portarlington, Portlaoise, Longford, Thurles, St. Michael's Hse, Athy, Birr, Naas, Kilkenny)
Contract document stage	2	5 (Ballin, Churchfield, Aqua,Clounalour, Clonmel)	2 (Tuam, Churchfield)	6 (Letter, Drogheda, Monaghan, Jobstown, Killarney, Ballybunion)	8 (Naas,Athy, Longford, Portlaoise, Portarlington, Thurles, Askeaton, Clondalkin)	9 (Birr, Naas, Claremorris, Kilkenny,Tullamore, St. Michael's Hse, Bray, Roscrea, Greystones)
Preliminary stage	13	4 (Aqua,Naas, Athy, Killarney)	4 (Letter.,Drogheda, Youghal, Ballybunion)	3 (Thurles, Claremorris, Monaghan)	10 (Athy, Kilkenny, New Ross, Castlebar, Buncrana, Bray, Greystones, Birr, Roscrea, Michael's Hse)	2 (Wexford, Dundrum)
Feasibility Rep. approval	3	1 (Roscrea)	3 (Bray, Greystones, Monaghan added to LASPP)			
Totals	21	12	13	18	23	20

(iii) Payment of final 5% on projects

July, 2000 to end 2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
	Ennis Monaghan Wicklow	Gorey- Courtown Navan	Roscommon Enniscorthy Dundalk	Ballinasloe Tralee	Grove Island, Churchfield

(iv) Numbers of LAs submitting Contract documents

July, 2000 to end 2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
0	5	12	3	7	8

APPENDIX J

Submission from Killian Fisher, ILAM re. Quest and White Flag Award

Comments/observations

1. Killian Fisher has extensive experience of Quest having put several London facilities through the process and being a fully qualified Quest Assessor.
2. Key people involved in the development of Quest were involved in the ILAM Ireland Operation Standards (which led to the development of the White Flag Award). At this development stage it was unanimously agreed by all involved, that Quest wouldn't transfer to Ireland without major adjustment as it was very much tied to the UK Local Authority system and associated structures.
3. The White Flag Award aims to promote best practice in leisure facilities. The Mandatory Criteria are the minimum standards required and the other Criteria refer to best practice in the area. All criteria are based on accepted industry codes of practice.
4. Overview of Quest
 - (i) Quest is a generic system that does not go into the technical operation of leisure centres or swimming pools.
 - (ii) The White Flag has specific sections on Swimming Pools, Health Suites, Fitness Studios, Sports Halls, Catering And will incorporate a specific section on Spas in line with Failte Ireland from next year.
 - (iii) As part of Quest an audit is carried out once every two years and a mystery visit is conducted on the other year. The White Flag process means that both an audit and a surveillance audit are carried out every year.
 - (iv) The Quest audit process is carried out by a commercial company, whereas the White Flag audit process is administered by an independent not-for-profit body.
 - (v) The awarding of the White Flag is based on the decision of an independent 12 member Jury, with representatives from ILAM Ireland, An Taisce, Sports Council for Northern Ireland, PWTAG (Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group), Environmental Health Officers Association, Irish Hotels Federation, Consumers Association of Ireland, Irish Water Safety, RLSS Ireland, City & County Managers Association, Blue Flag Jury and Association of Town Clerks of Ireland.
 - (vi) In the UK Quest has only been adopted by Local Authority run leisure facilities, in Ireland the White Flag Award has been supported by both public and private facilities.
 - (vii) There is one small area that Quest covers and the White Flag doesn't currently cover specifically, that is the area of Sports Development.
In Ireland Sports Development is carried out by Local Authorities where there is a SDO but in most cases this function is carried out by LSPs with no direct relationship to leisure facilities.
5. The White Flag Award is receiving continued industry support, there has been a 20% increase in applications this year. The White Flag Award is also recognised by Government Departments (An Taoiseach has made 2 presentations and one speech endorsing the white flag as the standard

for Ireland and we have statements of support from two Ministers at DAST (McDaid and O'Donoghue) and Ministers Eoin Ryan and Frank Fahey have also conducted white flag national ceremonies)- Failte Ireland have made the White Flag a condition of Grant Aid under their new Tourism product Development scheme (€13m grants for 11 projects announced by the Minister John O'Donoghue on 26th May 2004) and to be maintained for 10 years,

6. The Minister for the Environment & Local Authority requested Swimming Pool Guidelines from IWS and ILAM Ireland has been asked to work with them on this. Earlier this year the Irish Hotels Federation also endorsed the White Flag Award as the standard for hotel leisure facilities.

7. The White Flag Award is going from strength to strength (as a reference point in Year 3 of Quest there were 100 applicants out of a potential 7000, that's a 1% take up, currently 3% of UK leisure facilities have Quest, in Year 3 of the White Flag Award there are 88 applicants out of a potential 600, that's a 15% take up.

APPENDIX K

Projection – Number of Pool Programme Constructions 2007-2011 (assuming all outstanding projects in existing Programme come to fruition)

	New - under Construction from 2006	New – out to tender, contract docs etc...	Replacement/ Refurbishment		
2007	3 Ballybunion, Killarney, St. Ml.Hse	2 Greystones, Roscrea	4 Tullamore, Bray, Claremorris, Dundrum		
2008		2 Skerries, Loughrea	6 New Ross, Buncrana, Glenalbyn, Castlebar, Dunmanway, Ferrybank		
2009		3 Ballybofey, Ballaghadereen, 5 <u>*New</u>	3 Edenderry, Clara , St. Josephs		
2010		*3	*3		
2011		*3	*3		
Totals		16	19		

*** Arising from a re-opened pool programme**

APPENDIX L

MEMBERSHIP OF STEERING GROUP

Chair : Joe Timbs;

- Denis Breen, DAST
- Conor O'Malley (Review Processor),
- Mary Ferris (Swimming Pool Section)
- Alan Savage (Internal Audit Unit);
- Kay Maher, DAST
- Finbarr Wall, Office of Public Works
- Frank Griffin, Department of Finance
- Betty Moriarty (later replaced by Aidan Cunningham), Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- Kathleen Stack, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

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