

**Speaking Note for Minister Byrne for appearance at the Select Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> November at 7pm regarding Supplementary Estimate 2023**

As Minister Martin stated, I will be briefing the committee on the Sports elements of the technical supplementary and I happy to have the opportunity to do so.

The additional capital funding of €5.5m for Subhead D5 will allow Sport Ireland to continue to progress design and development work on key projects, including a National Velodrome and Badminton Centre and cricket facilities, and to advance these projects to a shovel ready position in anticipation of capital funding becoming available in the short term to enable construction to commence.

These projects form part of a new Masterplan for the development of the Sport Ireland Campus, approved by the Government in November 2022. The Masterplan provides the framework for the development of the campus over the next 15 to 20 years and identifies the next key high-level projects for development. The additional funding will also allow Sport Ireland to ensure that necessary maintenance and upgrade works to existing facilities at the Campus are progressed.

The additional €9m in capital funding for the Sports Capital and Equipment Programme (SCEP) will provide for a surge in applicants for funding, arising primarily from the 2020 SCEP round. The 2020 round received the highest number of applications ever with over 3,100 applications submitted representing an increase of 33% on the 2018 round. The Covid pandemic had a

major impact on the finances of many clubs with fund-raising opportunities seriously curtailed in 2020 and 2021. Furthermore, construction inflation means that the cost of many projects will have increased significantly since the applications were made. In awarding significant allocations under the 2020 round, grantees have been able to progress their projects apace and that is reflected in the projected rate of drawdown from the subhead.

These additional funding allocations arise on foot of savings elsewhere across the Department's Vote, specifically within the Tourism programme area and within Subhead D4, Local Authority Swimming Pools Programme, and Subhead D7 Large Scale Sports Infrastructure Fund.

The savings in the D4 subhead mainly arise from a delay in the drawdown of funding by the last remaining grantee of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme. Future applications for swimming pool funding will fall to be considered under the Large Scale Sports Infrastructure Fund.

The savings under D7, Large Scale Sports Infrastructure Fund, relate to much slower than anticipated drawdown of funds by grantees under the programme. A key factor has been the high level of construction inflation which has presented considerable challenges for LSSIF grantees. In light of drawdown challenges and following engagement with the Minister for Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform, officials in the Department recently wrote to all LSSIF grantees inviting them to apply for additional support. To be considered for additional funding, grantees were advised that the key elements of the project should remain as set out in the original application and that priority would be given to those who provide evidence-based documentation to support their application. Further allocations to existing LSSIF

grantees are now being considered, and will be announced in the coming period, which should enable LSSIF projects to progress significantly in 2024.

It is my opinion that the proposed redistribution of funding will bolster the sport sector and provide additional opportunities for individual athletes, clubs and communities, at both local and national level, something which I know is close to the hearts of many of those attending here today.

ENDS