

---

# North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association

---



**Fifth meeting**

## Sports Tourism

8 October 2014

**Background briefing prepared by the Research and Information Service (RaISe) of the Northern Ireland Assembly and of the Library & Research Service of the Houses of the Oireachtas (*Tithe an Oireachtais*)**

This paper is accurate as at the date of publication. It is primarily based on secondary sources. It has, on a confidential basis, been provided for use by the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association. It is not intended that this document should be circulated or reproduced for any other purpose

## Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Key points .....</b>   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>1. Introduction.....</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>2. Definition and measurement of the impact of Sports Tourism.....</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
| 2.1 Definition.....   | 5         |
| 2.2 Measurement.....  | 5         |
| <b>3. Government policy / discussion at parliamentary level .....</b>   | <b>7</b>  |
| 3.1 Government policy.....  | 7         |
| 3.2 Parliamentary discussion .....  | 9         |
| <b>4. An overview of the Sports Tourism Industry .....</b>  | <b>14</b> |
| 4.1 Activity-based .....  | 14        |
| 4.2 Events-based.....   | 16        |
| 4.3 Major infrastructure (stadia) .....   | 19        |
| <b>5. Projected economic worth/value to the economy of Sports Tourism .....</b>   | <b>22</b> |
| <b>6. Role/activities and promotion strategies of Fáilte Ireland, Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Tourism Ireland.....</b> | <b>26</b> |
| 6.1 Fáilte Ireland.....   | 26        |
| 6.2 Northern Ireland Tourist Board.....   | 29        |
| 6.3 Tourism Ireland.....  | 30        |
| <b>7. Examples of Sports Tourism initiatives elsewhere .....</b>  | <b>31</b> |
| 7.1 Shanghai Tennis Masters Cup 2002 .....  | 31        |
| 7.2 The development of Sports Tourism in Malta .....  | 31        |
| 7.3 Adventure tourism in Wales .....  | 32        |
| 7.4 Rugby World Cup in 1999 .....   | 33        |
| <b>Appendix 1: List of stadia on the island of Ireland (by capacity, over 10,000) .....</b>                                   | <b>35</b> |

## Key points

- Sports Tourism is a niche, but growing, market of the far larger tourism industry. The term 'Sports Tourism' comprises three elements;
  - Event-based Sports Tourism (traveling to watch sports e.g. competitive sports / tournaments);
  - Activity / Active-based Sports Tourism (traveling to play sports) and;
  - Nostalgia-based Sports Tourism (traveling to visit or to venerate famous sports-related personalities, teams, venues and / or museums).

Nostalgia-based Sports Tourism is however not prominent in the Republic or in Northern Ireland.

- Sports Tourism has a number of economic benefits (both direct and indirect) including the following:
  - Generates economic activity by increasing tourism expenditure on hotels, restaurants, attractions, retail and service businesses in the locality / region where the activity is located / event is held.
  - Marketing of an activity / event provides an opportunity for a city or region's to enhance its own tourism potential generally.
  - Media exposure of certain activities / events enhances the recognition and image of the area / town / city / venue to potential overseas visitors.
  - Support existing sporting activities and event facilities by providing an additional revenue stream, and indirectly supporting the upgrading or establishment of new facilities.
- Sport Tourism also has non-economic impacts in terms of the locality, community and the national economy in various ways. Events-based Sports Tourism may also enhance social inclusion in the wider, non-sporting community due to the legacy impact of major events on all citizens and, in particular, on the young.
- Measuring the size of the Sports Tourism market and its economic value is subjective due to the difficulties in accurately measuring the impact of Sports Tourism. Tourism statistics are not sufficiently disaggregated to provide for an accurate measurement of the economic benefit of Sports Tourism to the economy since they generally do not distinguish between sport, general tourism and recreation more generally. However, some academic studies have attempted to quantify the engagement of overseas visitors in certain activities which can form the basis for an approximation of the sector in the Republic. In particular, studies tend to neglect domestic tourists as a factor due to the difficulty in appropriate and precise measurement.

- 
- Studies have estimated its economic value at between €350m and €800m per annum in the Republic, overall. However, measuring the economic benefit of events-based Sports Tourism can be subjective and is often underpinned by optimistic forecasts by planners and analysts. No comparable studies have attempted to estimate the Sports Tourism market in Northern Ireland.
  - The Republic's previous Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar T.D., recently suggested in a parliamentary debate that, although other forms of investment in sport likely yield no economic return, Sports Tourism may be an exception whereby the return exceeds the initial investment.
  - Available figures detailing the percentage of overseas visitors who engage in a named form of activity-based Sports Tourism in the Republic and in Northern Ireland suggest that Northern Ireland underperforms the Republic by 5% (16% versus 21.1% for the Republic). Assuming expenditure by 'sport' tourists is at least equal to the average aggregate spend by all overseas tourists, expenditure on sporting activities in the Republic may, potentially, be over five times that in Northern Ireland (€697.9m / £542.95m versus €110.67m / £86.1m).
  - The evidence presented in this paper would suggest that Sports Tourism has been invested in, and planned for, in Northern Ireland on an event-by-event basis, with no overall strategy for the sector. In the Republic, the International Sport Tourism Initiative administered by a dedicated Sport Tourism Unit and its successor, the Major Events Unit within Fáilte Ireland have focused on encouraging sport-related tourism and enhancing Ireland's reputation as a sports venue. There is no comparable Initiative / Unit in Northern Ireland.

## 1. Introduction

This paper aims to define and provide an overview of 'Sports Tourism' across the island of Ireland, including an approximation as to the economic value / benefit of the existing market for Sports Tourism to the economies of the Republic and of Northern Ireland.

## 2. Definition and measurement of the impact of Sports Tourism

### 2.1 Definition

Sports Tourism is a broad concept. In general, it refers to the direct and indirect tourism benefits related to a consumer who travels to watch and / or participate in sporting-related activities or events. Expenditure in the tourism industry generally is considered an invisible export, as it involves the transfer of money from overseas consumers for a domestic-based service.

Sports (or Sport) Tourism is considered a niche market, but one which has received greater attention from policy-makers in recent years. It has been facilitated by among other things technological change, changing social attitudes and circumstances, and increasing regional accessibility due to the rise of low-cost air travel. Gibson (1998)<sup>1</sup> and Ross (2011)<sup>2</sup> identify three areas in sport-related tourism, summarised by Delpy (1998)<sup>3</sup> as follows:

1. **Event-based Sports Tourism** (travel to watch sports);
2. **Activity / Active-based Sports Tourism** (travel to play sports);
3. **Nostalgia-based Sports Tourism** (travel to visit or venerate famous sports-related attractions, teams or personalities).

Nostalgia-based Sports Tourism is however not prominent in the Republic or in Northern Ireland. As such, this paper will focus on activity-based and event-based Sports Tourism.

### 2.2 Measurement

Measurement of the economic value of this market is not a uniform science and therefore cross-country comparatives are difficult to make. For example, while activity-based Sports Tourism benefits a local economy in more constant and consistent ways (i.e. by the influx of tourists to a particular area due to the availability of certain area-specific sports), events-

<sup>1</sup> Gibson, Heather J. (1998) 'Sport Tourism: A Critical Analysis of Research', Sport Management Review, 1, pp. 45-76.

<sup>2</sup> Ross, Stephen D (2011) ' [An eGuide for Destination Marketers and sports Events Planners](#)': National Laboratory for Tourism and eCommerce, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> Delpy, L. (1998). 'An overview of sport tourism: building towards a dimensional framework', Journal of Vacation Marketing, 4 (1), pp. 23-38.

based Sports Tourism is generally viewed as a temporary boon to a specified area based around one or small number of particular venues which may also have longer term benefits due to the impact of media coverage on the locality, the region and the country as a whole. As such, tourism agencies and policy-makers often focus more on facilitating the latter category (i.e. large-scale sporting events) as the role of the government in that instance is generally only a supportive one and therefore the return on investment is maximised.

Furthermore, there are also certain non-economic impacts which are similarly very difficult to quantify such as the impact on a population's health (through the promotion of physical exercise and well-being), the impact on the local environment (through various forms of pollution and resulting impact on local communities / residents), and socio-cultural impacts (through the focusing of international attention on a country's cultural heritage, historical traditions and domestic / craft industries).

However, some studies have been published in the Republic in an attempt to assess the economic benefit of the market though the methodology applied and published findings often differ significantly (see Section 5 of this paper).

### 3. Government policy / discussion at parliamentary level

Commitments to the development of Sports Tourism (specific to the activity-based and event-based aspects) have featured in successive Programmes for Government (PfGs) in the Republic and in Northern Ireland in recent years. The topic has also been discussed at parliamentary level on a number of occasions.

#### 3.1 Government policy

##### Ireland

Devine, Boyd and Boyle (2010)<sup>4</sup> state that the linking of sport with tourism “[has] been an economic policy of the Irish Government since the late 1980s, and that this is reflected in both Fáilte Ireland and the Irish Sports Council’s collaborative approach to Sport Tourism”.

Successive Irish Governments have indicated a commitment to driving Sports Tourism in respective Programmes for Government (PfG) over the past decade. The most recent *2011 Programme for Government*<sup>5</sup> agreed between Fine Gael and the Labour Party states the following commitments to the activity-based and event-based forms of Sports Tourism, respectively:

- “We will target available resources at developing and co-ordinating niche tourism products and activity packages that are attractive to international visitors focusing on food, sports, culture, ecotourism, activity breaks, water-based recreation and festivals.
- Event tourism will be prioritised to continue to bring major fairs and events to Ireland such as the Volvo Ocean Race or Solheim Cup.”

Similar, though less specific commitments were listed in the *2007 Programme for Government*<sup>6</sup> agreed between Fianna Fáil, the Progressive Democrats and the Green Party - Comhaontas Glas:

- “Work with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to capitalise on the beauty of the Irish countryside and promote Ireland as a healthy activity holiday destination for walking, cycling, angling, golfing, sailing, equestrian and marine holidays.”

<sup>4</sup> Devine, A; Boyd, S and Boyle, E (2010). ‘*Unravelling the Complexities of Inter-Organisational Relationships within the Sports Tourism Policy Arena on the Island of Ireland*’. In Gorham, Geraldine and Mottiar, Ziene (eds) (2010) *Contemporary Issues in Irish and Global Tourism and Hospitality*. Dublin Institute of Technology.

<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/ProgrammeForGovernmentFinal.pdf> (p. 12)

<sup>6</sup> See: [http://www.taoiseach.ie/eng/Publications/Publications\\_Archive/Publications\\_2007/Eng\\_Prog\\_for\\_Gov.pdf](http://www.taoiseach.ie/eng/Publications/Publications_Archive/Publications_2007/Eng_Prog_for_Gov.pdf) (p. 26)

- “Encourage the Tourism Agencies to highlight our National Games to a greater degree in their promotional activities and continue the policy of attracting suitable major sporting events to Ireland.”

The *2002 Programme for Government*<sup>7</sup> agreed between Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats stated the following:

- “We will encourage year-round activity-based and special interest tourism.”

Following the stated political commitments, the *2007-2013 National Development Plan* (NDP),<sup>8</sup> building upon targets in the 2000-2006 NDP, also stated the following:

“Schemes established under NDP 2000-2006 and which impact on the rural economy will continue, including the expansion of regional and niche product marketing. These will be complemented by the establishment of a fund for tourism infrastructure (covering such areas as access, signposting, water-based facilities and marinas and walking and cycling leisure route development), a fund to support major new festivals and cultural events, a fund to support investment in “soft adventure” products (water sports and outdoor activity centres), and initiatives in the communications and enterprise capability areas. “

“Recognising the potential which can be delivered by sport, the National Development Plan will develop a range of sporting facilities at local and rural level.”

To facilitate the sport-related tourism objectives of the *National Development Plans*, a number of measures were introduced by successive governments. These are summarised in Section 6 of this paper.

### Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland’s *Programme for Government 2011–2015*<sup>9</sup> makes a number of commitments relating to the hosting of major sporting events, including:

- ‘develop sports stadiums as agreed with the IFA, GAA and Ulster Rugby;
- host the World Police and Fire Games in 2013;
- support the successful hosting of the 2012 Irish Open and build on that success to secure a further international golf event;’

The latter two commitments have now occurred, while the first is under development (see Section 4.2 of this paper). These commitments, it is stated, will contribute to an ‘increase [in] visitor numbers to 4.2 million and tourist revenue to £676 million by December 2014’.

<sup>7</sup> See: <http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/5992/1/2788-2990.pdf> (p. 19).

<sup>8</sup> Available to view online at <https://www2.ul.ie/pdf/932500843.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Available to view online at <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/pfg-2011-2015-final-report.pdf>



The preceding *Programme for Government (2008-2011)* did not explicitly refer to sport as having a potential tourism benefit.

### 3.2 Parliamentary discussion

The activity-based and event-based forms of Sports Tourism have been raised in both Houses of the Oireachtas during the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil / 24<sup>th</sup> Seanad. However, it is in Seanad Éireann that the majority of debate on the topic has been initiated. In the Northern Ireland Assembly, there have been few debates focused specifically on the subject of Sports Tourism. A sole exception is a debate on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2014 about the benefits of hosting the Giro d'Italia, though some comments were also made during the course of discussion of related subject areas.

#### Ireland

On 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013, Fáilte Ireland's events-based tourism programme was outlined in a Seanad Éireann<sup>10</sup> debate with Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Michael Ring T.D., on the attraction of major sporting events, as follows:

“Fáilte Ireland's events tourism programme is a key driver of high yield, high value international visitors to the country, a fact recognised in the programme for Government. It is a central component in increasing visitor numbers, as well as promoting the country as a world-class tourism destination, through the international publicity and exposure for Ireland. The programme is made up of three components: corporate events, cultural events, and sports events. To date this year, Fáilte Ireland is supporting 147 conference applications for bids and marketing support for committed conferences. These conferences represent 80,000 international delegates and have a potential estimated business value of €107 million”.

“Festivals and events are also an important part of the event-based tourism portfolio. They are an integral part of what Ireland offers as a destination while, at the same time, affording an opportunity for increased overseas visitors and revenue. This year Fáilte Ireland will fund over 198 festivals across the country through the festivals and participative events initiative.”

“The third aspect of event-based tourism, sports, gives us an opportunity to show that a small country can host major sporting events, whether it is the Tall Ships Race in Waterford and Dublin, the Ryder Cup or Solheim Cup in golf, or the co-hosting with Northern Ireland of the Giro D'Italia bicycle race in 2014. Ireland has shown that it can host these events in an efficient and capable manner and provide a great experience for spectators and participants alike.”

More detail on the role and functions of Tourism Ireland is provided in Section 6.1 of this paper. The Minister also highlighted his support for the 2018 Gay Games (Limerick) and the joint bid for the 2023 Rugby World Cup with Northern Ireland (see the later section on collaborative Republic/Northern Ireland bids).

On 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014, a motion was moved in Seanad Éireann recognising among other things the “central role of sport” in the Republic and explicitly referenced Sports Tourism as follows:

---

<sup>10</sup>Seanad Éireann. Adjournment Matters: [Sporting Events](#). 26.6.13

“That Seanad Éireann:- recognises the central role of sport in Ireland and its enrichment of people’s lives both as active participants and as a country;

- values the better physical and mental health and well-being that is to be gained through sports participation;
- values the achievements of Ireland’s sporting heroes;
- recognises that sport and recreation also have other benefits for the nation both economic in terms of **sports tourism** and employment opportunities;
- supports the Government’s efforts to increase participation and interest in sport; and
- calls upon the Government to continue to improve and develop sports facilities at national, regional and local level to make Ireland an internationally recognised destination for competitions in as many sports as possible; and to build upon previous successes and work to attract world class competitions to Ireland such as, for example, the rugby and golf world cups, international cycling and equestrian competitions and other high profile events that will have economic, social and reputational benefits for Ireland.”.

The following are quotes from contributions from Senators to the debate, specific to the issue of activity / event-based Sports Tourism:

Senator Terry Brennan:

“Sports tourism has a significant part to play in our country and particularly with regard to jobs in the country. The Minister will target available resources at developing and co-ordinating niche tourism products and activity packages that will be attractive to international visitors, focusing on food, sport, culture, eco-tourism activity breaks, water-based recreation, hill-walking festivals, etc.”

“Event tourism will be prioritised and continue to bring major sporting events to Ireland, such as the successful Volvo Ocean Race and the Solheim and Ryder Cups. I propose that we consider the possibility of staging other international sports in this country, particularly in the golf area, as our golfers are in the top 20 of the world. We have sporting facilities and we catered for the Walker Cup at Portmarnock in 1991, which was a tremendous success. The World Cup of Golf is held biennially in different countries and our golfers deserve to participate in that competition on this island.”

“The sports capital programme is the Government’s main vehicle for funding sport. Sports tourism is important for the country. The global sports tourism industry is valued at an estimated €450 billion. The inaugural European sports tourism summit will be held in Limerick in May as part of Limerick’s programme as national city of culture 2014. It is estimated that regional sports tourism activities associated with the Wild Atlantic Way region alone will deliver almost €19 million and attract up to 200,000 additional bed nights. On average, some 150,000 or more golfers visit Ireland each year, from Europe, the United States and the Far East, generating up to €200 million for the economy. Some 35% of domestic tourism in Ireland is attributable to sport. The Emerald Isle Classic American football match at the Aviva Stadium in 2012 was worth an estimated €100 million to the economy. We should recognise also that 40,000 jobs are supported by sport in Ireland.”

Senator Labhrás Ó Murchú:

“There are different ways of looking at sport. Let us consider the economic advantage of sports tourism which brings in €1.8 billion annually. We are ideally situated to develop and enhance that sector. I do not think we should feel we are wasting time or money in doing that. By all means we must think of those involved in the higher echelons of sport but we must also

consider all the wonderful sports facilities that we have on the ground. These facilities are being well used, but they must be maintained. There will be an ongoing requirement for funding. There are others waiting in the queue to develop their facilities, having collected a percentage of the money and identified a piece of ground. I hope the capital grant will not be cut any further. It is very important that we nurture sport at community level. If we do that we have less antisocial behaviour, a reduction in the incidence of crime and fewer older people feeling threatened in their homes. Young people will also have a sense of purpose and worth. Surely that is what all legislation should be discussing. My gut feeling is that the Minister will not be too far off from what we are saying here today and will bring that same message back to Government."

In response to contributions, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar T.D., stated the following:

"The programme for Government includes a commitment that event tourism will be prioritised in order to continue to bring major events to Ireland. The hosting of major sports events, both participative and spectator sports, can provide a great showcase for Ireland and drive international visitor numbers. The media coverage of sports tourism events helps to put Ireland on travel itineraries as a holiday destination. Accordingly, I am supportive of the ongoing efforts of the tourism agencies and the national governing bodies of sport to attract international events, subject, of course, to an assessment of the costs and benefits involved in providing any State financial support, in particular, the number of overseas visitors they will attract."

and

"Other important sports events take place each year, for example, the GAA all-Ireland series, the six nations rugby championship which brings in significant numbers of visitors from overseas without any need for State support and the Irish Open golf tournament. Where appropriate, the tourism bodies work with these and other sports bodies to maximise the tourism benefits of events. For example, the Irish Open receives significant support from Fáilte Ireland as its main sponsor.

Tourism Ireland is the body responsible for promoting in overseas markets the island of Ireland as a visitor destination. Working closely with Fáilte Ireland, it is promoting key sports events taking place in 2014, including the visit of the Giro d'Italia cycle race which I mentioned and the Croke Park Classic American football game between the University of Central Florida and Penn State which is happening at the end of August. It is our ambition to host a college football game at least every second year in Dublin, following the Notre Dame-Navy game two years ago. NFL games are played regularly at Wembley. We have not managed to secure an NFL game for Ireland, but we now intend to target college football games and have one played, perhaps in Dublin, every other year, if not every year."

In relation to the wider question of return on investment, the Minister stated the following in relation to funding for sport in general:

"I would be cautious about the Senator's suggestion that every euro invested in sport delivers a return of €3 or €4. We always hear lobby groups and NGOs produce Jack and the Beanstalk research of this nature. If it was true, we could invest €1 billion in sport and heritage and with the €4 billion returned we would have no deficit. The reality is that there is considerable deadweight when investing in anything. If the Government put nothing into sport, there would still be the Six Nations and the All-Ireland championship. By and large, the Government invests in areas of sport that do not generate an economic return. That is why

Government investment is necessary. Many sports do not need governmental support and we want to invest in areas that probably do not generate particularly large economic returns.”

However, the Minister went on to state the following:

“The exception might be sports tourism, where we make the calculation that the amount we invest will be less than the return.”

### Northern Ireland

During a debate in the Northern Ireland Assembly on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2014, on the potential benefits of hosting the Giro d'Italia, it was made clear that a key expectation following the event was social rather than economic alone. The proposer of the motion stated that:<sup>11</sup>

“The Giro legacy must be for all, not just a cycling elite. We must ensure that benefits are not lost in our communities...Let us be clear: social inclusion must be a major focus of any legacy or cycling revolution.”

A number of subsequent speakers concurred with this sentiment. For example:

“It is only right that the Assembly recognises the significance of the Giro d'Italia coming to Northern Ireland to our economy, tourism, cultural exchange, education, health and worldwide publicity for Northern Ireland. It is important, however, that the Assembly recognises and notes the unique opportunity that this is to allocate adequate resources and deliver a robust legacy plan for cycling in Northern Ireland.”

### Ireland / Northern Ireland (Collaborative)

Some discussion has taken place regarding a potential joint bid between Northern Ireland and Ireland<sup>12</sup> to host the 2023 Rugby World Cup. On 5<sup>th</sup> February 2014, An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny T.D., in an address to Dáil Éireann<sup>13</sup> on issues related to Northern Ireland, highlighted the following:

“Sport: The hosting of a high-level conference on Sport and Sectarianism in November 2013 with participation by the GAA, IFA, and the IRFU. In 2014, we will have another significant cross-border sports event in the Giro d'Italia. In the longer term, the recent agreement to cooperate on a possible 2023 Rugby World Cup bid will, I hope, result in major benefits to the tourism industry throughout the island”.

Indeed, a similar sentiment on the proposed joint bid was expressed by Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness MLA in January 2014:<sup>14</sup>

“I know that our Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Arlene Foster, and the sports Minister in the South recognise that that could be of enormous benefit to the island of Ireland and to the promotion of rugby. It is presently at an exploration stage, but I think that all of us in the House, and, I am sure those in Leinster House, would feel that it would be a tremendous coup for Irish rugby if we could pull it off. So, that is being very diligently explored at this time.

<sup>11</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly. Private Members' Business: [Giro d'Italia](#) 2014. 29.4.14:

<sup>12</sup> Dáil Éireann. Other questions to the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport: [Sporting Events](#). 18.2.14.

<sup>13</sup> Department of An Taoiseach (2014) [Statement by An Taoiseach on Northern Ireland Dáil Éireann](#). 5.2.14

<sup>14</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly. Ministerial Statements, [North/South Ministerial Council: Institutional](#). 20.1.14

Obviously, in the context of such a huge event that would propel us to worldwide prominence, economic factors are hugely important, so many of the discussions centre around its economic viability. However, in principle, it would absolutely wonderful if we could pull it off. We will see what the outcome of the discussions between the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the sports Minister in the South bring for us all.”

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar T.D., stated the following in an April 2014 debate to Seanad Éireann:

“Senators will be aware that in November last the Government considered a memorandum on a bid to host the Rugby World Cup in 2023. While the memorandum identified a number of challenges, the great potential of the event is also clear. Hosting it on a cross-Border basis in 2023 would be a significant opportunity for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It is probably the biggest event we could host on the island. In response to the memorandum the Government expressed strong support for the proposal. In order to progress the matter further, on 22 January the Minister of State, Deputy Michael Ring, and I met the Northern Ireland Ministers, Ms Arlene Foster and Carál Ní Chuilín, who are responsible for tourism and sport, respectively, in the Northern Ireland Executive. We agreed to establish a working group to examine some key issues and report back to us in the summer. The working group, chaired by Mr. Hugo MacNeill, has held two meetings already, with the next meeting scheduled to take place on 11 April. I look forward to receiving its report.”

Discussion of the potential joint bid for the 2023 Rugby World Cup has taken place within the Northern Ireland Assembly also. In response to a request made to the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, Arlene Foster M.L.A, in May 2014, the following update on discussions regarding the potential for 2023 bid was made:

“The cross-border steering group looking at the feasibility of hosting the Rugby World Cup 2023 has met four times since it was established in February 2014. The group is discussing issues such as the number of matches to be played in Northern Ireland, number of training camps expected, numbers of potential visitors and their related spend as well as the social benefits of hosting an event such as the Rugby World Cup. It is expected that Hugo MacNeill, former Ireland International rugby player and Managing Director at Goldman Sachs Dublin, who chairs the group will present a report to Ministers over the summer to allow a decision to be made about a bid.”

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport confirmed on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2014 that both Ministers had received the report and are considering its recommendations and content. The timeline regarding a decision is not yet known.

#### 4. An overview of the Sports Tourism Industry

In general, tourism statistics are not sufficiently disaggregated to allow for precise measurement of what is a 'niche' sub-section of the tourism industry. However, some academic studies have attempted to quantify the engagement of overseas visitors in certain activities which can serve as the basis for an guideline approximation of the market as a whole.

The following section attempts to quantify the Sports Tourism industry in the Republic and in Northern Ireland in terms of activity-based sports, event-based sports and sporting infrastructure.

##### 4.1 Activity-based

###### Ireland

The Republic's National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland, provides an annual breakdown of overseas visitors numbers in its 'Tourism Facts' series, and outlines the sporting activities visitors engaged in during their visit. According to preliminary figures from the, Fáilte Ireland, of 6.708 million overseas visitors to the Republic in 2013 (i.e. excluding visitors from Northern Ireland) 21.1% or 1.4 million engaged in a named activity-based sport i.e. equestrian, golf, cycling, angling or hiking / hillwalking.

**Table 2: Overseas visitor's engagement in sporting-activities (Republic of Ireland)**

|  |                                    | 2008         | 2009         | 2010         | 2011         | 2012         | 2013(p)      |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Total overseas visitors – Sport (000s)</b>      |                                    |              |              |              |              |              |              |
| <b>Engaged in Sporting Activities</b>              | Equestrian                         | 50           | 46           | 62           | 72           | 66           | 100          |
|  | Golf                               | 141          | 143          | 160          | 181          | 171          | 204          |
|  | Cycling                            | 120          | 114          | 168          | 178          | 149          | 242          |
|  | Angling                            | 142          | 132          | 127          | 113          | 118          | 128          |
|  | Hiking / Hillwalking               | 517          | 830          | 713          | 776          | 578          | 743          |
|  | <b>Total (sporting activities)</b> | <b>970</b>   | <b>1,265</b> | <b>1,230</b> | <b>1,320</b> | <b>1,082</b> | <b>1,417</b> |
| <b>Total visitor numbers – Overall (000s)</b>      |                                    |              |              |              |              |              |              |
| Overseas visitors (excl. visitors from N. Ireland) |                                    | 7,436        | 6,578        | 5,945        | 6,240        | 6,286        | 6,708        |
| <b>% Sporting Activities</b>                       |                                    | <b>13.0</b>  | <b>19.2</b>  | <b>20.7</b>  | <b>21.2</b>  | <b>17.2</b>  | <b>21.1</b>  |
| <b>Total expenditure – Overall (€mn)</b>           |                                    |              |              |              |              |              |              |
| Overseas visitors (excl. visitors from N. Ireland) |                                    | 3,849        | 3,419.7      | 2,998.8      | 2,919.4      | 2,955.8      | 3,303.8      |
| <b>Expenditure on sporting activities (est.)</b>   |                                    | <b>502.1</b> | <b>657.6</b> | <b>620.4</b> | <b>617.6</b> | <b>508.8</b> | <b>697.9</b> |

Sources: 2004-2013 (Annual) Fáilte Ireland 'Tourism Fact' Series

Assuming the average level of expenditure by a typical visitor who engages in a named sporting activity is the same as the average aggregate visitor expenditure, this suggests

expenditure by this group alone of at least approximately €697.9 million.<sup>15</sup> This represents a marked rise of 37% year-on-year from 2012 using this measure.

However, these figures are not sufficiently disaggregated to indicate whether an engagement in activity-based or attendance / participation in an event-based sport by an overseas visitor was a motivating factor in the choice of Ireland.

However, in its 2009 'Tourism Facts' publication,<sup>16</sup> Fáilte Ireland did provide drilled-down figures on those visitors who indicated 'Activity Important in Choice of Ireland' and the associated expenditure. The figures suggest that of the 1.265 million overseas participants (i.e. excluding Northern Ireland) visitors who ultimately engaged in some form of activity-based sports during their holiday in the Republic, only 558,000 indicated that the activity choice was an important motivating factor in their choice of the Republic (44%). This indicates an overall level of €357 million in expenditure. The figures suggest an average expenditure by this cohort of €640 per person in respect of 2009 (a peak year).

In relation to the employment, Fáilte Ireland has identified the following impact:<sup>17</sup>

- "Every €1m of tourist expenditure helps to support 34 tourism jobs.
- Every 63 international tourists help support one tourism job.
- 1,000 additional tourists support 15 jobs in the tourism industry."

This suggests that the 1.417 million overseas visitors who engaged in these named activity-based sports, spending €698 million, support at least approximately 23,732 tourism related jobs in the Republic.

**Table 3: Overseas visitors who stated 'Activity Important in Choice of Ireland' (2009)**

|                                    |                      | 2009         |             |                           |            |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------------------|------------|
|                                    |                      | Overall      |             | Activity Choice Important |            |
| Total visitor numbers – sport      |                      | 000s         | €mn         | 000s                      | €mn        |
| Sporting Activities                | Equestrian           | 830          | 494         | 16                        | 11         |
|                                    | Golf                 | 143          | 110         | 74                        | 59         |
|                                    | Cycling              | 132          | 105         | 42                        | 29         |
|                                    | Angling              | 114          | 97          | 60                        | 43         |
|                                    | Hiking / Hillwalking | 46           | 27          | 366                       | 215        |
| <b>Total (sporting activities)</b> |                      | <b>1,265</b> | <b>833</b>  | <b>558</b>                | <b>357</b> |
|                                    |                      | <b>100%</b>  | <b>100%</b> | <b>44%</b>                | <b>43%</b> |

Source: Fáilte Ireland (2009) 'Tourism Facts'

<sup>15</sup> **Note:** Some studies such as Devine (2006) suggest that 'Sports Tourists' may spend more per capita than the average for overseas visitors. As such, the estimated expenditure provided here may underestimate real returns. Devine, A (2006). '[Sports Tourism: Marketing Ireland's Best Kept Secret – The Gaelic Athletic Association](#)'. Irish Journal of Management. Vol. 27, Nbr 1.

<sup>16</sup> Fáilte Ireland. [Tourism Facts 2009](#).

<sup>17</sup> Fáilte Ireland. [Tourism Facts 2012](#). p. 2



**Note:** That the 2009 survey only refers to those who viewed engagement in activity-based sports as an 'important' motivating factor in their choice of destination. Those overseas visitors specifying activity-based sport as a 'central' / core consideration may be lower.<sup>18</sup>

These figures do not take account of domestic holiday-makers or regional economic valuations. For 2009, of the 6.55 million overseas visitors (i.e. excluding Northern Ireland) to the Republic, 558,000 stated that activity was an important factor in their choice of destination (8.5%).

### Northern Ireland

According to the Northern Ireland Tourism Board and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, for the period 2013/14, total visitor numbers to Northern Ireland from overseas (excluding the Republic) was 1.705 million, of which 16% engaged in some sporting activity / activities. The total expenditure by overseas visitors was £538 million which implies (assuming a comparably constant expenditure by tourists engaged in sport) a total expenditure of £86.1 million by those taking part in sport activities.

**Table 4: Overseas visitor's engagement in sporting-activities (Northern Ireland)**

|  | 2013(p)                       | 2013/14                      |
|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
|  | Republic of Ireland           | Northern Ireland             |
| <b>Total visitor numbers – Overall (000s)</b>  |                               |                              |
| Overseas visitors (excl. visitors from the island of Ireland to either jurisdiction) | 6,708                         | 1,705                        |
| <b>% Sporting Activities</b>   | <b>21.1</b>                   | <b>16.0</b>                  |
| <b>Total expenditure – Overall</b>   |                               |                              |
| Overseas visitors (excl. visitors from the island of Ireland to either jurisdiction) | €3,303.8m<br>(£2,570.28m)     | £538m<br>(€691.5m)           |
| <b>Expenditure on Sporting Activities (est.)</b>                                     | <b>€697.9m<br/>(£542.95m)</b> | <b>£86.1m<br/>(€110.67m)</b> |

**Sources:** Northern Ireland Tourist Board & Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and 20134 Fáilte Ireland 'Tourism Fact' Series. Conversion applied using xe.com.

## 4.2 Events-based

Quantifying event-based sports tourism is particularly difficult due to the implicit necessity to accurately measure both direct and indirect expenditure by participants as well as spectators to these events and the related benefits to local businesses and services which may include other forms of tourism. This measurement process is therefore highly subjective and an optimism bias may be included by planners to among other things ensure support from relevant stakeholders and / or the wider public.

<sup>18</sup> An empirical study by Schwark (2007: 126) [Schwark, Jürgen (2007). [Sport tourism: introduction and overview](#). European Journal for Sport and Society 2007, Vol 4 (Issue 2), pp.117-132]. using German data over a 28-year period (1971-1999) suggests that engagement in sport is declared by between 5% and 8% of the interviewed visitors to be a central component of any holiday whereas the value of increased to between 22% and 24% where sport is an 'important' factor – a three to four fold increase. Note that this study reflects a different composition of activity-based sports i.e. skiing / alpine winter sports.



## Ireland

As stated above, the potential economic benefit of events-based sport tourism is event-specific, highly variable and is particularly difficult to quantify. Types of events may include:

- Multi-sport and major games;
- Professional / amateur sport leagues and events;
- Amateur single sport events;
- Manufactured or created events; and
- Intercommunity events.

A number of events sponsored by the Irish Government's *Sports Tourism Initiative* (see Section 6) have been independently assessed as having varying economic impacts. In 2010, the then Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, Mary Hanafin T.D., stated the following in relation to the Volvo Ocean Race 2009:<sup>19</sup>

“The Galway stopover is a hugely important win for Ireland. It is estimated that 87,000 people visited the Galway region during last year's stopover and that it had a massive €56 million economic impact on Galway and the West of Ireland. Hosting the race enabled us to showcase Galway and the West of Ireland to a television audience of some 1.3 billion people around the world — an incredible marketing opportunity. The 2011 — 2012 race could well exceed this performance because this time, Galway is the finishing port and the final prize-giving will be held there.”

According to one assessment,<sup>20</sup> this €56 million impact includes €36.5 million of expenditure by race spectators from outside of the Galway region. In total, €45 million in direct expenditure and €10 million in indirect expenditure is estimated. There were an estimated 40,500 international visitors and 269 members of the media attending the event, with 650,000 spectators at Race Village and Salthill, generating over 200,000 bed nights. The second hosting of the event (in 2012) forecast an economic impact of €60.5 million.<sup>21</sup>

The economic impact of sporting events / tournaments varies substantially e.g. the annual Irish Senior (Golf) Open (£70m / €88m), 2006 Ryder Cup (€43m), World Rally Championships 2007 & 2009 (€48m), 2009 Athlone Triathlon (€3.5m), the 2010 Special Olympics Games (€9.95m) and the 2011 Solheim Cup (€37m).

Other events, such as the 2012 Emerald Isle Classic (American Football) at the Aviva Stadium sponsored by The Gathering Ireland 2013 initiative had a forecast total economic worth of €100m.

<sup>19</sup> See: <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/2010/03/31/00036.asp>

<sup>20</sup> Assessment delivered at the 'Smart Thinking In Tourism' Conference hosted by Athlone Institute of Technology and sponsored by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland by AIT lecturer Sarah Jane Coffey. Presentation is available online here <http://www.ait.ie/media/athloneit/thricconference/Sarah-Jane-Coffey.pptx>. 15.6.14.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.nuigalway.ie/about-us/news-and-events/news-archive/2012/november2012/volvo-ocean-race-report-finds-economic-benefit-of-605-million-to-host-city-1.html>

For comparison, Fáilte Ireland has estimated that 'The Gathering Ireland' initiative itself attracted 250,000 additional visitors and contributed between [€160m-€200m](#) to the economy.

### Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland does not have an equivalent to the Irish Government's *Sports Tourism Initiative* or its successor the Major Events Unit within Fáilte Ireland. Instead, Sports Tourism events have been bid for on an individual basis, with support split between the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), depending on the event.

A post-event evaluation for the Giro D'Italia, jointly hosted by Northern Ireland and the Republic, has yet to be published, but some of the reported economic impacts for Northern Ireland – based on evaluations at previous events elsewhere – are as follows:<sup>22</sup>

- Direct economic benefit of [£2.5m](#), with an 'advertising equivalent' of £10m;
- Direct and indirect impacts combined worth around [£12.5m](#) to the local economy;
- An estimated 140,000 spectators;
- 800 million people watching on television in 175 countries; and
- £4.2m spent on hosting the event.

It was estimated of the Clipper Festival in July 2012 that it generated around [£3.74m](#) economic benefit to Northern Ireland businesses, with £80,568 additional tourism revenue generated, and 57,550 spectators.<sup>23</sup>

The 2013 World Police and Fire Games was probably unique in that it could be thought of as both a participatory and an event-based sporting festival. Many participants came to Belfast both to compete but also as tourists, bringing their families with them and spending time in Northern Ireland before and after the Games themselves. It is estimated that 170,032 athlete/spectator attendances were made by 20,500 different people. Of these, local residents accounted for 11,347, so an estimated 9,153 attendees were residents from outside Northern Ireland. Total out-of-state accommodation expenditure was estimated at £2.8m. Incorporating other out-of-state spectator expenditure, as well as the more limited spending of domestic spectators, brought the total spectator expenditure to £6.94m. Combining this with other areas of expenditure, and calculating both income and expenditure by the event organisers, produces a total direct economic benefit of £7.3m and £3.6m in terms of Gross Valued Added (GVA). The consultancy who carried out this calculation also

<sup>22</sup> Belfast Telegraph (2014) '[Bravo Giro D'Italia! Now let's get the Tour de France...](#)' 12.5.14

<sup>23</sup> Northern Ireland Tourist Board. 2013. *ni2012: our time, our place our story*. <http://www.nitb.com/FileHandler.ashx?id=2645>

predicted that a future economic benefit of [£0.85m](#) of visitor spend and £0.4m of GVA (based on return visits).<sup>24</sup>

In November 2013, a Bill was introduced to the Assembly which sought to create greater flexibility within road closure orders, so that road races in Northern Ireland could potentially be re-scheduled slightly in the event of poor weather. A key justification for this legislative amendment was the positive economic impact of events such as the Vauxhall International North West 200 motorcycle race meeting. For example, in the explanatory memorandum for the *Road Races (Amendment) Bill* (now Act), it is stated that:<sup>25</sup>

“The major road racing events, such as the Ulster Grand Prix Week and the North West 200 Festival, provide major financial investment, attracting thousands of spectators from home and abroad. An Economic Assessment of the 2010 North West 200 commissioned by the event organisers, The Coleraine & District Motor Club and prepared by “Tourism & Transport Consult International” of Bangor concluded that it attracted some 90,000 visitors during “Race Week”; that the net additional value in terms of the impact based on expenditure was £4.45m and that for every £1 of public monies spent there was a return of £30.21.”

### 4.3 Major infrastructure (stadia)

A number of important factors impact on the ability of a country to attract event-based Sports Tourism with stadium capacity a particularly prevalent issue. This section provides an overview of existing stadium capacity on the island of Ireland. A list of stadium capacity in the Republic and in Northern Ireland (over 10,000 seat capacity) is supplied in Appendix 1 of this paper.

#### Ireland

The Republic ranks highly in terms of provision of large scale sporting infrastructure in *per capita* terms. According to the 2013 World Economic Forum Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report,<sup>26</sup> Ireland ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> of 139 countries in terms of sports stadia capacity as a proportion of total population (with 243,076.7 seats per million people). Of the top 20 stadia on the island of Ireland in terms of total spectator capacity, 18 of these are located in the Republic and 2 in Northern Ireland (see Appendix 1).

At national and regional level in recent years, ‘major’ sporting infrastructure has been constructed and redeveloped including the phased upgrade to facilities at Croke Park (1993-2005), the redevelopment of Thomond Park in Limerick (2008), the completion of

<sup>24</sup> World Police and Fire Games 2013. 2014. *Legacy of the Games*: <http://www.2013wpfg.com/media/342697/scan.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Road Races (Amendment) Bill as Introduced Explanatory and Financial Memorandum: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Legislation/Primary-Legislation-Current-Bills/Road-Races-Amendment-Bill/Road-Races-Amendment-Bill-as-Introduced-Explanatory-and-Financial-Memorandum/>

<sup>26</sup> World Economic Forum Travel and Tourism Competitiveness 2013 Report, available at [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_TT\\_Competitiveness\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TT_Competitiveness_Report_2013.pdf) (p. 203 for Ireland breakdown).

Tallaght Stadium (2009) and the construction of the new Aviva Stadium at Lansdowne Road (2010) added to the level of high quality sporting and multiuse infrastructure.

The economic impact of holding major competitive events and tournaments in national stadium facilities varies. For example, since the redevelopment of Thomond Park stadium, sporting events held there have generated approximately €200 million for the Limerick region, with direct expenditure at €110 million, returning €35 million to the exchequer.<sup>27</sup>

Complementing stadium infrastructure, the National Sports Campus plays a particularly key role in shaping national sport policy in the Republic of Ireland. According to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (2011):<sup>28</sup>

“The only remaining piece of major sporting infrastructure to be completed is the National Sports Campus in Blanchardstown (Abbotstown). Recognising the difficult economic situation the Government is not in a position to allocate significant Exchequer funds to this project at this time but has committed to continuing this development on an incremental basis. This will involve the construction of Sports HQ to provide office accommodation for National Governing Bodies, the transfer of the Irish Sports Council from its offices in Blanchardstown to Abbotstown House and the provision of GAA, soccer, rugby and hockey training facilities in co-operation with the GAA, IRFU, FAI and IHA over time.”

The day-to-day operations of the approximately 500-acre campus and its facilities are managed by National Sports Campus Development Authority (Operations) Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of the National Sports Campus Development Authority (NSCDA). Several sporting organisations are located on the campus including the National Aquatic Centre, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI), the Irish Institute of Sport and 20 other national governing bodies (NGBs).<sup>29</sup>

The *Sport Ireland Bill 2014*<sup>30</sup> will provide the statutory basis for the dissolution and merger of functions of the Irish Sports Council and the NSCDA and the establishment of *Spórt Éireann* I Sport Ireland, a new statutory body responsible for the administration of sports policy in Ireland.

<sup>27</sup> According to a Cantwell, John (2014) Presentation to the European Sports Tourism Conference. Thomond Park, Limerick.

<sup>28</sup> Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. 2011. [Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-2016: Medium Term Exchequer Framework](#). November 2011.

<sup>29</sup> The 20 organisations are: Angling Council of Ireland, Archery Ireland, Badminton Ireland, Canoeing Ireland, Cerebral Palsy Sport Ireland, Federation of Irish Sport, Gaelic Athletic Association, Gymnastics Ireland, Irish Ice Hockey Association, Irish Judo Association, Irish Olympic Handball Association, Coaching Ireland, Irish Squash, Mountaineering Ireland, Pentathlon Ireland, Paralympics Ireland, Pitch & Putt Union of Ireland, Student Sport Ireland, Swim Ireland, Table Tennis Ireland and the Camogie Association. See: <http://www.nscda.ie/irishsport.php>

<sup>30</sup> See the Bill's progression through the Houses of the Oireachtas here <http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=27180&&CatID=59>

Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Executive committed in the *Programme for Government 2011–2015* to improvement works at the GAA ground at Casement Park, the football ground at Windsor Park and the rugby ground at Ravenhill. The ‘three stadia’ project is being funded and managed by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. Details of the capital upgrade work at each of the three stadia are as follows:<sup>31</sup>

**Table 5: Summary of upgrade works at the three Belfast stadia, funded by Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL)**

|                      | Capacity upgrade   | Budget provided by DCAL | Timescale  | Current status  |
|----------------------|--|-------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Ravenhill</b>     | The remaining three sides of the ground were rebuilt to accommodate 18,000 spectators in total.  | £14.7m                  | Completed.   | Completed.  |
| <b>Windsor Park</b>  | Increase capacity from 14,000 to 18,000 through some refurbishment of the North Stand and the West (Kop) Stand, and complete redevelopment of the East and South Stands. | £25.2m                  | Potential completion date of October 2015.   | Construction work began in May 2014.                              |
| <b>Casement Park</b> | Complete redevelopment, involving demolishing of the existing stadium and bringing it up to a spectator capacity of 38,000.  | £61.4m                  | Legal challenge by a local residents’ group heard in Belfast High Court in September 2014. <sup>32</sup> | Planning permission granted, demolition work began in April 2014. |

Sport NI, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure’s executive agency for sport, produced the Sport Matters strategy<sup>33</sup> in 2009. This document stated that, ‘Northern Ireland is under-provided for in comparison with other regions in the UK and Europe’. It also stated that at the time of writing, 35% of the population lived more than 20 miles away from an accredited, high quality facility. The strategy was accompanied by a piece of research called *Active Places* which, using research commissioned from Edinburgh University, identified ‘a significant under-provision in key sports facilities’.<sup>34</sup> This research has not been replicated since, but it draws attention to the scale of under-provision which the current three stadia project is seeking to address.’

<sup>31</sup> Papers provided to the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure, 13.6.13.

<sup>32</sup> Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service. Court Lists Online, 16.9.14.

<sup>33</sup> [http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/sport\\_matters.pdf](http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/sport_matters.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> See also: Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service (2013) [Grassroots sport in Northern Ireland: A summary of participation and potential challenges](#). Research Paper.

## 5. Projected economic worth/value to the economy of Sports Tourism

The following section refers to the definitional problems related to the measurement of the Sports Tourism market and provides an overview of assessments which have been published in recent years.

### 5.1 The complexities of measuring the benefits of Sports Tourism

As stated in section 4, accurate measurement of the economic worth of Sports Tourism is difficult not least due to a number of definitional issues and the large number of variables which must be objectively considered to reach a comparable calculation of the social, cultural and economic dividends of a single sporting activity or event against the backdrop of a constantly evolving socio-economic background.<sup>35</sup>

As with the calculation of the overall economic contribution of tourism more generally, there are also methodological differences in the calculation of any subset of tourism between the Republic and Northern Ireland. However, some data does exist to provide a basis for an approximation of certain aspects of both activity-based and event-based Sports Tourism.

With the hosting of large sporting events in particular, it has become the norm to assign to them a range of benefits - typically economic, urban, infrastructural, cultural and participatory.<sup>36</sup> However, some recent analyses of major sports events (particularly 'mega events') have highlighted that the net effect of such large events may not always be positive.<sup>37</sup>

For example, concerns persist that these mega-events may not necessarily leverage the social and economic returns claimed of them by host governments.<sup>38</sup> There is a large body of literature highlighting the potential risks of cost over-runs, reputational damage and potentially long-term costs and liabilities arising from under-used (or even redundant) sports venues.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Preuss, H. 2007. 'The conceptualisation and measurement of mega-sport event legacies', *Journal of Sport and Tourism* 12, 3–4: p.216.

<sup>36</sup> For discussion of the 'standard list' of legacy benefits, see: Chappelet, J-L. 2006. *The Tale of Three Olympic Cities – Forecasts for Torino on Basis of Grenoble and Innsbruck*. Torino 2006 Winter Olympic Games Symposium, cited in Chalip, L. 2014. 'From legacy to leverage', in J Grix (ed) *Leveraging Legacies from Sports Mega-Events*. Palgrave MacMillan: pp2–12.

<sup>37</sup> For example, see Terret, T. 2008. 'The Albertville Winter Olympics: Unexpected Legacies – Failed Expectations for Regional Economic Development', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 25(14): pp1903–1921.

<sup>38</sup> For a general summary of such concerns, see Chalip, L. 2014. 'From legacy to leverage', in J Grix (ed) *Leveraging Legacies from Sports Mega-Events*. Palgrave MacMillan: pp2–12.

<sup>39</sup> For example, see Stewart, B. 2014. 'A tale of two Australian cities', in J Grix (ed) *Leveraging Legacies from Sports Mega-Events*. Palgrave MacMillan: pp62–72; Baviskar, A. 2014. 'Dreaming Big: Spectacular Events and the 'World-Class' City: The Commonwealth Games in Delhi', in J Grix (ed) *Leveraging Legacies from Sports Mega-Events*. Palgrave MacMillan: pp130–141.



More specifically, some research has suggested that the wider economic impact of hosting very large sporting events can, in some cases, be negative.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, it has also been stated that the branding effects of hosting large sporting events can be highly transitory,<sup>41</sup> with an almost undetectable impact on subsequent tourism to the destination.<sup>42</sup> Some studies have even concluded that businesses outside the immediate environs of the event can suffer as spending is concentrated within the event precinct, thus negating the overall economic contribution.<sup>43</sup>

While the wider concept of legacy has gained substantial traction, involving a high degree of expectation of social, economic and political outcomes,<sup>44</sup> it has been pointed out that securing such an array of legacy outcomes from sporting events involves the long-term participation of a much wider number of government agencies and indeed non-governmental bodies than the body responsible for organising the event itself.<sup>45</sup> This may especially be the case where such organising bodies are often disbanded soon after the event, thereby minimising any chances of legacy continuity.<sup>46</sup>

“...a single event may be a useful addition to the host destination’s marketing or development mix, but it is unlikely to have a long-term impact by itself.’ The solution, it has been suggested, is to create a ‘portfolio’ of events around the destination in order to optimize the overall ‘aggregate mix’<sup>47</sup>.

“Each event must be built into an integrated marketing and development package that synergizes it with the host community’s overall branding and development strategy.”<sup>48</sup>

## 5.2 Contribution of the sport sector to tourism (2008-present)

Notwithstanding the difficulties of measurement outlined above, the following is an attempt to summarise some of the calculated economic benefits of sports tourism for Northern Ireland and for the Republic.

<sup>40</sup> Taks, M, Kesenne, S, Chalip, L, Greeb, BC & Martyn, S. 2011. ‘Economic Impact Analysis versus Cost Benefit Analysis: The case of a medium-sized event’, *International Journal of Sport Finance* 6: pp187–203; Hiller, H. 1998. ‘Assessing the impact of mega-events: A linkage model’, *Current Issues in Tourism* 1(1): pp47–57.

<sup>41</sup> Ritchie, JRB & Smith, BH. 1991. ‘The impact of a mega-event on host region awareness: A longitudinal study’, *Journal of Travel Research* 30, 3: pp3–10.

<sup>42</sup> Chalip, L, Green, BC & Hill, B. 2003. ‘Effects of sport event media on destination image and intention to visit’, *Journal of Sport Management* 17: pp214–234;

<sup>43</sup> For example, Putsis, WP. 1998. ‘Winners and losers: Redistribution and the use of economic impact analysis in marketing’. *Journal of Macromarketing* 18: pp24–33.

<sup>44</sup> Chalip, as above: p6.

<sup>45</sup> Chalip, as above: p7.

<sup>46</sup> This trend is evident also in the aftermath of cultural mega-events.

<sup>47</sup> Chalip, as above: p7.

<sup>48</sup> Chalip, as above: p8.

Ireland

As identified by a 2005 ESRI study,<sup>49</sup> official statistics collected by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) are not sufficiently disaggregated to provide a basis for a wholly accurate and sufficiently precise economic valuation of Sports Tourism “since they generally do not distinguish between sport and recreation more generally”. The ESRI study<sup>50</sup> nonetheless, did attempt a valuation based on 2003 statistics as follows:

“One major additional area, for example, is the economic value of sports tourism into Ireland. According to Fáilte Ireland/CSO data for 2003, each visitor to the country spends approximately €660 (Tourism Ireland, 2005). Approximately 536,000 people stated that their purpose in coming to Ireland was to engage in some form of sports activity, of which golf; equestrian activities; cruising; walking/hiking and angling were the most important. If we assume that the spend per visitor who came for sporting purposes was the same as the average for all visitors, the estimate of the economic value of sports tourism would be approximately **€350 million**. A broad economic valuation could also include government spending on sport; a dimension of sports-related spending that has not already been included in the estimates presented above.”

Similarly, a 2008 Indecon Report estimated the contribution of sport-related tourism from overseas consumers, taking account of multiplier impacts, as €454.4 million, as follows:

**Table 6: Contribution of Tourism / Overseas Sector to the Republic of Ireland Economy – Multiplier Impacts – Expenditure, GVA, Employment and Wages – 2008**

| Type of Impact on Domestic Irish Economy  | Value of Impact |
|---|-----------------|
| Direct spending of sport-related tourism/overseas sector (A) - € million            | 200.8           |
| Indirect and induced spending (B) - € million                                       | 253.5           |
| Total direct, indirect and induced spending ((C) = (A) + (B)) - € million           | 454.4           |
| Total direct, indirect and induced wages/salaries - € million                       | 101.5           |
| Total direct, indirect and induced employment/FTE jobs                              | 2,859           |
| Total direct, indirect and induced gross value added contribution (GVA) - € million | 188.6           |

Source: Indecon. 2008. [Assessment of Economic Impact of Sport in Ireland](#) p. 43.

The Federation of Irish Sport in a recent submission to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport estimated the contribution of sports tourism as being “in excess of €800 million per year”.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid* p. 57

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid* p. 66

<sup>51</sup> See: [http://irishsport.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Sport-Ireland-consultation\\_Feb1\\_final.pdf](http://irishsport.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Sport-Ireland-consultation_Feb1_final.pdf) (p. 1)



**Table 7: Estimated contribution of sport tourism to Ireland – summary**

| Body   | Estimation   |
|--|--|
| <a href="#">ESRI</a> (2005)                      | €350 million   |
| <a href="#">Indecon Report</a> (2008)            | €454.4 million   |
| <a href="#">Fáilte Ireland</a> (2009)            | €357 million (select activity-based sports <i>only</i> )   |
| <a href="#">Fáilte Ireland</a> (2013)            | €697.8 million (select activity-based sports <i>only</i> ) |
| <a href="#">Federation of Irish Sport</a> (2013) | €800 million   |

**Source:** Multiple.Northern Ireland

In terms of data relating to activity-based tourism in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) does not collect detailed data on ‘reasons for visit’ and no academic studies have been published which seek to approximate an overall economic value to the Northern Ireland economy. However, the results of the survey of passenger departures indicate that around 16% of overseas visitors to Northern Ireland carry out sporting activity while they are here. This data is incomplete in that some overseas visitors will travel south of the border before departing via other ports. However, the data could be used to calculate an approximate estimate of £86.1m expended on sporting activities by tourists within Northern Ireland each year.’ (see Section 4.1 for comparative detail on this).

## 6. Role/activities and promotion strategies of Fáilte Ireland, Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Tourism Ireland

A number of tourism agencies are involved in the promotion of activities or events which can be classified as elements of Sports Tourism across the island of Ireland including Fáilte Ireland (in the Republic), the Northern Ireland Tourism Board (Northern Ireland) and Tourism Ireland (a North/South body). Their scope and promotion strategies differ significantly between the two jurisdictions.

### 6.1 Fáilte Ireland

Fáilte Ireland collaborates closely with other State agencies to deliver national objectives regarding sport-based tourism. In particular, a close collaborative working relationship has existed between Fáilte Ireland and the Irish Sports Council<sup>52</sup> and other State agencies including Coillte, Inland Fisheries Ireland and Bord na Móna.

#### a. Comhairle na Tuaithe

Following the objectives of the *National Development Plans* (2000-2006 and 2007-2013), Comhairle na Tuaithe was established in 2004 with the purpose of progressing three specific priorities;

- Access to the countryside for recreation purposes;
- Development of a countryside code; and
- Development of the countryside recreation strategy.

As such, it initiated a number of activity-based sporting strategies and schemes including the development a National Countryside Recreation Strategy<sup>53</sup> (2006), The Walks Scheme (2008) and Mountain Access Scheme.

According to the chair of Comhairle na Tuaithe (a principal officer in the community division of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government), presenting to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine (29 January 2013):<sup>54</sup>

“Comhairle na Tuaithe, through the Department representatives, also works closely with the national trails advisory committee, a sub-committee of the Irish Sports Council, to oversee the implementation of its national trails strategy and assist the national trails office in its work. With Fáilte Ireland, the Department funds 12 rural recreation officers through local development companies to support the development of walking trails and manage the walk

<sup>52</sup> Devine, A; Boyd, S and Boyle, E (2010). *‘Unravelling the Complexities of Inter-Organisational Relationships within the Sports Tourism Policy Arena on the Island of Ireland’*. In Gorham, Geraldine and Mottiar, Ziene (eds) (2010) *Contemporary Issues in Irish and Global Tourism and Hospitality*. Dublin Institute of Technology. p. 219.

<sup>53</sup> Available online at

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/Community/RuralDevelopment/FileDownload,27107,en.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> [http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/Debates%20Authoring/WebAttachments.nsf/\(\\$vLookupByConstructedKey\)/committees~20130129~AGJ/\\$File/Daily%20Book%20Unrevised.pdf?openelement](http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/Debates%20Authoring/WebAttachments.nsf/($vLookupByConstructedKey)/committees~20130129~AGJ/$File/Daily%20Book%20Unrevised.pdf?openelement)

scheme. While the scheme is closed to new trails, it currently maintains more than 40 trails throughout the country and approximately 1,800 landowners are participating in it.”

## b. The International Sport Tourism Initiative

In 2001, the then Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation, Dr. Jim McDaid T.D., launched a seven year, €55 million International Sports Tourism Initiative to increase sport-related tourism and enhance Ireland’s reputation as a sports venue. Under the Initiative, funding was made available to attract international sporting events to Ireland with preference given to annual or reoccurring events. Each event was assessed on different sets of criteria i.e. *economic* including revenue potential and regional reach and *promotional / marketing* including television exposure, prestige and impact on higher-profile future events. Sponsorship was administered and coordinated through a Sport Tourism Unit within the existing structure of Bord Fáilte (later Fáilte Ireland following the *National Tourism Development Authority Act, 2003*) and supported by a committee, the International Sports Tourism Advisory Group, comprising representatives from sport and tourism interests which were to consider applications.

Four categories of 'major event' were identified by Fáilte Ireland:<sup>55</sup>

- **“Mega Events:** Summer Olympic Games and Paralympics Games.
- **Commercially Successful Events:** Regular fixtures on the international calendar e.g. Formula One Grand Prix, PGA European Tour Events, Tour of Ireland Cycling.
- **One-Off Events:** That attract substantial interest and international TV rights e.g. Rugby World Cup, IAAF World Championship, Ryder Cup.
- **Other Events:** That have the potential to boost their sports in Ireland and where Ireland has a good chance of winning medals e.g. IAAF World Cross Country Championships, World Paralympics Swimming Championships, European Show jumping Championships.”

Major events<sup>56</sup> which were attracted under the Initiative included:

- AIB Irish Seniors Open (annual)
- British Touring Car Championships (2001 and 2002)
- World Senior Amateur Boxing Championships (2001)
- Quiksilver Masters (2001), International Pairs (2001)
- Adidas Dublin Marathon (2001 and 2002)

<sup>55</sup> A summary of the Initiative is available here

[http://www.open4business.ie/mayo/o4schemes.aspx?WCI=htmschemeview&WCU=Grant\\_PKEY=30-S16895,POPUP=N#.U9DzCrdOUdU](http://www.open4business.ie/mayo/o4schemes.aspx?WCI=htmschemeview&WCU=Grant_PKEY=30-S16895,POPUP=N#.U9DzCrdOUdU)

<sup>56</sup> See: <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/2010/03/31/00036.asp> and [http://www.business2000.ie/pdf/pdf\\_6/bord\\_failte\\_6th\\_ed.pdf](http://www.business2000.ie/pdf/pdf_6/bord_failte_6th_ed.pdf)

- F1 Powerboat Grand Prix (2002)
- EFSA European Boat Championships (2001)
- World Cross Country Championships (2002)
- American Express World Championships (2002)
- Seve Trophy (2002),
- European Eventing Championship (2003)
- European Short Course Swimming Championships (2003)
- Special Olympics (2003)
- Ryder Cup (2006)
- Smurfit Kappa European Open (2007)
- World Rally Championships (2007 and 2009)
- Volvo Ocean Race (2009)
- The Solheim Cup (2011)

The Initiative was wound down in the late 2000s. The then Minister for Arts, Sports and Tourism, Mary Hanafin T.D., speaking in Dáil Éireann in March 2010 confirmed that 160 events has been supported by the Initiative, representing an investment of €50 million over its lifetime.<sup>57</sup>

In February 2014, Fáilte Ireland launched a **Major Event Unit** to proactively identify, target and secure event-based tourism under specified criteria with each event evaluated on a competitive basis.<sup>58</sup> Any event with a proven track record of delivering in excess of 6,000 international bed nights will be considered by the Unit for both practical and financial support.

Fáilte Ireland also hosted the inaugural European Sport Tourism Summit in Thomond Park Stadium Limerick in May 2014 which featured speakers from international organisations and dedicated Sport Tourism specialists.<sup>59</sup>

### c. The Wild Atlantic Way – Blueway Initiative

The Wild Atlantic Way is a long distance tourism (driving) route under a single brand spanning the west coast of Ireland from the Inishowen Peninsula in Donegal to Kinsale in Cork. According to Fáilte Ireland:

“‘Wild Atlantic’ highlights included paddleboarding at the Strandhill Surf School; cycling along the Mayo Greenway with ‘Electric Escapes’; ferrying to Garnish Island; climbing the Geokaun Mountain & Fogher Cliffs.”

<sup>57</sup> See: <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/2010/03/31/00036.asp>

<sup>58</sup> See: <http://irishsport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Failte-Ireland-Key-Criteria-for-Major-Events1.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> Full programme available here <http://limerickcityofculture.ie/sites/default/files/ESTS%20Overview.pdf>

The complement the Wild Atlantic Way, The Blueway Initiative<sup>60</sup> was launched by the Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Michael Ring T.D. in June 2014. The Blueway is a pilot programme to encourage visitors to engage with the sea by developing trails for water activities such as snorkeling and kayaking and highlighting local activity providers and events at the five Blueway locations in counties Mayo and Galway. Commenting on the launch of the Blueway, the Minister highlighted that 84,000 overseas visitors engage in water-sports every year with the “vast majority” of those taking part in kayaking and snorkelling.

## 6.2 Northern Ireland Tourist Board

In 2013, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) published its *Events Strategic Vision to 2020*.<sup>61</sup> While this strategy does not make specific reference to a sport sub-strand within its work, sporting events are referred to as examples of ‘major global events’ which can ‘showcase Northern Ireland’s iconic landscapes and stand-out features’ and ‘act as a catalyst for wider industry to develop related product and embrace the opportunities presented’. The hosting of the Irish Open in Portrush in 2012 is highlighted as an example of such an event, with the following figures presented:

- 130,785 tickets sold;
- 28,373 bed nights generated (£1.2m in sales);
- Tourism impact of NITB monies of £1:£4.29;
- Broadcast to 447m households, with £107m gross in global media coverage;
- £9.5m tourism revenue generated;
- £12m economic benefit to NI businesses.

The *Events Strategic Vision* document states that such events will ‘increase the likelihood and potential for Northern Ireland to host bigger events in the future’. In order to facilitate the process of bidding for larger events in the future, the document states that the following developments are taking place:

“Bidding structures, including a Northern Ireland bidding group, are being put in place to ensure this vision is realised. NITB will bring key partners together who have the strategic expertise and knowledge to identify major events which could showcase Northern Ireland on a world stage and drive visitor numbers and spend.”

<sup>60</sup> See: <http://www.failteireland.ie/Utility/Media-Centre/Minister-Ring-launches-the-Blueway-%E2%80%93-the-new-way-t.aspx#sthash.ynO8Mb56.dpuf>

<sup>61</sup> Available to view online at: <http://nia1.me/25m>

### 6.3 Tourism Ireland

The concentration on niche markets that have revenue potential is a key focus for Tourism Ireland for the period 2014-2016. While activity or event-based sports are not directly referenced, golf is explicitly stated as one of four areas for further evaluation.

Tourism Ireland employs five key themes under the headline banner of 'Island of Ireland Delivers – An Experience-Led Brand Architecture', one of which is 'Getting Active in Nature'.<sup>62</sup>

In a previous corporate strategy (2011-2013), Tourism Ireland highlighted, as part of their strategy, a commitment to working with regional tourism interests to "promote and leverage key activities over the period including the 2011 Solheim Cup at Killeen Castle and the return of the Volvo Ocean Race to Galway in 2012".<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> See: <http://www.tourismireland.com/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=4c2fc680-a8e8-4a26-a728-a08f4e7ef37f>

<sup>63</sup> See: <http://www.tourismireland.com/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=3030ea25-aa85-49ab-957d-b64dec39c6f7> (p. 5).

## 7. Examples of Sports Tourism initiatives elsewhere

The following is a small selection of sports tourism initiatives which have been attempted elsewhere, including both the benefits of such ventures but also the challenges experienced.

### 7.1 Shanghai Tennis Masters Cup 2002

The city authorities in Shanghai considered bidding for a major competition such as the Tennis Masters Cup to be important in turning around perceptions in the world media that the city was a developing one with a low, or even negative, profile. Improving that profile was viewed by government officials as an important stepping stone in seeking to bid for even bigger events in the future.<sup>64</sup> At the time, Shanghai had little experience of, and no profile in relation to, large sporting events, and no sports tourism expertise. However, it did have the advantage of strong government backing for the bid.

An estimated 71 million television viewers watched the event in 146 countries. At a cost of US\$13m the event was expected to produce a financial loss. However, reports suggest that after ticket sales and sponsorship the Shanghai Tennis Master Cup was in fact a break-even operation. Just two weeks after the event, Shanghai was awarded the right to host the World Exposition in 2010 – this was considered by Chinese officials to be a key function behind the hosting of the Tennis Masters Cup in the first place. In addition, Shanghai went on to host the F1 Chinese Grand Prix and the FIFA Women's World Cup.

The Shanghai Municipal Sports Bureau, a state company formed for the delivery of the Shanghai Tennis Masters Cup 2002, continues to this day and now delivers all such sporting events within the city. Having such a specialised event-organising company, rather than just a temporary organising committee, has been described as essential for maintaining the knowledge and skills first gained in hosting the Tennis Masters Cup.<sup>65</sup>

### 7.2 The development of Sports Tourism in Malta

The National Tourist Organization in Malta has been promoting sports tourism in Malta since the 1990s, partly as a way of tackling a downturn in tourists coming from markets such as the UK (with the expansion of cheap flights to other destinations).<sup>66</sup>

Sports tourism in Malta is striking for its diversity, with diving, water sports, yachting, power boating, golf, football and swimming among a range of activities developed and promoted on the island. Unlike golf tourism provision in other European destinations, Malta seeks to

<sup>64</sup> Liu, D. 2014. 'The legacy of the 2002 Shanghai Tennis Masters Cup', in J Grix (ed) *Leveraging Legacies from Sports Mega-Events*. Palgrave MacMillan: pp96–106.

<sup>65</sup> Liu 2014, as above: p104

<sup>66</sup> Weed, M & Bull, C. 2009. *Sports Tourism: Participants, Policy and Providers*. Elsevier: pp 209–221.

provide a cheaper, non-luxury category, including affordable courses and intensive golf schools.

However, elite and technical sports tourism are also strong elements of the market in Malta. There is football tourism, particularly in the form of training camps, with teams coming in particular from Scandinavian countries, Switzerland and Germany to the Malta Football Association Technical Complex. High end swimming camps are also facilitated with a number of operators offering packages involving the Tal-Qroqq Olympic size pool, university facilities and local hotels. In the last twenty years, Malta has hosted various international events which have helped to develop its reputation as an elite sports venue, with Masters events at the Tal-Qroqq swimming pool, the World Paralympics, and the World Offshore power boat racing grand prix. Training camps – and indeed sports tourism in general – have helped to extend the tourism season in Malta with teams from northern Europe using Malta as a base during the winter months.

In 2013, a total of 1.58 million inbound tourists came to Malta, of whom almost half had participated in some form of sport or outdoor recreational activity.<sup>67</sup> However, resource constraints pose real challenges to any continuation in expansion; both land and water are limited resources. As a result, Malta has struggled to expand its golf facilities with various other tourism sectors also seeking to grow. Some commentators have described a lack of joined-up approach within the Maltese government, with little coordinated strategy and responsibility for tourism and sport lying in separate departments.<sup>68</sup>

### 7.3 Adventure tourism in Wales

Across the UK as a whole, trips featuring rural sports participation made up a reported 14% of the overall tourism market in 2005, with a total value of £8.3bn.<sup>69</sup> Wales has sought to capitalise on this interest since at least 2002, with the creation by the Wales Tourist Board of a set of campaigns aimed at promoting activities such as walking, riding, cycling and fishing.

An estimated 800,000 horse riding occasions are taken by visitors in Wales each year with a direct expenditure of £18.6m. A recent economic impact assessment of outdoor activity tourism as a whole in Wales concluded that the total annual contribution is £481m, with an

---

<sup>67</sup> Malta Tourism Authority. 2014. *Tourism in Malta*. Edition 2014.

<sup>68</sup> Weed & Bull 2009, as above: p218.

<sup>69</sup> Weed, M & Bull, C. 2009. *Sports Tourism: Participants, Policy and Providers*. Elsevier: pp 237–255.



additional £304m in value added activity.<sup>70</sup> This collectively makes up a 10% contribution to the Welsh tourism economy, with 8,243 FTE jobs supported.<sup>71</sup>

Adventure tourism can involve such activities as climbing, caving, non-motorised watersports, diving, airsports, mountain biking, rope courses, bungee jumping and other pursuits. The range of activities available is, almost by definition, highly diverse and constantly changing, with pursuits such as parakarting and gorge walking now widely available in Wales.

Inclement weather is not necessarily seen as a deterrent by practitioners and enthusiasts, but the rugged and challenging landscape of Wales is certainly viewed as an incentive. Indeed, as one commentator has stated, 'one of the key aspects of rural sports participation tourism is that it can make substantial economic contributions to the more marginal, local rural areas, such as uplands, where most forms of economic activity are severely limited'.<sup>72</sup> One study has suggested that adventure tourism is worth £140m to the economy of north-west Wales alone,<sup>73</sup> and that £60m of this relates to Snowdonia National Park specifically, an area otherwise without strong economic opportunities.

In addition to the natural landscape of Wales, other key factors in the success of adventure tourism in Wales are the number of activity centres catering for both 'taster' and expert levels of participation, and also the range of private tour operators and guides providing training, equipment and facilitation. Networks are now being established to try to bring some coordination to what has been described as a growing but fragmented sector. A key challenge for the adventure tourism sector in Wales is the sustainability of the resource, particularly the environmental impact of adventure activities and the installations necessitated by them. Traffic and pedestrian congestion has been identified as a risk to the countryside character of rural Wales. Access arrangements and sustainable transport options require further development.

## 7.4 Rugby World Cup in 1999

Wales won the bid to host the Rugby World Cup in 1999 and was the official host of the tournament, with the Welsh Rugby Union and Cardiff County Council making the formal bid. However, hosting of the matches was shared with Ireland, England, France and Scotland.

<sup>70</sup> Miller Research Evaluation Consulting. 2014. *The Economic Impact of Outdoor Activity Tourism in Wales*: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/Tourism/140428economic-impact-activity-tourism.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> By comparison, taking Northern Ireland as an example, it has been estimated that activity tourism in Northern Ireland is worth £55m / €71m in overseas tourist spending, and when combined with the Republic's market may be worth as much as £90m / €115.7m to £100m / €128.5m per annum in revenue for Northern Ireland tourist businesses. However, this would still amount to less than a quarter of the potential sum estimated for Wales.

<sup>72</sup> Weed, M & Bull, C. 2009. *Sports Tourism: Participants, Policy and Providers*. Elsevier: pp 249.

<sup>73</sup> Weed and Bull 2009, as above, quoting Snowdonia Key Initiative 2005. *Strategy and Working Plan 2005/2006*.

The tournament was predicted to attract 1.7m spectator visits, with a total television audience of around 3bn. However, according to some commentators, the shared hosting arrangement diluted recognition of Wales as the official hosts and had a tangible negative effect on the economic impact of the event.<sup>74</sup> Only 8 of the 41 matches were hosted in Wales, with under 1% of the tournament gross accruing there.

Furthermore, it has been commented that exclusive contracts between Rugby World Cup Ltd and overseas tour operators meant that many spectators from outside Wales attended matches in Cardiff but were bussed back out again to stay elsewhere. Consequently, few spectators stayed to visit other attractions in the area and so did not undertake a Welsh 'experience'.<sup>75</sup>

Further limitations on the event's economic impact for Wales may have derived from the fact that of the six games played with Cardiff, four involved the home team so the net extra benefit accruing to Wales from spectators from elsewhere was limited. Other difficulties derived from ticketing arrangements, where 50% were allocated to sponsors and external tour companies, thereby creating a backlash with limited numbers available to local fans. Negative media coverage arose from such difficulties.

However, the Rugby World Cup was also a catalyst for significant infrastructural investment. The Millennium Stadium, a 72,000 seat stadium close to the city centre which is now used for major rugby and football matches as well as conferences and cultural events, was a key part of this. The stadium cost £130m, with 40% contributed by the UK National Lottery and the rest financed by the Welsh Rugby Union to be repaid by gate receipts. Support for the new stadium was strong within the city, and it has been described as a facility which is entirely appropriate to the host city and region with few doubts over the success of its legacy.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Jones, C. 2001. 'Mega-events and host-region impacts: Determining the true worth of the 1999 Rugby World Cup', *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 3: pp241–251.

<sup>75</sup> Jones, C. 2001. As above: p246

<sup>76</sup> Jones 2001, as above: p247.

**Appendix 1: List of stadia on the island of Ireland (by capacity, over 10,000)**

| Tenant/use        | City          | Stadium             | Capacity | Seats      |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------------|----------|------------|
| National Stadium  | Dublin        | Croke Park          | 82 300   | 69 500     |
| Tipperary County  | Thurles       | Semple Stadium      | 53 000   | -          |
| National Stadium  | Dublin        | Aviva Stadium       | 51 700   | All-seater |
| Limerick County   | Limerick      | Gaelic Grounds      | 50 000   | 35 000     |
| Cork County       | Cork          | Páirc Uí Chaoimh    | 43 000   | -          |
| Kerry County      | Killarney     | Fitzgerald Stadium  | 43 000   | -          |
| Monaghan County   | Clones        | St. Tiernach's Park | 36 000   | -          |
| Mayo County       | Castlebar     | McHale Park         | 36 000   | 35 000     |
| Antrim County     | Belfast       | Casement Park       | 32 500   | -          |
| Cavan County      | Cavan         | Breffni Park        | 32 000   | 6 000      |
| Laos County       | Portlaoise    | O'Moore Park        | 27 000   | -          |
| Munster Rugby     |               |                     |          |            |
| Shannon RFC       | Limerick      | Thomond Park        | 26 500   | 15 100     |
| UL Bohemian RFC   |               |                     |          |            |
| Limerick FC       |               |                     |          |            |
| Galway County     | Galway        | Pearse Stadium      | 26 197   | 8 000      |
| Galway County     | Tuam          | St. Jarlaths Park   | 25 000   | -          |
| Tyrone County     | Omagh         | Healy Park          | 25 000   | All-seater |
| Kilkenny County   | Kilkenny      | Nowlan Park         | 24 000   | 17 000     |
| Clare County      | Ennis         | Cusack Park         | 24 000   | -          |
| Castleblayney GFC | Castleblayney | St. Mary's Park     | 23 000   | -          |
| Carlow County     | Carlow        | Dr. Cullen Park     | 21 000   | -          |
| Down County       | Newry         | Páirc Esler         | 20 000   | -          |
| Wexford County    | Wexford       | Wexford Park        | 20 000   | -          |
| Armagh County     | Armagh        | Athletic Grounds    | 19 500   | 5 700      |
| Roscommon County  | Roscommon     | Hyde Park           | 18 500   | -          |
| Leinster Rugby    | Dublin        | RDS Stadium         | 18 500   | 16 500     |
| Ulster Rugby      | Belfast       | Ravenhill Stadium   | 18 200   | -          |
| Waterford County  | Waterford     | Walsh Park          | 17 000   | 6 000      |
| Sligo County      | Sligo         | Markievicz Park     | 17 000   | -          |
| Fermanagh County  | Enniskillen   | Brewster Park       | 16 000   | -          |
| Offaly County     | Tullamore     | Páirc Uí Conchúir   | 16 000   | -          |
| Kildare County    | Newbridge     | St. Conleth's Park  | 15 000   | -          |
| Glentoran FC      | Belfast       | The Oval            | 15 000   | 5 000      |
| Derry County      | Derry         | Celtic Park         | 15 000   | -          |
| GAA-use           | Dungarvan     | Fraher Field        | 15 000   | 4 000      |
| Donegal County    | Ballybofey    | McCumhaill Park     | 15 000   | -          |
| Multi-use         | Dublin        | The O2              | 14 500   | 9 500      |
| National Stadium  | Belfast       | Windsor Park        | 12 950   | 15 000     |
| Leitrim County    | Carrick       | McDiarmuid Park     | 12 000   | -          |
| Louth County      | Drogheda      | Drogheda Park       | 12 000   | -          |
| Bohemian FC       | Dublin        | Dalymount Park      | 12 000   | All-seater |
| Westmeath County  | Mullingar     | Cusack Park         | 11 000   | -          |
| Offaly County     | Birr          | St. Brendan's Park  | 11 000   | -          |
| Shelbourne FC     | Dublin        | Tolka Park          | 10 100   | All-seater |
| Meath County      | Navan         | Páirc Tailteann     | 10 000   | -          |
| Dublin County     | Dublin        | Parnell Park        | 10 000   | -          |
| Longford County   | Longford      | Pearse Park         | 10 000   | -          |
| Wicklow County    | Aughrim       | Aughrim Park        | 10 000   | -          |

Source: <http://www.worldstadiums.com>

Ireland



Northern Ireland

**Note:** The capacities provided above for the '3 stadia' project in Northern Ireland (see Table 4 of this paper) reflect the total capacity following completion of the ongoing construction / expansion works. The O2 (Dublin, Ireland) has since been renamed the 3Arena (September 2014) and is not a dedicated sporting venue, though has hosted certain sporting events.