

Mid Term Review

We have recently undertaken a Mid Term Review of our 2007 Operating Plan and it is appropriate to present this to the membership. The Operating Plan was drawn up in late 2006 to provide direction and focus to our work in 2007. We need to demonstrate to all our stakeholders that we are developing the sport to the best of our ability.

The primary unit of the Association is the club and the aim of the Association is to support the club and all the people who contribute to the development of athletes. The Association thrives in Ireland because of the spirit and energy of thousand of volunteers who coach, administer and officiate and of course the athletes who participate.

The staff now employed by the Association is there to help and support these volunteers and the athletes at every level. I am constantly struck by the enthusiasm and commitment of thousands of people who give so generously of their time, energy and expertise to keep athletics alive. This was shown so many times this summer as officials stood for hours in the rain to keep competitions going.

I went to a number of Primary School competitions and the All Irelands Schools events and the contribution of teachers is also enormous. We need to support them more and more as athletics is on both the Primary and Post Primary curricula.

It has been difficult in every sporting organisation to integrate staff with the volunteers. In AAI the volunteers are the lifeblood of the organisation. They make the policy and decide on the direction of the Association through the elected committees. The objectives in this Plan were suggested by members of the Association at a series of consultative meetings around the regions and ultimately signed off by The Board of AAI.

While the Association is athlete centred it is clear there would be no clubs, no coaching or no competitions without the support of all the volunteers. By planning and evaluating our activities we can demonstrate to the Irish Sports Council, Dept of Arts, Sports and Tourism and sponsors that AAI is a vibrant organisation promoting positive health and values and deserving of financial support.

The monies we raise will be used to support clubs by supplying equipment, training coaches and training administrators. It will be used to train officials and purchase equipment for our competitions. It will support athletes who represent us on the international stage. It will help us promote athletics as a sport, a recreational activity and an educational activity that every child should experience.

Brendan Hackett
Chief Executive

The Operating Plan was drawn up in late 2006 to provide direction and focus to our work in 2007. The Board of AAI signed off on the Plan and it is delivered by the AAI staff with the help of thousands of volunteers throughout every level of the Association. It is useful at the outset to present a summary of this Plan which outlines the overall aim of the Association and eight key objectives. The primary aim of the Athletic Association of Ireland is the promotion and development of athletics in Ireland and the people involved in it. Athletics is a competitive sport but it is also an educational activity and a recreational activity. As the National Governing Body for athletics, AAI is responsible for developing each of these strands in a cohesive manner. This operating plan demonstrates how AAI will work towards these aims. These objectives outline how AAI intends to fulfil its primary aim.

AAI Development Plan

- 1. To increase participation in athletics.**
- 2. To identify athletes with athletic talent and develop them to their full potential.**
- 3. To provide support to elite athletes to enhance their performances at international competitions.**
- 4. To provide support to clubs and administrators.**
- 5. To develop coaching expertise.**
- 6. To develop and support personnel involved in officiating.**
- 7. To provide appropriate competition for all members.**
- 8. To promote the activities and members of the Association to a widespread audience.**

This Operating Plan details the ways in which AAI will achieve the objectives. AAI has committed significant resources and investment towards this plan and this is fully supported by the Irish Sports Council who is the main financial supporters of the Association. This Plan is also consistent with the Irish Sports Councils strategic plan Building Sport For Life.

Key Objectives

1. Increase participation in athletics.

The Plan

There are two groups that are specifically targeted in pursuit of this objective; children under 10 and adults who run recreationally. The development of the “Little Athletics Programme” is designed to introduce children between the ages of 5 and 10 to athletics. This programme is consistent with the Long Term Athlete Development Plan and the Primary School P.E. Curriculum. It is designed to improve physical literacy in children at a crucial state in their development. The programme will be offered by AAI clubs under the guidance of specially trained Athletic Leaders. The recruitment and training of parents is one of the main targets of the Athletic Leader Programme. These leaders will be responsible for organising the Little Athletics Programme in their clubs. It is hoped to increase the number of people coming into coaching through this programme. Many of these Athletic Leaders will start with their children and it is planned to offer them opportunities to develop as coaches as their children progress in athletics. The Athletic Leader and Level 1 courses will be offered to Primary School teachers in July as part of the Continuing Education Programme. This is also part of the strategy to increase participation in athletics.

The Mile Challenge is an exciting event to be staged on 07.07.07. This will be marketed aggressively and the target is to stage a series of mile runs at venues in every county. Participants will be timed and given a grading. This mile time will be used as a grade in future events and all the times will be returned to a central website so that participants get instant feedback. AAI believe this can become a standard event in schools and participants will be encouraged to run a series of miles to monitor their personal progress.

The Fit4Life Programme was introduced on a pilot basis in autumn 2006. Many lessons have been learned and these will be put into practice with the expansion of the programme this year. The Fit4Life Programme is aimed at people who would like to take up running as a recreational activity. Initially, the focus was on staging handicapped races but there is a demand to hold training nights where people can meet and train with others of similar ability. This has created a demand for Fit4Life Leaders. These will be recruited from these groups and offered a training course similar to the Athletics Leader course.

The ultimate aim of all of these programmes is to encourage people of all ages and abilities to participate in athletic activities. AAI will hope to increase the number of registered members from this increased participation.

Progress to date

The Little Athletics Programme has been very successful on two fronts. Firstly the number of clubs offering this Programme is 118. This is measured by clubs who have received the Little Athletics Equipment Pack. The Pack was available for any club who had 3 qualified Athletic Leaders. The packs were funded from the Sports Capitation Grant which AAI successful applied for to the Dept of Arts, Sport and Tourism. The other measure of success of this Programme is the 925 people who have qualified as Athletic Leaders. 40 courses have been run throughout the country. Every child taking part in a Little Athletics Programme should be registered by the club with AAI to ensure that they are fully insured. At year end will assess the number of under 9's registered with the Association as another measure of the Programme.

There were three courses held in July for Primary School teachers. The courses were designed to equip teachers with ideas and knowledge to teach athletics in the school curriculum. There are plans to run further courses in

the autumn and to cooperate with the Primary School Curriculum Support Unit that provides ongoing workshops for teachers.

The recreational running boom appears to be continually growing. The numbers in major road races such as the Women's Mini Marathon, Dublin City Marathon, Ballycotton, BUPA 10k and the Irish Runner Challenge are up on previous years.

The Fit4Life Programme was launched in May as a Meet and Train initiative. Clubs were invited to apply for this Programme on the basis that they would offer it from September. The core of the Programme is the training of Fit4Life Leaders. Clubs intending to run this Programme would nominate three volunteers to be trained as Leaders by AAI. These Fit4Life Leaders would then run the Programme in their clubs. AAI would provide the clubs with other incentives such as t-shirts and training booklets for participants. This Programme is aimed at attracting recreational runners into clubs in the knowledge that there is a special section in the club to cater for them with dedicated leaders to direct their training. To date 25 clubs have applied to run the Fit4Life Programme. This is lower than we expected and we would encourage clubs to consider applying in September. The Little Athletics and Fit4Life Programmes are designed to attract new people into athletics. We currently have a registered membership of 22,492 in 269 clubs and we would like to increase this by another 5000 by year end.

The Mile Challenge was held on the 7 July 2007. It took place in 28 locations. Despite an extensive marketing campaign the number of participants was lower than expected. There were 2500 participants with Kilkenny, Tullamore and Santry the most popular venues. A website (www.sparmilechallenge.com) has all of the results posted. The venue promoters reported very positive feedback from the people who took part and there is a sense that this event has a bright future. The date will need to be examined and there is strong opinion that it should not be curtailed to one day only. It would appear that there should be dates during the school

and university terms. Table 1 below summarises the achievements for Objective 1.

PLAN	PROGRESS	ITEMS
-Develop 'Little Athletics' Programme.	-118 Clubs offering 'Little Athletics' programme. -40 Athletic Leader Courses. -925 Trained Leaders. -3 Teacher Training Courses.	-Achieved.
-Run the SPAR mile challenge.	-28 locations with ~2500 participants.	-Achieved but participation was lower than expected.
-Develop Fit4Life Programme.	-25 Fit4Life Clubs.	-Achieved but number of clubs was lower than expected.

2. Identify athletes with athletic talent and develop them to their full potential.

The Plan

Most children take up a sport unaware of their ability. Normally, if they enjoy an activity or discover they have an aptitude for a particular sport, they will continue with it. Children with ability, desire to improve and their continued involvement often hinges on the quality of coaching and support they receive. AAI recognise that children with talent are discovered in clubs, at school or during competitions. To assist in their development, AAI have set up a regional coaching system where talented club and school athletes and their coaches get an opportunity to train with athletes of similar ability from other areas at regional squad sessions. The coaching and guidance they receive is aimed at improving their training when they get back to their own environment. The next step for many of these athletes will be to attain the standards to qualify for international competitions. At that stage, they will become part of the High Performance Programme. It is planned to hold at

least 6 of these regional coaching days in each area which is a total of 30 sessions. There is also a weekly coaching clinic in Santry from January to May and September to December.

Progress to date

The five Regional Coaching Coordinators who have been responsible for organising the coaching programme to date are John Shields (Dublin), Enda Fitzpatrick (Leinster), John Sheehan (Munster), Mary Barrett (Connaught), and Stephen Maguire (Ulster).

Region	Name	E-Mail	Phone
Leinster	Enda Fitzpatrick	enda.fitzpatrick@dcu.ie	0868909729
Dublin	John Shields	schools@athleticsireland.ie	0872633376
Munster	John Sheehan	jsheehan58@eircom.net	061305436
Connacht	Mary Barrett	marybarrettpe@hotmail.com	0876115574
Ulster	Stephen Maguire	STEMAGUIRE@aol.com	+447730308311

They have organised a total of 76 coaching clinics since January. These clinics are attended primarily by young athletes who place in the top six at Juvenile and Schools Championships. The most successful clinics are those held weekly in Dublin. They are well established and there is a regular attendance. The Regional Clinics are held monthly in the off season but these are difficult to organise as the competition calendar is so full between juvenile fixtures at county, regional and national level and schools fixtures also. The plan in September is to announce the Regional Squads so that athletes, their coaches and clubs will be aware of the composition of the squads. Dates for coaching clinics will be announced so that athletes can plan these days into their training plans. There will be a greater involvement of the full time Regional Development Officers in the identification and development of talented young athletes. They will work closely with the clubs and schools to identify athletes for inclusion in the Regional Squads. They will also work with clubs and County Boards to organise local coaching

clinics and development events. Table 2 below summarises the achievements for Objective 2.

PLAN	PROGRESS	ITEMS
-Develop Regional Coaching System.	-76 Regional Coaching clinics.	-Achieved and above target with more clinics to follow.

3. Provide support to elite athletes to enhance their performances at international competition.

The Plan

The AAI High Performance Programme now ranges from Youth to Senior Internationals. The programme offers multi-faceted assistance to all who qualify for the programme. Athletes are funded to attend relevant competitions. There is a panel of sports science and medical personnel to assist in their development. The Programme also offers financial assistance to athletes and some coaches to travel to training camps and experience other environments.

The High Performance Programme aims to expand this year by appointing a Director of Athletics to oversee the development of this Programme. The Medical and Sports Science network needs to be established so that athletes on the Programme can avail of services when needed. It is proposed to hold a training camp abroad for Juniors at Easter and a Senior Camp in Portugal in May. These camps will provide a positive training environment and an opportunity to work with many of the medical and sport science personnel.

Progress to date

The High Performance Department has been restructured and is now headed by Max Jones. As Director of Athletics he is responsible for the overall improvement of standards throughout the sport. His primary focus is working with the High Performance Panels but he will also direct his attention to the development of coaching.

Gareth Devlin has been appointed as Manager of the High Performance Programme. The Programme is designed to support and enhance our international athletes. The Programme does this in a number of ways.

The High Performance Department supported by the AAI High Performance Committee negotiate with the Irish Sports Council the criteria for inclusion on the High Performance Programme and appropriate financial support is then granted to the athletes through the ISC carding scheme. The High Performance staff then liaises with these athletes and assesses their yearly plans. The athletes make quarterly reports on their progress and the High Performance staff hold quarterly meetings with the ISC to update them on athlete's plans and progress. The High Performance staff oversees all the administration and travel arrangements for the international competitions. These include Indoor, Cross Country, Walks and Track & Field Championships from youths through to senior. There are also a selected number of invitational events. A training camp was organised in April for the Youth and Junior athletes in Spala, Poland. Twenty four athletes attended and a number of personal coaches as well. The camp was staffed by AAI personnel and there were educational workshops in addition to training opportunities. The High Performance Department also organised a Senior training camp in Portugal in May. Twenty senior athletes travelled in addition to AAI medical, sports science and coaching personnel.

The athletes on the High Performance Programme now have access to a network of medical and sports science personnel. This network is headed by Dr. Bill Cuddihy who has been appointed as medical co-ordinator. He is

assisted by Nessa Smith who co-ordinates the physiotherapists and there are a number of nutritionists, psychologists and other related specialists. Athletes can avail of these services when ill or injured but equally important to prevent injury or illness. These services are there to enhance and assist our athletes towards optimum performance.

The international teams are now managed by five key managers. Patsy McGonagle (Senior T&F), Anne Keenan Buckley (Cross Country), Br. John Dooley (U23), Peter Sinclair (Junior) and Geraldine Nolan (Youth). They work hand in hand with the High Performance Staff with preparations for all the Championships.

Team Managers

Section	Name	E-Mail	Phone
Senior T&F	Patsy McGonagle	patsymcgonagle@hotmail.com	0872226112
Cross Country	Ann Keenan-Buckley	bozobuck@gaelic.ie	05786-61470
U.23	Br. John Dooley	johndooley60@hotmail.com	0872312833
Junior	Peter Sinclair	peter.sinclair@ie.verizonbusiness.com	086 8135065
Youth	Geraldine Nolan	germnolan@eircom.net	086-6033562

The ultimate measures of the effectiveness of the High Performance Programme are the performance of the athletes. The athletes who have achieved the qualifying standards for all of the major championships are listed on the website in the High Performance section. This has been a phenomenal year for National Records and the list of new records is shown below.

National Records 2007

Indoor

Senior				
60 metres	6.66	Paul Hession	Vienna	20 th January
	6.63	Paul Hession	Belfast	18 th February
	6.61	Paul Hession	Birmingham	3 rd March
400 metres	45.91	David Gillick	Dusseldorf	6 th February
	45.52	David Gillick	Birmingham	3 rd March
60 metres	7.30	Anna Boyle	Birmingham	3 rd March
Long Jump	6.19	Kelly Proper	Belfast	17 th February
Pole Vault	3.87	Erin Kinnear	Gainesville	27 th January
Under 23				
Long Jump	6.19	Kelly Proper	Belfast	17 th February
Junior				
Long Jump	6.19	Kelly Proper	Belfast	17 th February
Shot	13.25	Laura Cogan	Nenagh	18 th March
	13.43	Laura Cogan	Nenagh	24 th March
	13.66	Laura Cogan	Nenagh	24 th March

Outdoor

Senior				
100 metres	10.28 (+1.5)	Paul Hession	Kalamata	2 nd June
	10.18 (+1.9)	Paul Hession	Vaasa	23 rd June
200 metres	20.44 (+1.2)	Paul Hession	Sheffield	15 th July
	20.30 (+0.1)	Paul Hession	Dublin	21 st July
400 metres	45.23	David Gillick	Geneva	9 th June
10,000 m	27.39.55	Alistair Cragg	Stanford	29 th April
20K walk	1.20.15	RobHeffernan	Leamington	20 th May
5000 metres walk	18.59.37	RobHeffernan	Barcelona	30 th June
50K walk	3.51.32	Colin Griffin	Dudince	24 th March
3000 metres S/C	9.28.29	Roisin McGettigan	Heusden	28 th July
Hammer	69.44	Eileen O'Keeffe	Vaasa	24 th June
	73.21	Eileen O'Keeffe	Dublin	21 st July
Junior				

Long Jump	6.34 (+0.3)	Kelly Proper	Limerick	16 th June
Pole Vault	4.90	Anthony McCreery	Dublin	22 nd July

N.B. Performances achieved since the beginning of May are subject to the approval of the High Performance Committee.

Signed: Liam Hennessy, Chairman HP Committee 30th July 2007.

Link for Championship qualifiers:

<http://www.athleticsireland.ie/content/wp-content/uploads/2007/08/Current%20Qualifiers%20Championships%202007%20April071.pdf>

Table 3 below summarises the achievements for Objective 3.

PLAN	PROGRESS	ITEMS
-Set up Sports Science and medical support system for elite athletes.	-Dr. Brendan O'Brien appointed as Chair of Medical and Sports Science committee. -Dr. Bill Cuddihy appointed as medical co-ordinator. -Nessa Smyth appointed as physiotherapy co-ordinator.	-Achieved.
-Appoint Director of Athletics.	-Max Jones appointed.	-Achieved.
-Appoint HP Manager.	-Gareth Devlin appointed.	-Achieved.
-Set up Junior Training Camp.	-Camp held in Spala, Poland.	-Achieved. Camp feedback was very positive.
-Set up Senior Training Camp.	-Camp held in Monde Gordo, Portugal.	-Achieved. Camp feedback was very positive.

4. Provide Support to clubs and administrators.

The Plan

Clubs and the volunteers, who run them, are the lifeblood of AAI. The people who give so generously of their time need assistance to support their efforts. It is proposed to draw up a Club Development Programme to give this support. It is intended to provide training for key personnel involved in the running of a club. There are a number of publications that will be produced by the Association to guide administrators in their duties.

The development of an online registration system will assist clubs with registration of members. The database will also facilitate better communication between the head office and clubs and the membership in general.

There is an Equipment Scheme which aims to supply clubs with athletic equipment. Clubs who have active qualified coaches will be granted equipment packs containing all the necessary equipment to conduct training sessions. This will ease the burden on clubs trying to raise money to purchase equipment.

The Association will also assist club personnel to promote and market their activities. Clubs running the Little Athletics and Fit4Life Programmes will receive promotional material. A club directory will be published and distributed to LSP's, Schools and other groups who can attract new athletes.

Progress to date

There are now seven full time Development Officers with the appointment of Joe O' Connor in May. They have been responsible for supporting clubs in two main ways to date. The Development Team have organised all of the

coaching courses throughout the country and they have been co-ordinating the distribution of equipment to clubs.

Development Officers

The regional development officers are responsible for the overall development of the sport in their region, including delivery of coach education, developing coaches, administrators and officials, delivery of club support and recreational athletics as well as organising events to promote and develop athletics and young athletes in their area.

Region	Name	E-Mail	Phone
Director of Development (and RDO for Tipperary, Waterford and Kilkenny)	Jacqui Freyne	jacqui@athleticsireland.ie	087 2629950
West Dublin, Carlow, Kildare, Laois, Westmeath	Pat Ryan	pat@athleticsireland.ie	087 2621310
Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan	Eamon Harvey	eamon@athleticsireland.ie	087 2797548
North Dublin, Louth, Meath	Bart Rogers	bart@athleticsireland.ie	087 2696577
Limerick, Kerry, Cork	Joe O'Connor	joe@athleticsireland.ie	087 6335565
Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Offaly, Longford and Clare	Paul McNamara	paul@athleticsireland.ie	087 2693675
South Dublin, Wicklow, Wexford	Ryan Montgomery	ryan@athleticsireland.ie	087 2631441

One hundred and eighteen clubs have received Little Athletic equipment packs. There is also a Juvenile equipment pack available but to date only twenty clubs have applied for this. The Development Department also announced details of the Fit4Life Running Programme in May. This is a programme to encourage clubs to set up a section for recreational runners. Clubs who run this programme will receive three free places on a Running Leader Coaching course which is designed for people who wish to work with recreational runners. There will also be financial support available to these

clubs to set up the Fit4Life Programme. To date twenty five clubs have applied. We had a target of forty clubs so any clubs still interested in becoming involved should contact their relevant RDO at the beginning of September.

A Club Development Programme will commence in the final quarter. This will consist of a number of publications to assist clubs with promotion and some seminars for club administrators. It is planned to publish a Club Directory in September. This will be published on the website first so clubs will have an opportunity to correct before going to print.

A public relations and promotion training workshop is also planned in each region and clubs will be invited to send key people from their admin and coaching committees.

The launch of the Online Registration System did not go smoothly. This project proved to be more complicated than foreseen and the company designing the system are still working on the architecture. Great credit is due to club secretaries who persevered with the registration process. We are constantly working with the company to make the system more user friendly and until we are sure this system is fully functional we have postponed the introduction of competition entry online until 2008.

Table 4 below summarises the achievements for Objective 4.

PLAN	PROGRESS	ITEMS
-Set up Club Development Programme.	- AAI Strategy Document and club directory to be launched in Sept	-Club workshops to help clubs develop strategy in Oct.
-Set up Online Registration System.	-System introduced progress ongoing.	-Many problems to solve.
-Set up Equipment Scheme.	-118 clubs received 'Little Athletics' packs. -20 Clubs applied for Juvenile packs.	-Achieved but target is to include all 269 clubs.

5. Develop Coaching Expertise.

The Plan

Athletics is a multi-event sport and the range of coaching expertise needed in a club to attract and retain athletes is very demanding. The Association has now finalised its Coach Education Programme. There are four levels in the programme.

- Athletics Leader Qualification for those wishing to work with 5 – 10 year olds.
- Level 1 Qualification is designed for those wishing to introduce 10 – 14 year olds to competitive athletics.
- Level 2 Qualification is an advanced course specialising in two of the four key disciplines of speed, endurance, jumps or throws.
- Level 3 Qualification is a specialised course focusing on one of the four disciplines of athletics.

Developing coaching expertise presents an enormous challenge to the Association, but it is the key to the health of the sport.

AAI have redeveloped the Coach Education Programme after years of stagnation and there are ambitious plans for 2007. The plan is to qualify 300 Athletic Leaders, 240 Level 1 coaches, 120 Level 2 coaches and 15 Level 3 coaches.

It is also planned to publish a coaching information section on the website with useful articles, links and resources available for coaches. It is also planned to hold at least one coach education workshop in each of the following events, sprints, endurance, walks, throws and jumps with a National Coaching Conference in November.

Progress to date

The Coach Education Programme has been finalised under the direction of Gary Ryan. The AAI Coach Education Programme was designed in line with the National Coaching Development Plan proposed by the NCTC.

The RDO's have been organising and running coaching courses throughout the regions and to date there have been:

- 434 Athletic Leaders qualified
- 335 Level One coaches qualified
- 54 Participants are currently attending a Level 2 course
- 12 Participants are completing Level 3

There are plans for another Level 2 course in September and Level 3 will be completed by year end.

There are now Event Coaching Coordinators who have responsibility for organising specific coaching workshops for coaches who are coaching on a regular basis. There will be at least one workshop in each event area in Sept/Oct and the National Coaching Conference will take place in November.

National Event Co-ordinators

The National event co-ordinators are responsible for the organisation of the National squads in their event group. These squads are for the best Senior and Junior athletes (and their coaches) in the country.

Event	Name	E-Mail	Phone
Sprints	Paddy Fay	paddyfay@eircom.net	0862354259
Endurance (Senior)	Jim Davis	coachjdavis@hotmail.com	0879537637
Endurance (U23 and Junior)	Teresa McDaid	Teresa.McDaid@mailb.hse.ie	0871203284
Jumps	Drew Harrison	drew.harrison@ul.ie	0863467611
Walks	Michael Lane	lanemichael@eircom.net	0877928855

Throws	Ailish O'Brien	ailish.obrien@itcarlow.ie	0879187194
Multi-Events	Chris Regan	chrisregan@eircom.net	0874175374

Many of our experienced coaches have been coaching talented young athletes at the regional coaching squads and this will continue in Sept, Oct and Nov. It is hoped that more recently qualified coaches particularly Level 1 coaches will avail of the opportunity to attend the regional coaching days and observe experienced coaches in action and begin to assist them when the chance arises.

Table 5 below summarises the achievements for Objective 5.

PLAN	PROGRESS	ITEMS
-Finalise Coach Education Programme.	- Gary Ryan has revamped the CEP with Athletics Leader and Levels 1-3 coaching courses.	-Achieved.
-Qualify 300 Athletic Leaders. -240 Level 1's. -120 Level 2's. -15 Level 3's.	-433 Athletic Leaders qualified. -335 Level 1 coaches qualified. -54 Level 2 coaches on present course. -12 Level 3 coaches on present course	-Achieved and exceeded targets. Another Level 2 will commence in Oct and Level 3 coaching courses to finish at end of year.
-Set up Coach information section on website.	-Coaching section put in place with articles, links and resources.	-Achieved.
-Set up Coaching workshops.	-7 Coaching Co-ordinator's appointed.	- Each Co-ordinator will hold workshops in Sep/Oct.
-Set up National Coaching Conference.	-	- National Coaching Conference taking place in November.

6. Develop and support personnel involved in officiating.

The Plan

An athletics competition is a complex event. It requires numerous officials to stage even the smallest event. All of these officials are volunteers and an athletics event normally runs over several hours. The recruitment and development of officials has been haphazard in the past and this has impacted on the numbers of officials available.

Officials Grading Scheme is to be introduced in 2007. All existing officials will receive a grading from 1 to 3 consistent with experience and expertise. A series of training courses will be offered from then on to prepare officials to the required standard. The officials will receive uniforms and recognition for their work at all events.

Progress to date

The AAI Technical Committee which is a sub group of the Competition Committee undertook the grading of existing officials. They set up a grading system ranging from Grade 1 (County level) to Grade 5 (ITO/ATO). To date 493 officials have been graded. They each received a uniform and a license which must be kept in use through a minimum number of officiating duties each year. This has been a successful scheme and the Technical Committee have devised training courses for each grade going forward. The RDO's will assist the Technical Committee by organising Official's Training Courses in the regions.

Michael O Hart has been a strong driving force behind this scheme and it is satisfying to see so many officials graded. On behalf of the Association I would like to thank and commend all the officials who officiated at the Championships this season. It was a particularly difficult season for officials with many events almost washed out.

Table 6 below summarises the achievements for Objective 6.

PLAN	PROGRESS	ITEMS
-Introduce Official's Grading Scheme.	-AAI Technical Committee has set up a grading scheme with level 1-5.	-Achieved.
-Supply Official's with appropriate uniform.	-493 Officials graded to date and all received their uniform and licence.	-Achieved.

7. Provide appropriate competition opportunities for all members.

The Plan

Athletics is primarily a competitive sport and competition is the lifeblood of the Association. AAI stages 37 national competitions from juveniles (U.9) to masters (0-35+).

There are four core competitive activities for each of these age categories:

- Cross country
- Road races
- Indoor events
- Outdoor track and field

Much of the Associations energy is channelled in the organisation of competitions. There are challenges at underage level to retain participants and this will be evaluated in 2007. There are many events within an athletic competition particularly track and field events. This too will present a

challenge going forward as people lead more demanding lives with ever increasing attractions.

AAI will develop a competition strategy to compliment the Development Plan in 2007. This will focus on providing competitive opportunities for all members.

Progress to date

Two committees have been set up to examine the AAI competition structure. The Committee looking at senior competition consists of representatives from Competition, High Performance and Coaching. There has been an initial meeting with more planned in September under the Chairmanship of Paddy Marley.

The Committee to examine underage competition has an onerous task. Representatives of the Juvenile Committee, Schools and agencies like NCTC and Cumann na mBunscoil compromise this committee. It will be chaired by Neil Martin who is a member of the AAI Board.

While these committees have been set up to examine our competitive structures going forward it is worth pointing out the tremendous work carried out by the Competition, Juvenile and Schools Committees in organising the various competitions under their brief.

Table 7 below summarises the achievements for Objective 7.

PLAN	PROGRESS	ITEMS
-Set up Competition Strategy to compliment the Development Plan.	-Two committees set up to review Senior and Juvenile competition issues.	-Achieved. More meetings to take place.

8. To promote and market the activities of the Association.

The Plan

It has been highlighted that the Association has now created a range of programmes to promote and develop the educational, recreational and competitive aspects of athletics. The marketing of these programmes is essential if they are to reach their target audiences.

The organisations that provide support to AAI, such as The Irish Sports Council, Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and sponsors, deserve recognition for their initiative. Delivering information to the public about the Associations activities and the organisations, who are contributing to this success, is an essential objective of AAI.

The promotional department will consist of a marketing manager, press officer and a part time webmaster. The primary purpose of this department is to highlight the activities of the Association and to create awareness of the brands with their intended audience.

The identification of AAI with the educational and recreational aspects of athletics is also an important objective of the promotional department.

Progress to date

The promotion of AAI and its activities in the media has been increasing. There has been over 150 articles on athletics in the main national papers this year and over 20 features on national T.V. This does not include the hundreds of local media articles. The appointment of Der O Donovan as webmaster has had a huge impact on the AAI website. His constant updating of the site has meant the flow of traffic to the site is at an all time high. There are over 250,000 page hits per month.

While the ISC and Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism are the Associations biggest financial supporters it is encouraging to report that sponsors are keen to be involved with athletics.

The increase in support from Woodie's is a welcome boost to the competition calendar. Woodie's are now the major sponsor of the Championships from Juvenile to Masters. ESB continue their support of high performance athletes and became the sponsors of the National League Competition this year. Asics continue to be the official kit sponsor and it was good to welcome Spar as a sponsor through the Mile Challenge. We also recognise the support that Spar gives the Cork City Sports and individual athletes such as Derval O'Rourke and David Gillick.

A marketing manager was not appointed as it was deemed unnecessary at this point. There will be a significant announcement in September regarding further promotional and PR activities.

Table 8 below summarises the achievements for Objective 8.

PLAN	PROGRESS	ITEMS
-Appoint Promotional Team.	-Der O'Donovan appointed as part-time webmaster with over 250,000 hits per month. -150 articles in National papers, 20 features on National TV.	-PR activities to be announced in September. -Marketing Manager not deemed necessary by the Board at this time.
-Increase financial support.	-Irish Sports Council and Dept. Arts, Sport and Tourism continue support. -Woodies increase sponsorship -ESB increase involvement -Asics continue kit sponsor. -SPAR sponsor mile challenge as well as supporting other athletics sponsorships.	-Achieved but will continue to look for more sponsorship.

