



Draft Blessington Local Area Plan Submission - Report

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Topic

Community Development (incl. sports facilities & schools, etc.)

Submission

West Wicklow, like many regions, could benefit from dedicated athletics facilities for several reasons:

Health and Well-being: Access to quality athletic facilities promotes physical activity, which is crucial for improving overall health. It can help tackle issues like obesity, mental health challenges, and chronic diseases by encouraging regular exercise for people of all ages.

Community Engagement: A local athletics facility serves as a hub for community events, fostering social connections, and creating a sense of belonging. It provides a space for people to come together, whether through organized competitions, training sessions, or casual exercise. Since joining Lakeshore Striders AC, I have personally benefited hugely from both the social connections and friendships. Where I live in Donard, there is no suitable safe, well lit routes for running. As a female runner, I do worry about my safety when on the roads. A dedicated running track would provide a safe, off road, well light space for the female runners in Blessington and the wider West Wicklow community.

Youth Development: Having athletics facilities locally offers young people an opportunity to engage in organized sports, fostering discipline, teamwork, and personal growth. It also creates pathways for talent identification and development in athletics, giving youth the chance to excel and pursue careers in sports. Fostering a relationship between Lakeshore Striders AC and the recently opened Youth Hub in Blessington may help divert young people away from anti social behaviour if they could be encouraged to take part in activities such as running, but this requires facilities such as a running track.

Economic Boost: Modern athletics facilities can attract regional and even national competitions, boosting tourism and providing local businesses with additional customers. Events hosted at these venues can generate revenue and increase the area's visibility. Lakeshore Striders AC are the only club in Wicklow that do not have their own training grounds and therefore can't host events such as the annual County Wicklow 5km Championship.

Access to Facilities: Currently, residents of West Wicklow do not have access to adequate safe running facilities, especially for female runners. Running on the roads can be daunting, especially when running alone in poorly lit areas or areas without footpaths in some of the smaller villages. As a female runner I strongly feel that I deserve access to a safe off road facility to pursue an activity which has benefited me so much.

Encouraging Outdoor Activities: West Wicklow is known for its natural beauty, and an athletics facility could

complement the landscape by providing spaces for outdoor sports. This could increase interest in athletics and outdoor fitness activities, making use of the area's scenic environment.

Local Talent Development: Having access to a dedicated facility can help identify and nurture athletic talent locally, enabling athletes to train and compete at higher levels without the need to leave the area.

Overall, a dedicated athletics facility would have numerous benefits for the community in terms of health, social well-being, economic growth, and youth development. It would create opportunities for local residents to engage in physical activities, strengthen community bonds, and boost the profile of West Wicklow

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