



Wednesday 5th September 2007

VISION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND OLYMPIC WATERSPORTS CENTRE MOVES CLOSER

- Portadown bid shortlisted by Sports Minister Edwin Poots -

Wednesday 5th September – Plans for a Northern Ireland Olympic Watersports Centre in Portadown edged a step nearer today after Sports Minister Edwin Poots MLA confirmed the town's bid will be moving forward to the second stage of the competition.

Portadown's proposal is one of fifteen of the 27 projects assessed by Sport Northern Ireland under the Elite Facilities Capital Programme to proceed to stage two of the competition. The town will have three months to prepare an additional outline business case. A final selection process will then take place and those successful will be invited to proceed to the construction stage.

Brian Walker, Chairman of Portadown 2000, commented: "We are of course very pleased to move forward to the next round after such widespread support for what we know is a unique project. The Northern Ireland Olympic Watersports Centre will provide us with a sporting venue of international significance, which will not only enhance sport participation across the province but also provide a lasting legacy for the potential Olympic athletes of the future."

Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee, Craigavon Borough Council, Cllr. Dolores Kelly, MLA comments: "Council is delighted that our joint bid for the Northern Ireland Olympic Watersports Centre has got through to the second stage of bidding – although because of all the hard work that has gone into the bid – we were cautiously optimistic. However, the hard work really starts now and we have taken nothing for granted, although our partnership with both Portadown 2000 and Portadown Boat Club will stand us in good stead. I am delighted for everyone concerned with the bid."

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Kevin McDonagh, President of Portadown Boat Club commented: "This facility will provide a world class training venue for future Olympic rowers and athletes in other areas of watersports. If Richard Chambers from Coleraine, who was crowned a World Champion at the Rowing World Cup in Munich, can achieve what he did without any access locally to a facility of this kind...just imagine the potential!"

The Northern Ireland Olympic Watersports Centre is the brainchild of a multi agency group consisting of Craigavon Borough Council, Portadown 2000, Consarc Design Group, Doran Construction, Portadown Boat Club and the governing bodies of rowing, canoeing and triathlon in Northern Ireland.

The centerpiece of the proposed Northern Ireland Olympic Watersports Centre would be a 2000 meter international competition rowing and canoeing lake as well as an international triathlon training facility. The design could also include a world class white water canoe slalom course and Olympic Standard BMX Track. This would be completed in time for the London Olympics in 2012.

There is wide cross-community support for the world class facility which is designed to facilitate and inspire Northern Ireland's potential Olympic champions of the future. In July, politicians from the four main parties have backed Portadown's application at a news conference on the River Bann.

Further information can be found on the following dedicated website: **www.niowc.org**.

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