



Subject:	Elite All Ireland Boxing Championships (Male and Female)
Date:	12 September 2018
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Gerry Copeland, City Events Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, when will the report become unrestricted	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>In March 2018, the following Notice of Motion was approved by the Council:</p> <p><i>“Belfast has produced world class athletes through the sport of amateur boxing who have consistently succeeded through every level of the sport and brought recognition to the city of Belfast through their successes.</i></p> <p><i>We, as a City, are very proud of the achievements of boxers from this City and should seek to build on these successes by showcasing the talent this vibrant sport has to offer across Ireland.</i></p> <p><i>This Council agrees to engage with the Irish Athletic Boxing Association to explore the possibility of bringing the All Ireland Boxing Championships to the City of Belfast.”</i></p>

1.2	<p>The Council agreed that its Officers would engage with the Irish Athletic Boxing Association (IABA) to explore the possibility of bringing the All Ireland Boxing Championships to Belfast. It is important to note that the Notice of Motion did not specify a time for the event. Council officers recently met with IABA and they expressed an interest in holding the event in Belfast in February 2019. This would require a financial contribution of £69,470 from the Council or its partners. This financial allocation has not been set aside in the Council budgets for this financial year.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>It is recommended that the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes the £200,000 of funding approved by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on January 5th 2018 for the implementation of the Belfast Boxing Strategy through the Irish Athletic Boxing Association (IABA) • Notes that, following engagement with Officers from Belfast City Council's City Events Unit, IABA has expressed a wish to stage the Elite Irish Amateur Final event in Belfast on 23rd February 2019 with a request for a financial contribution from Belfast City Council of £69,470 towards the event • Notes that the IABA Championship was not considered as part of Place & Economy's 18/19 operational plans and consequently there is no existing budget allocation to support the event • Agrees that officers continue to negotiate with IABA to build a greater understanding of the costs associated with holding the event, including options for the Council to secure income from ticket revenue.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>In March 2018, via a Notice of Motion, the Council agreed that its Officers would engage with the IABA to explore the possibility of bringing the All Ireland Boxing Championships to Belfast.</p>
3.2	<p>For information, the IABA is the globally-recognised body that governs boxing on the island of Ireland (as recognised by the International Boxing Association - Amateur). IABA's main role is to develop, foster and control amateur boxing across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The IABA operates from the National Stadium in Dublin, which was the first purpose built amateur boxing stadium in the world. Currently there are over 360 clubs affiliated to the IABA.</p>
3.3	<p>Members will be aware that the Council has its own boxing strategy, This recognises the fact that the sport is one of the most successful in terms of generating medals at Olympic and World levels. The IABA operates via provincial branches; Ulster Boxing; Leinster; Munster and Connaught branches. This network is further enhanced with county affiliations. Belfast</p>

	<p>operates via its County Antrim Board, which has 48 clubs registered, of which 34 are in Belfast.</p>
3.4	<p>To date Officers have been liaising with IABA in order to garner the relevant technical and resource information to enable the Committee to make an informed decision on the possible staging of an event.</p>
3.5	<p>There are no existing economic statistics attached to the competition, as the Elite Finals have not been held outside of the National Boxing Stadium in Dublin. However, it is estimated by the IABA that the finals would attract approximately 2,000 people, alongside 100 competitors (20 bouts for male competitors and 20 bouts for female competitors plus coaching staff). The IABA estimates that visitors would create 950 overnight stays. It is important to note that the IABA have not provided any independent validation of the audience for previous events, and that the current limit of the National Stadium in Dublin is 2,000.</p>
3.6	<p>From preliminary conversations with the IABA, it has been made clear that there would be a financial ask of Belfast if the event was to move to the city. At this point, the likely figure is around £69,470 (see additional detail below). Given that the economic impact of holding the event in Belfast is likely to be in the region of £138,940, this would give a 2:1 return on Council investment. This 2:1 figure does not compare favourably with other events currently hosted in the city. As an example, the RoI figure for the Maritime Festival is 6.42:1.</p>
3.7	<p>The IABA states that the staging of the National Senior Championships is dictated by the staging of other international competitions. This means that any potential Belfast event would need to fit around the IABA's calendar of events and the international boxing calendar – hence the request for 2019 rather than 2020. The February 2019 date is fixed as these National Elite Championships are based around official AIBA (world body) dates that will determine when each boxing board will run their national championships. Therefore, the championships will be used as part of the selection criteria as to who will compete in the European, World and Olympic qualification events in 2019 and early 2020 in the lead up to the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.</p>
3.8	<p>The IABA has stated it may welcome a bid from Belfast City Council for the staging of a European Youth Championship, subject to the All-Ireland competition being staged successfully in Belfast. Belfast previously hosted the International Boxing Association's World Championships in 2001.</p>
3.9	<p>The staging of Junior European Championship is likely to bring approximately 900 out of state visitors to Belfast in the form of competitors and their travelling parties. The IABA have stated that media coverage of the Junior European Championships has been limited to date, but they would seek to stream the event which may increase the level of coverage. The</p>

Junior European Championship would require the hire of two rings and the rent of the SSE arena for 5 to 6 days. While exact costs have not been calculated at this juncture, it is reasonable to assume that the staging of the Junior European Championships would cost more than the Irish Senior Men's Championship.

3.10 Cost Breakdown - Elite All Ireland Boxing Championships (Male and Female)

The cost breakdown for the proposed February 2019 event is detailed below. Key elements of expenditure will include:

- Rings and Practice/Warm-up Areas: any venue will need to accommodate dedicated spaces where boxers can prepare for their bouts. Such areas will need to be within the competition venues. In addition, the venue must be capable of hosting a full size-boxing ring, with adequate space for judges, officials and coaches around the ring apron. At this point, it appears that Belfast Waterfront would meet the requirements
- Media: the staging of the finals of the National Senior Amateur Boxing Championships will attract Irish national broadcasting opportunities, print and social media journalists, alongside potential specialist boxing media outlets. Live streaming and recorded broadcasting from the likes of the BBC NI and or RTÉ are a possibility (subject to agreement). Therefore, any venue will need to provide media access within both the venue and externally concerning possible broadcast vehicles. The event was televised by RTE in February 2018, the first time in more than five years. To date no public commitment from a broadcaster to televise the event has been made
- Ticketing: it is necessary to pre-ticket the championship finals. Therefore, a ticketing service will be required unless the selected venue already has a dedicated system e.g. the Belfast Waterfront. It is important to note that the IABA expects to recoup all of the ticket revenue. However, if the Council wishes to progress this event, it is recommended that consideration be given to engaging with IABA to secure a portion of the ticket revenue
- Medical Provision: as per all levels of boxing it is essential to have onsite medical arrangements. These must be accommodated within the selected venue to allow for pre & post competition checks and for any other incidents that may occur. In addition, there will need to have medical cover for attending patrons
- Marketing & Promotion: as with all such events it will be expected that the staging of this competition will require marketing and promotional activity. It is envisaged that any campaign would involve traditional advertising alongside the use of social media, which would require input from BCC's Marketing and Communications section, along with the venue operators and of course the IABA.
- Miscellaneous/contingency: IABA expect Belfast City Council to cover the costs of stewarding. In addition to the expenditure for audio and lighting equipment

connected to the competitive bouts. The IABA would also expect that the Council to meet the costs of officials attending.

The total estimated cost to the Council would be £69,470. The cost breakdown is:

Item	Cost
Waterfront Hall hire	25,000
Boxing Equipment	£10,220
Accommodation & Hospitality	£12,450
Compere and Medical	£1,400
AV, Tech, Lighting	£3,400
Marketing & Promotion	£10,000
Contingency	£7,000
Total	£69,470

3.11 Officers have engaged with Tourism NI to explore the potential of securing financial support from them towards the costs of hosting the event. However, their event grant schemes are now closed for the 2018/19 year and they are not in a position to assist if the event occurred in February 2019. In addition, given that the key assessment criteria for Tourism NI include PR coverage and out-of-state visitor numbers, it is unlikely that this would be successful in attracting significant support from Tourism NI's event support fund.

3.12 Belfast City Council Boxing Strategy

In 2012, Belfast City Council created a strategy to assist in the sports development. This strategic vision recognises the important role which amateur boxing plays in the life of Belfast and its working class communities in particular. The document highlighted four key strategic challenges: Pathways to the sport (boxers, coaches and officials); Coach education and development; Club support and development and Governance. A Steering Group was established to develop and oversee the implementation of the Strategy – this included representatives from IABA, Ulster Council, Co Antrim Boxing and Sport NI. This steering group (with the exception of Sport NI) continues to meet to oversee the delivery of the strategy and its related action plans. A contribution of £200,000 per year over 3 years from April 2013 was agreed by the Council to enable the implementation of the strategy's action plans. Due to a delay in recruiting staff the funding was spread over a longer period and this funding ceased on 31st March 2017. The Council agreed to directly fund the Irish Athletic Boxing Association (IABA) to deliver elements of the strategy during the financial year 2017/18. The Strategic Policy & Resources Committee agreed further funding on January 5th 2018 of £200,000 for the implementation of the Belfast Boxing Strategy through the Irish Athletic Boxing Association (IABA).

3.13 Finance and Resource Implications

The financial request from IABA is to provide £69,470 towards the costs associated with hosting the event in Belfast in February 2019. This funding has not been set aside in the Economic Development budgets for this financial year.

3.14	<u>Equality & Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The IABA event would be open to all and as such has the potential to promote good relations & equality by bringing together people from a wide range of backgrounds. There are no perceived Rural Needs implications connected to this project.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None