

Denvir, Clare

SB105/1/03

From: ashley whittley [ashleywhittley@sportni.net]
Sent: 12 December 2003 11:03
To: 'nigel.carson@dcalni.gov.uk';
Cc: Paul Scott; Elizabeth Bailey
Subject: SCNI National Stadium Papers
Importance: High

Eamon McCartan and Paul Scott have requested that I forward the attached two papers for Nigel Carson's attention.

Should you have any difficulties opening these documents, do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Ashley Whittley
 Facilities Project Assistant

Sports Council for Northern Ireland
 Upper Malone Road
 Belfast, BT9 5LA
 T: 028 9038 1222
 F: 028 9068 2757

DATE 12.12.03

NO. NC-44.13

12/12/2003

NATIONAL STADIUM UPDATE

FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide an update to members on paper SC/03/47 (copy attached) considered at the meeting held on 9 April 2003 and to appraise them of recent developments regarding this matter.

2. Background

- 2.1 Members will have noted from paper SC/03/47 that following the Hillsborough Disaster in 1989, the subsequent Taylor report, and the injection of finance seeded by public funding, a new generation of stadia has been developed throughout Great Britain. The new style venues provide safe and spectator friendly viewing accommodation plus ancillary facilities such as restaurants and commercial space which generates revenue required for the sustainability of the ground and host club.
- 2.2 Members will also have noted that the three major spectator sports in Northern Ireland use three different stadiums each of which have significant short comings and all require considerable finance to enable them to be upgraded to a reasonable standard and address the Health & Safety issues that exist. These venues have limited potential to generate income from non-match day activities. The benefits of a 'National Stadium' suitable for the major fixtures of all three sports was considered as were the issues raised regarding sustainability of a single venue.

3. Timeline of Events

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|-----------------------------|---|
| • Ongoing | Public Debate regarding "National Stadium" |
| • 1989 | Hillsborough Disaster – Taylor Report – Refurbishment of Major Venues in GB |
| • 1999 | "Wimbledon" Project – new venue required for locally based team to play in Premier/Football League. |
| • 1999 | PcW publish report "Pre-feasibility Study" Reports |
| • April 2003 | World Student Games Report indicates lack of suitable venues in Northern Ireland |
| • April 2003 | Paper SC/03/47 considered by Sports Council. |
| • Spring 2003 | Reports appear in Belfast Telegraph regarding "National Stadium" |
| • Spring 2003 | Drawing obtained from Miller Partnership (architect involved with many major projects in GPA). |
| • Spring 2003 | Meeting between SCNI/DCAL and Stadia Management including a 'fact finding' visit, Council paper |
| • August 2003 | Ulster Branch IRFU consider future of Ravenhill. |
| • (Being obtained from IFA) | FIFA Report indicates Windsor Park is no longer suitable for International Fixtures. |
| • Sept 2003 | UEFA Under 19 Report indicating shortcoming of facilities in Northern Ireland. |
| • Sept 2003 | UEFA Licencing – indicates lack of facilities throughout NI. |

Current Situation

4.1 The debate regarding a National Stadium has again been raised. The following should be noted:-

- A significant number of articles periodically appear in the media and in particular a series of articles published in the Belfast Telegraph which commenced on the 26 February 2003 asking the question "Do we need a National Stadium?"
- The Ulster Branch of the IRFU are considering their options regarding Ravenhill. See Belfast Telegraph, 21 August 2003 - "December D-Day for Ravenhill".
- The GAA have made a number of approaches to DCAL, SCNI regarding Casement Park and their other facilities. Meetings have been held between Danny Murphy and Paul Scott over the last three years.
- FIFA have advised the IFA that Windsor Park no longer meets international standards and NI may have to play their home fixtures in the World Cup Qualifier competitions in 2004 in GB.
- UEFA have introduced a Licensing Scheme for European Fixtures. This will require substantial investment to venues to enable local clubs to play in European competitions.
- There are concerns regarding the financial viability of Linfield Football Club who own Windsor Park, these could impact on the future of the venue.

5. Current Facilities

5.1 There are three 'stadium' sports in NI that attract the numbers of spectators commensurate with the scale of a "National Stadium". Each of these sports uses an existing facility all with significant 'short comings' - see table below.

	Capacity	Condition	Changing Accommodation	Flood-lighting	Media Facilities	Arrangements for persons with Disability	Suitability for major fixtures	Costs for improvements	Sustainability Potential	Area
Windsor Park	14,000 covered seats (10,000 4,000)	good/adequate poor/very poor	Reasonable but additional facilities required	Barely adequate and deteriorating	very basic	Requires upgrading	Becoming inadequate	£12M-£20M	Limited	Perceived single identify area. Car parking and access problems
Casement Park	2,500 covered seats 5,000 open seats 25,000 open standing	Poor Poor Adequate but basic	Very basic	None	very basic	Very basic	inadequate	£10M-£20M	Very poor	Perceived single identify area Car parking and access problems.
Ravenhill	4,000 covered seats 8,000 open standing	Adequate Adequate but basic	Old but adequate	Very good	reasonable	Good	inadequate	£8M - £12M	Limited	Perceived mixed area Car parking and access problems

BENEFITS OF A PURPOSE BUILT STADIUM

6.1 There are a number of benefits in the provision of a purpose built stadium. These include:-

- Provides a facility that meets the requirements of the International Governing Bodies of Sport.
- Attracts prestigious fixtures and events which NI does not yet have the capability to host.
- Designed to maximise its potential to generate revenue from non-match day activities.
- Act as a focus for regeneration in an inner city area.
- Providing a facility welcoming to all sections of the community and visitors.
- Inspire civic pride amongst the population.
- Encourage the youth of NI to strive for excellence.

6.2 The three current venues all have problems with access, car parking and have associations with defined sections of the community. A new purpose built stadium should be located in a "neutral" area. It should be readily accessible by road, rail, and public transport and be reasonably proximate to both airports. It should be readily accessible to the major centres of population, hotels, restaurants and other commercial undertakings with adequate car parking.

7. OPTIONS AVAILABLE

Option 1 – Do nothing

7.1 The three existing major stadia in NI will continue to deteriorate resulting in ever increasing maintenance costs. It is likely that in the near future FIFA may no longer recognise Windsor Park as a venue suitable for staging international matches. Ravenhill will remain unable to stage prestigious matches. Larger GAA fixtures played in the north part of Ireland will be staged at Clones. The venues are unlikely to generate a significant non-sporting income and the benign apartheid that exists in NI will be reinforced as the differing traditions migrate to each of the respective venues. NI will remain as the only major population centre in the UK without a quality venue to host or attract major fixtures.

Option 2 – Upgrade the existing Stadia

7.2 Estimates to upgrade the three existing stadia would be in the region of £30m - £52m. This would result in major improvements at each of the three "elderly" venues. Location problems would remain, as would the ability of each of the stadia to maximise the potential to generate income from non-sporting activities incorporating commercial revenue generating facilities into the existing grounds would be difficult to attain. We would effectively be playing catch-up and not providing stadia of a standard comparable to those in the rest of the UK and address the expectations of the local spectating population. As with option 1 spectators from the various traditions would each frequent each of the three respective venues. Maintaining the existing benign apartheid

Option 3 – Provision of a New Stadium

- 7.3 A purpose built modern stadium capable of providing 25,000-35,000 covered seats is likely to cost in the region of £30-40M plus land and service costs. It would require approximately 40 acres of land (which would include car parking space). Such a stadium could be designed to accommodate the three sports and provide (depending on design) significant floor space for office/retail/commercial usage. If the venue were utilised for major events of all three sports it would be attractive to providers of hospitality. Income could be derived from corporate boxes and similar ventures. This would be a stadium for Northern Ireland and all of its people and encourage inclusiveness from all sections of the community. A venue of this stature is likely to attract fixtures and events not previously staged in NI (such as a UEFA Cup Semi Final). As has been shown in mainland GB and locally with the Odyssey Complex a new high quality venue attracts new spectators both from the immediate area and beyond. Such approaches are tried at tested at Livingston Football Club, the Reebok Stadium home of Bolton Wanderers or the McAlpine Stadium at Huddersfield.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 Doing nothing will result in future deterioration at each of the three venues and may result in major fixtures being played outside Northern Ireland. Social issues would not be address such as the aforementioned benign apartheid and there would be no option of commercial activities to sustain the venues and their respective organisations.

Action

- 1) No action required**

- 8.2 Upgrading the existing venues will be costly (£30M-£52M) and would not result in state of the art venues, address the social issues or maximise sustainability.

Actions

- 1) Engage with DCAL to assess the potential for funding required upgrading each venue being obtained.**
- 2) Engage with Governing Bodies and other parties to assess the potential for funding required upgrading each venue being obtained.**
- 3) If funding is available undertake an Options Appraisal for developing each venue**
- 4) Investigate and action the way forward.**

- 8.3 A new stadium would incur substantial construction costs, this is likely to be in the region of £30M-£40M, excluding land and service costs, based on the construction costs of venues which have been recently built at Hull, Coventry and Leicester and provide 30,000 seats plus ancillary and commercial facilities. This would provide a venue which would be conjunctive to social inclusion, would enable major fixtures to be played in NI and could attract additional prestigious matches. Ancillary activities would provide additional income to ensure sustainability. Examples of non-sporting revenue at stadia include hotel, nightclub and office accommodation being provided at Livingston, a leisure centre incorporated into the venue at St Mirren, office, hotel and retail suites provided at the McAlpine Stadium. Most new stadia incorporate restaurants, banqueting and conference facilities.

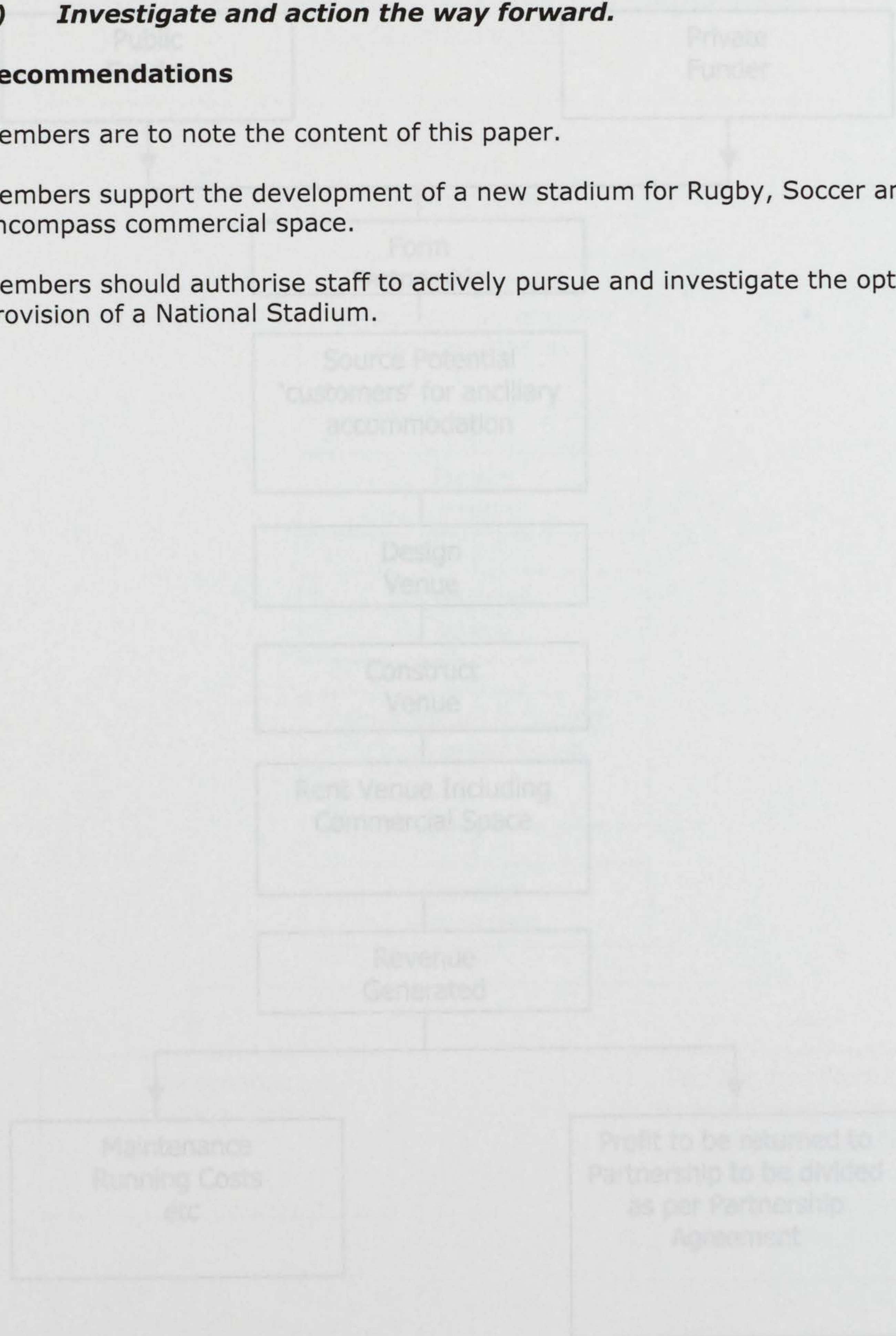
Actions

- 1) Engaging with DCAL to assess the potential for the funding required to construct a new purpose built venue.**
- 2) Engaging with Governing Bodies and others for the funding required to construct a new purpose built venue.**

- 3) ***If funding is available undertake an Options Appraisal regarding the best model to follow regarding the construction and operation of the proposed venue (ie, 100% Government Funding, Government/Governing Body partnership, Public/Private partnership)***
- 4) ***Investigate and action the way forward.***

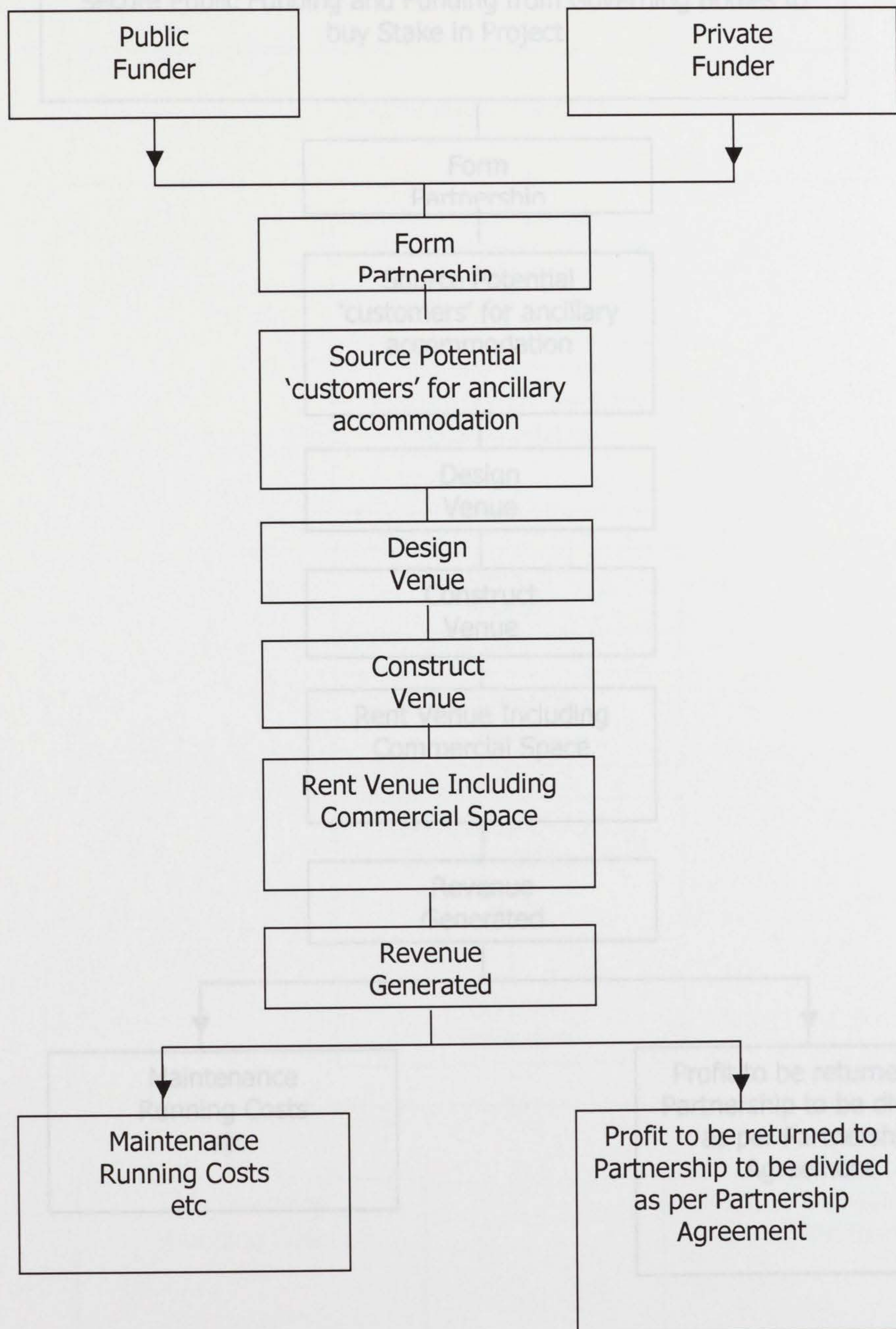
9. Recommendations

- 9.1 Members are to note the content of this paper.
- 9.2 Members support the development of a new stadium for Rugby, Soccer and GAA to encompass commercial space.
- 9.3 Members should authorise staff to actively pursue and investigate the option of the provision of a National Stadium.

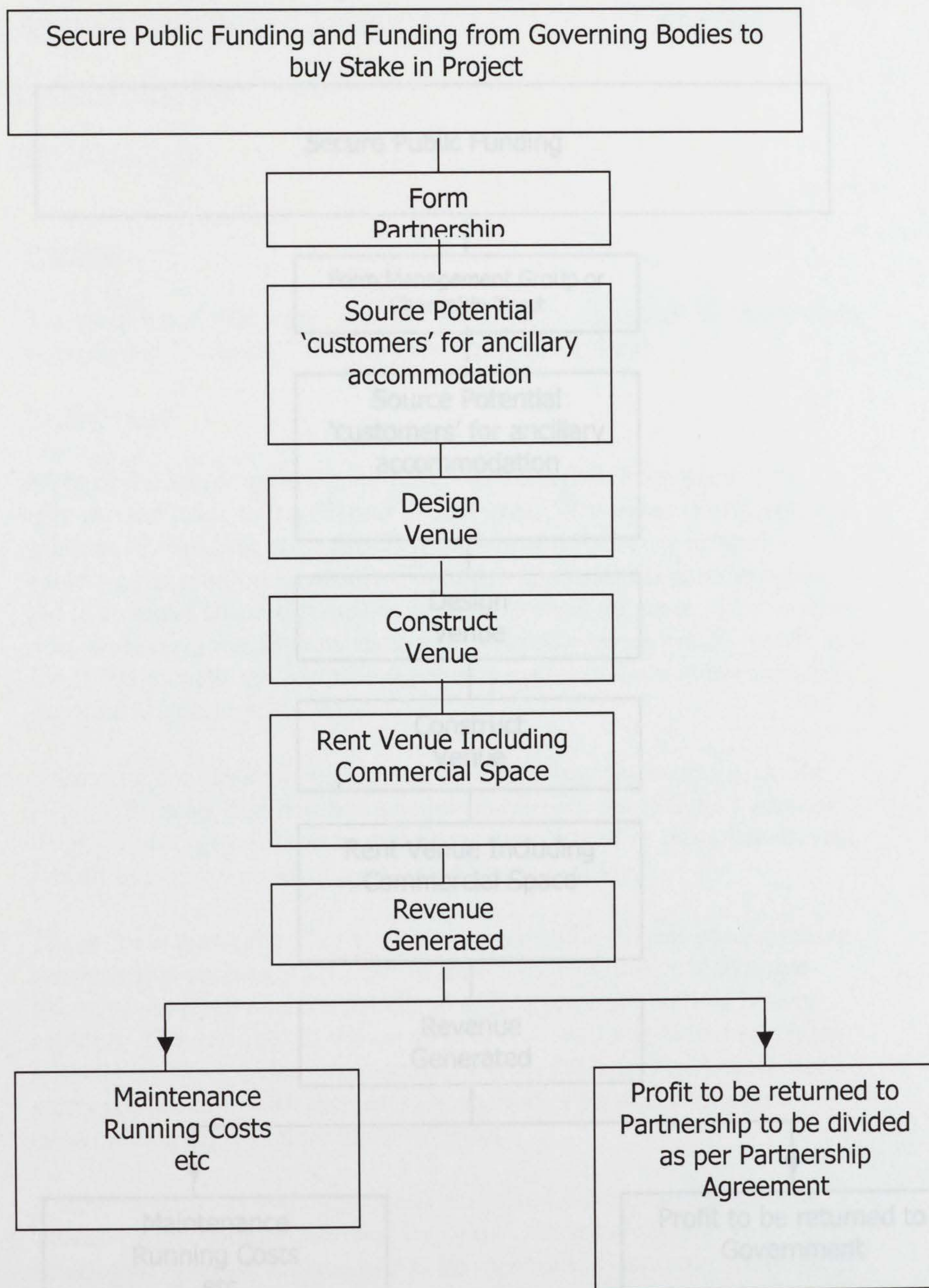


Decision to Action Project

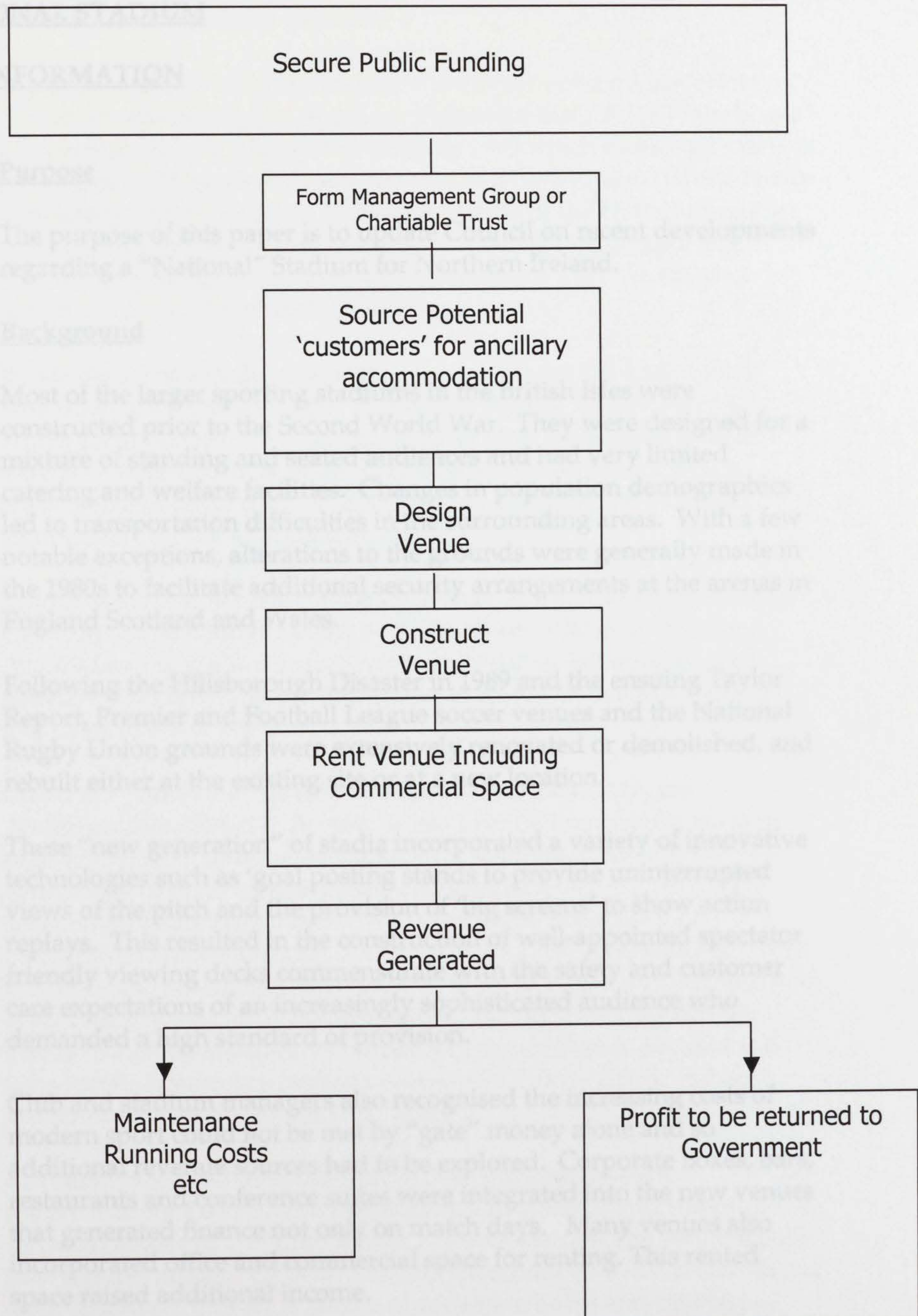
Public & Private Partnership



Public /Governing Body Funding



Public Funding



NATIONAL STADIUM

FOR INFORMATION

1 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to update Council on recent developments regarding a "National" Stadium for Northern Ireland.

2 Background

- 2.1 Most of the larger sporting stadiums in the British Isles were constructed prior to the Second World War. They were designed for a mixture of standing and seated audiences and had very limited catering and welfare facilities. Changes in population demographics led to transportation difficulties in the surrounding areas. With a few notable exceptions, alterations to the grounds were generally made in the 1980s to facilitate additional security arrangements at the arenas in England Scotland and Wales.
- 2.2 Following the Hillsborough Disaster in 1989 and the ensuing Taylor Report, Premier and Football League soccer venues and the National Rugby Union grounds were extensively renovated or demolished, and rebuilt either at the existing site or at a new location.
- 2.3 These "new generation" of stadia incorporated a variety of innovative technologies such as 'goal posting stands to provide uninterrupted views of the pitch and the provision of 'big screens' to show action replays. This resulted in the construction of well-appointed spectator friendly viewing decks commensurate with the safety and customer care expectations of an increasingly sophisticated audience who demanded a high standard of provision.
- 2.4 Club and stadium managers also recognised the increasing costs of modern sport could not be met by "gate" money alone and so additional revenue sources had to be explored. Corporate boxes, bars, restaurants and conference suites were integrated into the new venues that generated finance not only on match days. Many venues also incorporated office and commercial space for renting. This rented space raised additional income.

2.5 Public funding channelled via the Football Trust was made available to clubs in England, Scotland and Wales for new build, structural renovations and for upgrading safety management arrangements.

3. A Stadium for Northern Ireland

3.1 The provision of a modern Stadium in Northern Ireland has been discussed on a number of occasions in recent years. Price Waterhouse Coopers undertook a feasibility study in 1999 which examined many of the structural, and service requirements of a new venue. Unfortunately at present Northern Ireland is the only region of the United Kingdom that is not served by a venue capable of hosting a major sporting fixture in a safe, spectator friendly environment with the range of services expected by today's consumers.

3.2 In Northern Ireland the major spectator sports are Gaelic Football, which can attract attendances in excess of 20,000. Rugby Football which attracts audience in excess of 10,000 and association football which is perceived to be under performing at present and which attracts audiences of 6,000 – 12,000 but has the potential to attract significantly higher attendances.

3.3 Each of the major venues for the respective sports (Casement Park for Gaelic Sport, Ravenhill for Rugby Football and Windsor Park for Association Football) despite recent renovations, fall short of the standards of safety and comfort found at arenas in the larger towns and cities of Great Britain.

3.4 Casement Park has a capacity of 34,000 and is located on the Andersonstown Road in Belfast. It has a limited number of covered seats (2500) in an antiquated stand, with the remainder of the venue comprising of open concrete seats and standing terraces for 31,000 spectators. There are no facilities for corporate hospitality or restaurants. The venue hosts 2-4 major events per year, although there would be the potential to increase this to up to 10 fixtures per year with capacities in excess of 20,000 spectators. Estimates to upgrade the venue to include substantive numbers of covered seats coupled with appropriate hospitality facilities range from £10m - £20m. Public transport services in the area are limited.

3.5 Ravenhill is located in South East Belfast and comprises of approximately 4,000 covered seats in an aging stand, and standing terraces capable of accommodating 7,000 spectators. The venue would host fixtures attracting 10,000 – 11,000 spectators on 8 –10 occasions per year. There are limited numbers of corporate boxes and catering is provided in marques at major fixtures. The venue would not be in a

position to hosts a major fixture such as a European Cup semi final. Funding in the range of £8m - £12m would be required to renovate the stadium to a reasonable standard.

- 3.6 Windsor Park is situated in the 'Village' area of South Belfast. Although two new stands have been built in the past 15-20 years providing 11,000 covered seats, the remainder of the venue is in a poor condition. Access to the ground is very limited and hospitably arrangements are basic. Attendances in the region of 7,000 - 10,000 can be expected 4-6 times per year. £12m - £20m would be required to upgrade the stadium to a standard in keeping with FIFA and UEFA requirements.
- 3.7 In short, very substantial sums of money are required to up-grade the three venues to modern standards. However, it is likely that each sport and each venue would appeal to a specific sector of the Northern Ireland community and reinforce what has been described as benign apartheid in the Province.

4 Proposals

- 4.1 It may be appropriate to re-open the 'National Stadium' debate. Indeed the Belfast Telegraph has already published a series of articles on the subject that has been echoed on radio and television.
- 4.2 A figure of £30m - £40m, depending on finish specifications, plus land and service costs would be required to build a stadium with a capacity of 30-35,000 covered seats coupled with corporate, restaurant conference facilities and commercial space which would be available for let. An area of 9-11 acres would be required for the arena with a further 20-30 acres being required for car parking. This could include a synthetic warm up/multi-sport area. The construction period would last between 12-18 months from site clearance to opening. Spatial layout would require careful consideration to facilitate the three major sports, and to expand and shrink the 'apparent capacity' to accommodate audiences ranging from 10,000 to 32,000 spectators while still providing an 'intimate' atmosphere both for those attending and for television audiences.
- 4.3 Consideration should be given by Government and its agencies to the funding options for the initial build. This may include private/public initiatives, and revenue generation projections once construction has been completed. An undue burden should not be placed on the public purse during the design and build phase or throughout the working life of the building.

5 Benefits

A 'National' stadium would provide a number of benefits for sporting and civic life of the Province. Amongst these benefits would be a:-

- 5.1 quality stadium for the people of Northern Ireland, where all feel welcome and all can celebrate sporting excellence;
- 5.2 venue that will provide a vision and will encourage our young people to strive for excellence;
- 5.3 venue that will inspire civic pride and aid in the regeneration of its surrounding area;
- 5.5 venue capable of attracting and hosting major events and fixtures that will enhance the reputation of Northern Ireland; and
- 5.6 home for a museum and art gallery where our sporting heritage can be celebrated.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 Existing stadia in Northern Ireland are dated, lacking in modern facilities, located in areas with poor transport facilities and do not portray an inclusive image to many sections of the community. Significant funding is required to upgrade these venues to a reasonable standard. A new purpose built venue, properly located would provide a new image for sport in Northern Ireland capable of addressing the expectations of an increasingly discerning public. If properly designed and located the venue could provide non-sporting revenue to meet the running costs and to service capital loans. The venue could attract and host major events and would be an inspiration to young local talent. It would also symbolise the inclusive nature of a society sought by many in the Province and act as a focus of regeneration for the location.

7 Recommendations

That members note these matters and approve officer's continued liaison with all appropriate agencies as a means of realising a 'national' stadium for Northern Ireland.