

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSC ATHLETICS TRACK REPLACEMENT DELAYED

The Contractors replacing the athletics track at the National Sports Centre (NSC) have informed the Department that the completion of the project has had to be delayed until Spring 2010.

The works commenced in July and had originally been scheduled for completion in October. The whole project is highly weather dependent and the installers, Thornton Contracts Ltd, have been seriously delayed by the very poor weather, especially during the critical month of August. There have also been some delays due to unanticipated problems with ground conditions and the drainage system for the track.

The materials used in the laying of synthetic surfaces are very sensitive to moisture and cold conditions particularly as the weather worsens in Autumn. Having taken specialist advice, with great reluctance, the Department has agreed to the Contractors leaving the site and returning to finish the work next Spring. The strong possibility that the track would not be laid properly, in view of the significant investment by Government, made this decision the only realistic one that could be taken.

The new track will be in place for something like the next twenty years and it is essential that the track is constructed correctly. Before the contractors leave the site the track will be completed up to the tarmac basecoat, but the double coat of rubber crumb and the final topcoat will be delayed until Spring 2010. This will mean that the tarmac surface of both the track and field event areas will be available to athletes for winter training. The Department has decided that there will be no charge made to the athletes during this period.

Thornton Contracts, who are undertaking the project, are planning to return to the NSC after Easter and anticipate that the project will be completed by TT week.

Head of Sport and Recreation, Andy Varnom explained:

'The timing of the renewal of the track was always difficult; not least because it is the Island's only synthetic track. The work has to be completed during good weather and to have started earlier than July would have disrupted the preparations for the Island Games in Åland. We have worked closely with the Athletics Association on this project and jointly agreed that asking our athletes to prepare for the Games without the track was not an option. Having had to go for a tight window of opportunity we needed an average summer at the least – unfortunately August was one of the wettest on record.

'We will now work with Thorntons to get the work completed as soon as weather permits next Spring. The track will be open for Winter training and although the surface is far from ideal at least it will provide a safe, well lit alternative to the roads. I apologise for the inconvenience caused to our athletes and if any individuals or groups have any problems with Winter training I would ask them to contact us and we will do our best to find suitable alternatives.'

Ends

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