



From: Tracy Meharg
Permanent Secretary

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Our Ref: PSC 0340.21
Date: 8th October 2021

Mr William Humphrey MLA
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Via Email: Committee.publicaccounts@niassembly.gov.uk

Dear Mr Humphrey

FURTHER COMMITTEE QUESTIONS – SPORTS SUSTAINABILITY FUND

I refer to your correspondence dated 21 September which seeks further information regarding the Sports Sustainability Fund following my attendance at the Public Accounts Committee meeting on 8 July and my letter of 23 August.

The Committee has asked for further information on a range of issues and I have addressed each of the questions outlined in the recent correspondence below:

1. *“In your evidence you indicated that there was a lot of engagement with the sports sector including asking governing bodies to give estimates of their financial need and that this included conversations, meetings etc with the GAA, the IFA, Ulster Rugby and the Golfing Union of Ireland. Specifically relating to the Golfing Union of Ireland can you please provide details (including if possible the dates) of your meetings and conversations between March 2020 and October 2020 with the Golfing Union of Ireland (or individual golf clubs) to obtain estimates of financial need. How much did the Golfing Union of Ireland estimate was the financial need at that time?”*
 - Sport NI were in regular contact with sport Governing Bodies and the sector throughout the pandemic. Six sectoral briefings were held between April and September 2020 to assess the impact the pandemic



was having on the sector and how support could be provided. While these sessions were not aimed at assessing financial loss for specific sports, records indicate that Golfing Union of Ireland / Golf Ireland attended four of these briefings (23 April 2020, 8 July 2020, 26 May 2020 and 10 Sept 2020).

- I can also confirm that the Minister met with over 70 senior representatives from Governing Bodies and sporting organisations on 19 October and heard first-hand about the concerns they had and the challenges they faced.
- In evidence provided to the Committee I outlined that engagement took place with the sector, including asking Governing Bodies to provide estimates of their financial losses. Given the time pressure in October 2020 to collate this information figures were not included for some sports and I can confirm that, as set out in the NIAO Report, estimated losses were not provided by the Golf Union of Ireland. As advised at the evidence session, an uplift was applied to the estimated quantum of loss for the sector to reflect that not every sport had provided figures.

2. *“In the evidence session it was stated that prepaid green fees made up 40% of the bank balance of Royal County Down. However, the accounts of the club at December 2019 show a bank balance of £4.3 million and deferred income (including prepaid green fees) of just over £1m. This is 24%. Please can you provide evidence to the committee to support the 40% figure?”*

- Royal County Down provided Sport NI with sight of their most recent accounts for the “Year ended 31 December 2020” which showed ‘Cash at bank and in hand’ of £3.4m (and total ‘Current assets’ of £3.6m) and ‘Deferred income’ of £1.6m. The deferred income figure represents 48% of the cash balance of the Year ended 31 December 2020 accounts, 40% of which was pre-paid green fee income.
- The figures referenced by the Committee in the recent correspondence relating to 24% (£4.3m cash and £1.1m deferred income) refer to the 2019 accounts (Year ended 31 December 2019).

3. *“In the evidence given to the committee, it was stated that the costs of Crusaders Football Club participating in Europe would largely have equalled the income they received. This differs from figures supplied by Crusaders to Sport NI and the Audit Office at the time the Audit Office was clearing their report which would show that for each match in Europe generated income of*



£215,000 and a with associated costs of £140,000 i.e. a surplus of £75,000 per match. Using this information this would indicate an average surplus from European matches of around £165,000 would have been included in their SSF grant. Please can you clarify the actual position.”

- On the 14 June 2021 Sport NI engaged with representatives of Crusaders Football Club who indicated that the income of approximately £215,000 generated through European Competition would largely be offset by expenses required for taking part. These included costs for charter flights of £90,000-£100,000 and a Players Fund of approximately £40,000.
 - In reviewing Crusaders accounts it is not possible to ascertain all European-related income or expenditure. It is also difficult to apply an average net benefit of a European game as a team could be drawn against different opposition which could mean various levels of expenditure, for example playing against a Scottish team one year and a team from Belarus the next would have very different financial implications. Comparisons are also difficult as teams reach different rounds of the competition in different years.
 - Crusaders have indicated that any net benefit per round of European competition was significantly outweighed by their primary COVID-related losses of approximately £525k, which related to lost gate receipts, hospitality income and other commercial income.
 - This is consistent with the position stated in the NIAO Report at paragraph 48.
4. *“When discussing the possibility of stopping/pausing the larger payments and reconsidering, the receipt of legal advice was mentioned. The advice was that if DfC/SNI decided to delay making one of the larger payments to a club then that could be subject to litigation and therefore the legal advice in those circumstances was to stall the scheme completely and not make any payments to any of the sports sector. Please can you provide us with more details of the advice received and if it presented any other options other than completely stalling the scheme? When was this advice taken and who was it provided by? Please also send us the available relevant documentation that supported the DfC/SNI decision to proceed with the payments greater than £1 million.”*



- Sport NI sought legal advice from Cleaver Fulton Rankin to provide assurances around actions taken in delivery of the Scheme. This legal advice was received from Cleaver Fulton Rankin on 5 July.
 - Sport NI have advised that the legal advice was clear that any decision by Sport NI to refuse to make an award in accordance with the Scheme formula would have been susceptible to legal challenge.
 - It also advised there were no provisions within the Scheme's Terms and Conditions that enabled claw back of monies that have been paid in accordance with the rules of the Scheme, unless incorrectly paid as a result of an administrative error. Therefore, any attempt to do so would likely result in a legal challenge.
 - Sport NI have advised that had they faced litigation in the event of withholding payment of an award that was in accordance with the rules of the Scheme, their cautious legal response would have been to stall the Scheme.
 - The Board of Sport NI took Sports Sustainability Fund investment decisions at their Board meetings on 10 February 2021, 26 February 2021 and 19 March 2021. Board minutes have been attached.
 - As set out in my letter of 23 August Sport NI is required, in line with the *Sport NI Management Statement and Financial Memorandum*, to seek Departmental approval for awards in excess of £1m and the approval letter is attached.
5. *"In the evidence a key difference was pointed to between Scottish and NI golf clubs in terms of their opening and closing dates due to COVID. Could you provide an analysis of the comparative opening and closing dates because of COVID restrictions between April 2020 and December 2020 for both Scotland and NI. "*
- The significant difference for golf here was that for the period of the second lockdown in Northern Ireland golf courses were closed from the 26 December 2020 through to the 1 April 2021.
 - The position regarding closure of golf courses in Scotland differed as courses were only closed between 23 March and 29 May 2020 (the 1st lockdown period) but remained open during the period 26 December 2020 and 1 April 2021.



6. *“The figures included on the application form were estimated figures based on projected outturns and these were the basis for grant payments. Is any work being done to compare these projections against actual outturns (now that the actual accounts for the year should be available) and is there any potential for clawbacks of grant in the event of significant disparities between what was projected by clubs for 2020 and what actually happened?”*

- The terms and conditions of the scheme recognised that the Award application was made at a point in time and included some element of projected figures which, per the application, were made in good faith and to the best knowledge of the applicants (both Applicant Organisations and their Affiliated Clubs) at the time of application.
- The terms and conditions further confirmed that should the figures, once realised, have changed, either to the benefit or detriment of the application, it was not Sport NI’s intention to reconsider any figures.
- In the case where figures have changed to the benefit of the applicant, it is Sport NI’s expectation that the intended use of the award and its principles are maintained with the purpose of sports development in mind.
- The terms and conditions further state that where Sport NI becomes aware of an award being used outside of the intended use and programme principles, Sport NI reserves the right to conduct an investigation into such and to, if deemed appropriate following investigation, seek repayment of all or part of the award.
- Both the standard terms and conditions and specific terms and conditions issued as part of the award agreement permit clawback where errors have been identified, either by the recipient or through Sport NI’s post-award due diligence.
- The due diligence work has identified errors totalling £37,504 (0.17% of total awarded) and these are subject to repayment processes. To date Sport NI have issued invoices to the relevant recipients and are working through the recovery process for these monies.

7. *“In relation to Royal County Down the evidence provided by witnesses pointed to widening participation work and specifically mentioned a summer scheme for 10 to 17 year olds. Can you confirm what this scheme entitled the participants*



to (e.g. did it allow them access to a full round of golf) and if the scheme was open to all members of the public or just junior members of the club; or just the children of members. Also can you provide more evidence of the other widening participation work being done at Royal County Down which encourages participation beyond its members.”

- Royal County Down have confirmed that they ran their annual summer scheme programme for 10-17 year olds and that it was led by their Assistant Professionals as part of their three year PGA Golf Management Programme.
- The summer scheme programme was open to all young people and this year there was a total of five camps with 25 young people taking part in each. All participants had access to the Club facility, PGA tuition and use of the academy course.
- In addition Royal County Down ran a *Get Into Golf Programme* which includes specific engagement with women and children and emphasises the fun aspects of the game.
- Royal County Down have indicated that over 98% of their golf activity is related to the amateur game. The Club hosted the Ulster Scratch Event in June enabling three local golfers, two male and one female, to get a card for the ISPS Handa World Invitational in Galgorm Castle that took place between 28 July and 1 August.
- Royal County Down hosted the 2021 European Ladies Team Championship event between 6 and 10 July attracting players representing 20 countries. The event which included six players per team along with support staff and supporters would have made a small contribution to the struggling tourist economy.
- The club facilities at Royal County Down includes two golf clubs and courses with the Mourne Golf Club making a significant contribution to the health and wellbeing of older people. A significant proportion of the members of the Mourne Golf Club, approximately 60%, are over 65 years of age. This demonstrates the work the club does to support life-long participation in sport and active living.



I hope that the detail provided against each of the questions gives the Committee sufficient clarity.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Meharg

**TRACY MEHARG
PERMANENT SECRETARY**



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Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn
Pobal

Máinnistrie o
Communities

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By email to: antoinettemckeown@sportni.net

Date: 3 March 2021

Dear Antoinette,

On the 9 February Sport NI provided DfC with a full list of applications that had been submitted to the Sports Sustainability Fund (SSF), outlining the total amount being claimed. This list highlighted applications where the payment to an individual organisation was likely to be in excess of £500k.

In line with DfC Engaged Communities Group (ECG) delegated limits a submission was prepared outlining the role required for both DfC Officials and the DfC Minister to provide approval for payments over £500k.

The four highest awards to individual organisations related to three sports Governing Bodies and one affiliated club. While the submission acknowledged that final awards have not yet been confirmed, approval for payments up to the claimed amount, subject to final verification by Sport NI, has been confirmed by the DfC Minister for the following applicants:

- Irish Football Association (IFA) £1.716m
- Royal Co Down Golf Club £1.700m
- IRFU obo Ulster Rugby £1.510m
- Ulster GAA £1.449m

Approval for payments up to the claimed amount, subject to final verification by Sport NI, has been given by me as Grade 5 for a further three affiliated clubs that may receive a single payment between £500k and £750k:

- Royal Portrush Golf Club £745,211
- Crusaders FC £540,800
- GAA Down Co Committee £513,123

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathryn Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'K' and 'H'.

KATHRYN HILL

Director of Active Communities Division



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SPORT NI BOARD HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 10TH FEBRUARY 2021 @ 9:15AM (VIA ZOOM MEETING)**

<p>Present: Board members: George Lucas Jay Colville Richard Bullick Wilma Erskine Kyle Ferguson Kieran Harding Darryl Petticrew</p>	<p>In attendance: Sport NI Officials Antoinette McKeown, CEO Adrian Doherty, Director of Finance & Governance Peter McCabe, Interim Director of Performance John News, Interim Director of Participation Ali Campbell, Executive Unit Manager Gillian Gilliland, Board Secretary</p>
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Agenda Item	Record of main discussion
1. Apologies	There were no apologies to note.
2. Register of Members' Declarations of Interest	There were no new declarations of interest to note.
3. Minutes of Previous Meetings	Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2020. A member requested the minutes be proof read for grammar and spelling mistakes before uploading to the website as a public document.
4. Chair's Remarks	<p>The Chair confirmed there have been three closed sessions of the Board (12/01/21, 21/01/21 and before this morning's meeting) to discuss confidential HR issues. The CEO advised that she had not been aware of her need to attend a closed session of the Board this morning.</p> <p>The Chair advised the Business Plan for 2021/22 is in draft for discussion with DFC. In the event that additional monies are offered to Sport NI in response to ongoing Covid-19 challenges, the Board will have a discussion as to priorities for next year.</p> <p>This year's business plan was agreed in March last year and no-one could have foreseen the additional amount of work required throughout the year to meet Covid need; Sport NI's budget was more than doubled and the associated work undertaken with the same amount of staff reflects the significant commitment from across the organisation. In the interim, on behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked staff for their continued commitment during Covid-19.</p>

<p>5.1 Q3 Business Plan Review</p>	<p>A member queried point 2.4 within the CEO report in terms of staff rejecting the protocols for restructuring, stating it was disappointing to read and thought the staff were being brought along to modernise the needs of the business. Members asked for an update.</p> <p>The CEO advised staff have been engaged throughout the whole process in terms of formal and informal engagement. Earlier this year the Union had asked to stop the restructure process but staff asked for this to continue. Neil Hughes has advised the process has been exemplar in terms of staff engagement for restructuring. SNI never had a restructuring protocol or policy in place before and we put this in place to ensure transparency. The CEO advised staff have not been able to separate individual job situations from the policy and gave some examples of protocol implications. The CEO advised that new posts were being advertised in line with employment law, exemplary HR practice and Sport NI's HR policies.</p> <p>The CEO further advised there are three sticking points; Members queried was this not provided to staff at the beginning of the process. The CEO advised that there has been engagement throughout but now that the restructuring has become real, staff are naturally concerned about their own posts. The CEO also advised that it is disappointing situation as the project Team has demonstrated movement the whole way through the process in response to staff consultation and feedback (with clear audit trail of this)but that certain demands cannot be provided as it is not the right thing to do. The CEO also advised that not every staff member will have to apply for posts.</p> <p>Members queried how this was going to be resolved. The CEO confirmed a meeting has been sought with the Union and this is in the diary. Members queried would this hold up the restructuring process; the CEO advised this would not, further stating if staff see us moving through the next level we might see some nerves calmed. The protocol is the best of the sector, this is demonstrating to staff we are here to protect them by following employment law.</p> <p>A member queried the position on return to work and how this would look. Members queried whether there were any hybrid variations at this stage. It was advised there is an assumption that life will change but there have been no formal discussions yet about this; we don't see this on the horizon over the next month or so. Members heard there are plans to return safely and these have been drawn up in terms of how many staff will be in the workplace at any one time in terms of social distancing etc. Executive agreed there was a need to have formal engagement with staff about their views for the future, it would be good to understand what that stage would look like.</p> <p>Members received the Quarter 3 Business plan Review and noted 70% of targets were on track, 13% of targets are likely to be missed by a small margin and 17% missed by a substantial margin. Members agreed that given the situation regarding Covid and additional funding with no extra staff this was a good outcome. Members were advised some of our core goals have had to take a back step because of Covid.</p>
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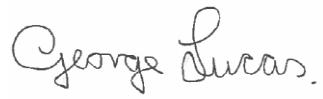
	<p>A member queried in terms of participation we have this is as red but physical activity has dramatically increased with people out walking and queried whether this could be measured in the future in terms of our baseline information. Is there any way we can have an insight on this? Would this relate more to our earlier discussions in terms of working with partners? How can we be more innovative in terms of using outdoor spaces? Members discussed the core area of physical activity and sport needs to be looked at and how much information on research there is to do this. It was discussed that in the PfG workshop, SNI needs to discuss sport and physical activity and the direction agreed in our new corporate plan so that we clarify what our baselines are.</p> <p><i>K Ferguson left the meeting at 9.50am.</i></p> <p>Members queried whether an explanation can be inserted in the Business Plan Review to address the targets not met; it was advised this would be provided within the end of year report and in our formal Annual Accounts.</p>
<p>6. Communications 6.1 Media Report</p>	<p>Members received the new interactive Media Report for information.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the team for the update and the changes to the recent report; well done to staff for this.</p> <p>A member stated if you look at your own sport you can see SNI everywhere; there is a big difference with sports referencing SNI. SNI are seen as a crux for sports and we must not take this for granted. Members agreed the changes within comms are excellent.</p>
<p>7. Remuneration Committee TOR update SNI 21 04</p>	<p>Members received TOR SNI 21 04 for approval.</p> <p>The Remuneration Committee Chair advised the Committee had met, reviewed the TOR and approved the changes.</p> <p>The Board approved the Remuneration Committee TOR.</p>
<p>8. Rolling Board Business 2020/21 update SNI 21 05</p>	<p>Members received paper SNI 2105 for noting which sets out the business for 2021 Board meetings.</p> <p>Members noted the paper.</p>
<p>9. Major Games Update SNI 21 06</p>	<p>Members received paper SNI 21 06 for information.</p> <p>Members noted the 2020/21 major games which were currently planned, however there were likely to be further developments. Over the next few months there will be further updates provided on the Olympics and Paralympics.</p> <p>Members agreed this was a great paper, however one concern was athlete wellbeing and whether anything was being done. Members were advised initially there were different messages from GB and Ireland; however both are now starting to take this on board and there are interventions from both to work with athletes on this.</p>

	<p>Members discussed that while we are fixated on the Olympics there are also knock-ons for commonwealth games qualification and how this will roll out with some regions being more affected than others. Even in terms of people dropping off the performance ladder with elite club level closed for so long and community sport that has been lost.</p> <p>Members noted the paper.</p>
<p>10. Sport Sustainability Fund SNI 21 07</p>	<p>Members received paper SNI 21 07 for decision.</p> <p>Members heard the awards for the Sport Sustainability Fund would be made against the Scheme of Delegation which would require Board input on decisions. Therefore an exceptional Board meeting is required due to the level of requests and it was suggested this be held during the week commencing 22 February.</p> <p>Members queried four sports getting the largest amount of money (86%) and whether this would attract criticism from other sports. Members heard other sports have been very supportive of the process and there has been feedback from sports about the process and they have all been involved. Members agreed as long as there was a process involved they were content.</p> <p>It was advised a short paper would be sent to members as far in advance of the extraordinary meeting but it might be 72 hours in advance.</p> <p>Members approved the recommendations within the paper.</p>
<p>11. Delegated Decisions SNI 21 08</p>	<p>Members received paper SNI 21 08 for information.</p> <p>Members agreed this paper was very useful to see what the ET and staff are dealing with.</p> <p>Members approved the paper.</p>
<p>12. Finance & Governance Report SNI 21 09</p>	<p>Members received paper SNI 21 09 for decision.</p> <p>Members were advised there was an updated position on budgets since the paper was sent to members, the budget underspend was likely to be 4% (£312k) including a small amount under the Sports Hardship Fund and the risk of a more significant underspend for Sport Sustainability Fund; our target underspend is 1%. Members were advised there was a difficulty with procurement which was a slower process and also in terms of Covid; therefore there was a general underspend in all business areas.</p> <p>Members heard communication had been received from DfC (from DoF) indicating there may be an additional £8m coming to SNI from central money. Indications at this stage state this money is for 2021/22 but we would need to spend it this year, which breaks accounting rules; we have never had the authority to carry money forward. It was highlighted to members SNI does not have current capacity to spend this and there is not the demand currently for it.</p>

	<p>In principle we want to get all the money spent we can but this needs to be done with propriety. The SSF update figures indicate an underspend of £1-2m. Members agreed with the position provided by staff.</p> <p>Members heard SNI welcome all the additional support we have had this year and we have tried to get as much out to those that need it but within a third pandemic lockdown it is difficult to sustain the pace of work that has been held throughout this year.</p> <p>Members heard the Risk Register had been updated by ET as part of the quarterly deep dive. Covid has been added as a risk and budget uncertainty has moved from red to amber. You could interpret the risk that there originally was underfunding and now this is overfunding potentially; however this risk is forward looking into the next financial year.</p> <p>Members were advised of an update meeting with NIAO on accounts; unfortunately regarding the 2014/15 Lottery accounts we will not get those through in March. The NAO have not been in contact with NIAO and the NIAO haven't been able to get any traction. The NIAO are ready to have these signed off.</p> <p>The 2019/20 accounts are within the remit and ability of NIAO to complete and they are confident the audit will be complete and accounts submitted to ARAC in March in time to sign off. We might need a single agenda Board meeting immediately after the ARAC meeting on 22 March. Members agreed this was great news about the 2019/20 accounts and further agreed there should be a Board meeting after ARAC to formally approve the accounts.</p> <p>Members noted the 2014/15 accounts had been discussed with DfC but this is an issue between the NIAO and NAO. There is the opportunity at the ARAC to raise this again with NIAO for them to follow up again. The accounts involve such a small amount of money for a historic accounts however every single audit is important for the NAO. It was confirmed ARAC could ask NIAO for an update and it will be minuted.</p> <p>Members approved the paper.</p>
<p>13. HR Policies SNI 21 10</p>	<p>Members received paper SNI 21 10 for approval.</p> <p>Members were advised these policies had previously been approved by the Board but DfC had requested some changes.</p> <p>Members approved the policies.</p>
<p>14. AOB</p>	<p>A member raised an issue from the past when they were appointed to the Board and called to a meeting with the Minister years ago. One of the comments was that the Board didn't know what was going on and staff welfare and wellbeing was being ignored; therefore the member raised this again in terms of a potential staff engagement survey. The member advised they didn't want this being levelled at the Board again and would welcome thoughts and any plans for a staff engagement survey.</p>

	<p>Members heard there has been numerous reports and discussions at Board meetings over least 2 years on staff welfare and SNI have been engaged with staff on culture during the last three years and have carried out several surveys. We haven't repeated the survey carried out in 2015/16 by the DfC EIL Team and we recognise it did not make good reading. There has therefore been a range of ways used to continuously engage staff and seek and receive feedback rather than rely on a periodic survey. Members were advised if a staff survey was carried out now it would not be good given the uncertainties caused by Covid and restructure. Members noted methods currently include micro engagement around hot topics, short surveys with staff at CEO briefs and monitoring of staff welfare; put all these together to get a good picture of what staff feel. At the moment our engagement has been good with staff.</p> <p>Members heard it would be naïve not to think the last 10 months has not been trying for all staff because of the whole environment and this would be reflected. The ongoing successful delivery during Covid is a measure of resilience of staff notwithstanding the reds within the Business Plan, given the doubling of budget.</p> <p>Members noted this is a time of massive instability and we need certainty. With both Covid and restructuring there is uncertainty and there was a need for feedback to check the temperature of staff, respond to staff and meet their needs but we need to agree the best way to do this and provide them with support in terms of what they have delivered. The CEO assured the Board there was constant feedback sought and received from staff currently.</p> <p>It was highlighted to members SNI staff can't sustain the current work pace much longer and there was a need to make some decisions in terms of money Vs Business Plan against staff welfare. Members were advised that Executive Team has introduced a staff resource tool to ensure workloads are evenly allocated and this is reviewed fortnightly.</p> <p>Members agreed there is no right or wrong answer but staff wellbeing is most important and as a Board we must ensure this is reflected. Members advised they welcomed all initiatives ongoing to ensure there is wellbeing being shown along the way. Members stated they would welcome further discussions on this, possibly considered internally and reported back to the Board. A member was asked if he had any insight in relation to the issue discussed. Members were advised that to introduce a staff survey at this stage would be difficult as staff are struggling.</p> <p>The Chair asked for some consideration over the next 2-3 months in terms of the range of staff engagement taking place.</p> <p>The Chair asked if everyone felt this has been a good meeting and this was agreed. The Chair requested if members had any ideas for improvement to give him a call or email the Board Secretariat to circulate.</p> <p>Members agreed the papers show what a great job ET and staff are doing and asked for the Board's thanks to be passed onto staff.</p>
15. Date of next meeting	Wednesday 14 th April @ 9.00am

	<p>The Chair indicated it was his intention to plan closed sessions before the April Board meeting, one with the board only and one with the Board and CEO.</p> <p>There being no further business to discuss the meeting ended at 10.32am.</p>
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Approved by: _____
Sport NI Chair

Date: 14 April 2021



**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE SPORT NI BOARD
HELD ON FRIDAY 19th MARCH 2021 @ 10.00AM (VIA ZOOM MEETING)**

<p>Present: Board members: George Lucas Jay Colville Richard Bullick Wilma Erskine Darryl Petticrew</p>	<p>In attendance: Sport NI Officials Antoinette McKeown, CEO Adrian Doherty, Chief Operating Officer Richard Archibald, Head of Sports Systems Peter McCabe, Interim Director of Performance John News, Interim Director of Participation Ali Campbell, Executive Unit Manager Gillian Gilliland, Board Secretary Ian Weir, Performance Governance Manager (for item 4)</p>
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Agenda Item	Record of main discussion
<p>1. Apologies</p>	<p>Apologies were received from Kyle Ferguson and Kieran Harding.</p> <p>The Chair congratulated Richard Archibald on his appointment and welcomed him to today's meeting.</p>
<p>2. Register of Member's Declarations of Interest</p>	<p>There were no new declarations of interest to note.</p> <p>Members agreed that if there were discussions about their specific clubs or other interests they would leave the discussion.</p>
<p>3. Draft Business Plan 2021-22 SNI 21 05</p>	<p>Members received paper number SNI 21 05 for approval.</p> <p>The Chair advised the plan was fluid and this was the Board's opportunity to make a contribution before formal approval.</p> <p>Members were advised the target is to have the plan in place for the end of March but it was better to get it right. There have been ongoing discussions with the department and we want to ensure the Board are content with it.</p> <p>The Chair acknowledged we are in the middle of a pandemic and everyone is working very hard but in future if the Board were able to have earlier drafts it would be appreciated. The Chair asked members for their views and comments on the draft plan.</p> <p>Members queried the possibility of including specific research targets to provide evidence and it was advised there were two research pieces referenced within</p>

	<p>the draft plan and SNI have set up a Cultural Diversity Panel to carry out specific research.</p> <p>Members discussed the areas of physical recreation and physical literacy following on from the recent Board Workshop. It was advised SNI want to ensure that our partners get people physically active to allow us to transition them into the club environment and sustain club membership.</p> <p><i>D Petticrew joined the meeting at 10.25am. W Erskine left the meeting at 10.30am.</i></p> <p>The Chair raised the possibility of developing a plan to become a strategic partner with the view to bringing large sporting events to NI and whether this could be included within the business plan. Members discussed this in terms of the current situation with Covid alongside SNI's capacity and resources. It was queried whether NGBs would have an appetite for this currently and this shouldn't get in the way of Build Back Better.</p> <p>It was agreed that would be kept on the agenda for the next 6 months and not included within the Business Plan for now. It was further agreed to revisit this around May/June to look at ideas of what we can do.</p> <p>Members agreed there were no changes required to the current draft Business Plan and the Board were content for further discussions to take place with the department.</p>
<p>4. Sport Sustainability Fund – Investment Decisions SNI 21 06</p>	<p>Members received paper number SNI 21 06 for approval.</p> <p><i>I Weir joined the meeting at 10.40am. W Erskine re-joined the meeting at 10.40am</i></p> <p>Members agreed as the same template as previous awards is being applied we don't need to go over due diligence again.</p> <p>Members raised queries in terms of some figures within the paper for golf and cycling.</p> <p>It was confirmed that there had been a formatting error in Section 3.1 Table 2 in respect of the 'verified amount' for golf; the correct figure is as noted in Section 3.2 Table 3 'Recommended award'.</p> <p>It was advised Board approval was not required on the cycling award but it was confirmed that within their initial application cycling had misunderstood the process and requested an amount of £400k figure. Cycling subsequently submitted a much reduced application and an award of £14k was verified through the process.</p> <p>Members queried why some clubs didn't receive awards based on the amounts applied for. It was advised some individual clubs had misunderstood what could be included and that largely led to the shift in amounts. Within the final part of the application they didn't net off income and losses and demonstrate the financial need. Members also queried was there a similar reason regarding</p>

sports within Table 1 being awarded a recommended amount which is greater than the requested amount and this was confirmed.

Members heard the figures submitted by all applicants have been scrutinised by the team working on this to evaluate applications on fairness and financial rigour. Some applicants misinterpreted information and the team have checked figures on a sample basis based on the procedures; there have been differences to the detriment and benefit of applicants.

Members queried the position on clubs with large reserves and it was advised the programme wasn't set up to consider reserves as these could not be quickly monetarised. A lot of sporting organisation haven't been able to operate as normal and we need to help keep sports going but this wasn't based on reserves of clubs.

Members queried the promotion and publication of the programme and it was confirmed social media assets had been developed including videos, e-zines and public advertisement of the programme as we normally do and reach was good.

It was advised NGBs were managing the process of the applications and at the initial engagement meeting with NGBs there were 80 participants representing 70 sports which equated to 90% representation of sports across NI. Subsequently 15 or 20 sports recognised they don't lease their own facilities and therefore did not apply. We are confident that we have had a good representative uptake across the sporting sector. In addition, in terms of knowledge and awareness within sports SNI did the regional piece and many of the sports were retweeting and sharing links. SNI also encouraged sports to do their own publicity and we know that a number of sports carried out specific awareness sessions with their clubs. Outside SSF, another 1,200 clubs received support through the Sport Hardship Fund; this is not a single intervention but a whole suite of interventions.

Members approved the recommendations within the paper.

The Chair thanked I Weir for attending today's meeting and providing explanations to the Board.

It was highlighted to members there was an award for Castlerock GC within the paper in red as we are waiting for a response. The award amount is under £34k and it was queried that rather than delay other clubs and having to bring another paper to the Board were the Board content for the application to be reviewed as soon as the clarification comes from Golf Ireland. The Board confirmed they were content with this approach.

Members queried when these awards would be announced. It was advised following the letters of offer being issued to the applicants a press release would be agreed with the department. It was requested that the press release be shared with the Board before going out to the media.

D Petticrew, J News and I Weir left the meeting at 11.00am. The CEO thanked J News for attending today's meeting during annual leave.

	The Chair thanked the staff involved in this whole process and acknowledged this had involved a lot of hard work.
5. Draft response to Programme for Government consultation SNI 21 07	<p>Members received paper number SNI 21 07 for approval.</p> <p>Members discussed the draft response to the PFG consultation and agreed there was nothing untoward within it.</p> <p>Members were advised this is our policy position and therefore required Board approval before submission to the NI Executive.</p> <p>Members expressed thanks to A Campbell for drafting the response which is a very good document. Members noted this provides a massive opportunity for inter-departmental working and we need to ensure the policy and strategy are right.</p> <p>Members approved the draft response.</p>
6. AOB	The Chair asked everyone did they think today had been a good meeting with good discussion and everyone agreed.
7. Date of next meeting	<p>Monday 22 March @ 7.00pm (following the ARAC meeting) to approve accounts. The Chair expressed thanks to the team for the work on the accounts.</p> <p>There being no further business to discuss the meeting finished at 11.07am.</p>

George Lucas.

Approved by:
Sport NI Chair

Date: 14 April 2021



**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE SPORT NI BOARD
HELD ON FRIDAY 26TH FEBRUARY 2021 @ 10.00AM (VIA ZOOM MEETING)**

<p>Present: Board members: George Lucas Jay Colville Richard Bullick Wilma Erskine Kieran Harding</p>	<p>In attendance: Sport NI Officials Antoinette McKeown, CEO Adrian Doherty, Director of Finance & Governance Peter McCabe, Interim Director of Performance John News, Interim Director of Participation Ali Campbell, Executive Unit Manager Gillian Gilliland, Board Secretary</p>
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Agenda Item	Record of main discussion
1. Apologies	Apologies were received from Kyle Ferguson and Darryl Petticrew.
2. Register of Member's Declarations of Interest	<p>The following new declaration of interest was noted: Kyle Ferguson became a Committee member of British Irish Chamber of Commerce, Culture, Arts, Sports and Tourism (CAST) Committee with effect from 19 February 2021.</p> <p>In relation to today's meeting, members highlighted their current interests; it was agreed, during the meeting where these may be discussed in relation to a particular award, the member in question would leave the meeting until the discussion was concluded.</p>
3. Chair's remarks	<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the Board meeting to discuss and approve this tranche of the Sport Sustainable Fund, to assist NGBs and clubs cope with the impact of Covid-19.</p> <p>There has been engagement and communication with all stakeholders over the past two months and the Board paper reflects the criteria, evaluation and investment proposals.</p> <p>The commitment and extra work put in by the Executive Team and staff in trying to get these funds to NGB's and clubs before the year end 31 March 2021 is acknowledged by the Board.</p> <p>The Board also recognises the partnership and dedication of DfC colleagues and also take this opportunity to thank the Minister for obtaining these much needed funds for sport.</p>

4. Sport Sustainability Fund – Investment Decisions SNI 21 03

Members received paper number SNI 21 03 for decision.

Members noted the Sport Sustainability Fund, which had been given the go ahead in December, closed on 21 January 2021 and today's meeting was to approve the awards.

Members queried if, following receipt of funding, clubs were to recover would they have to repay the funding. It was confirmed this is a grant scheme as opposed to a loan scheme and therefore was not repayable. Members were advised in terms of a UK-wide approach to the pandemic each devolved administration adopted their own approach in respect of sport and Sport NI looked at what would work for Northern Ireland. Members noted applicants were asked to provide 3 years approved annual accounts, a further set of 9 month management accounts up to the date of submission and 3 years anticipated income to 31 March. Members noted it would have been preferable to have at least 5 or even 10 years accounts but this would have been disproportionate in terms of time available.

Members were advised this is not an income replacement scheme; this programme was looking at evidence of net losses to assist clubs and sports to get back on their feet in order to stabilise the sector for the future.

Members highlighted the issue of smaller clubs who may not have applied, some of which are in real need of support, in terms of how the media would focus on the large amounts of money being awarded and potential criticism on Sport NI. Members heard within the application process all sports and clubs were able to apply but we also asked them to take into account other Covid related awards they had received and factor this into the process so the smaller clubs may have already had funding from other sources. Additionally, upon completion of the application form were unable to demonstrate a net loss. Members noted some new clubs were unable to apply as they couldn't provide the necessary period of accounts required.

Members noted the figures recommended in the paper are the verified figures related to their accounts and in terms of governing body requests there will be 100% pre-payment vouching.

A McKeown joined the meeting at 10.15am.

A member requested assurance around the role of GBs in setting any criteria to ensure Sport NI are not exposed in anyway and also queried the limited number of woman's clubs benefitting from this fund.

A member also queried the terminology used as GAA as opposed to Gaelic games in terms of totality. Clarity was also sought in relation to the range of clubs which SGBs were bidding for and assurances were sought on women's sport. It was noted that currently the Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) are not officially recognised and it was queried whether the Ulster Council had made an application on their behalf as it was noted certain counties have got some amounts along with a number of ladies Gaelic and camogie clubs. Within some clubs the ladies are part of the Gaelic club and it was queried had this been

controlled by (Ulster GAA or LGFA in terms of inclusivity to ensure females are benefiting).

Members were advised the criteria for GBs and guidance notes describe the roles and responsibilities of GB. When looking at co-design of the scheme we looked at making it “a free for all for clubs” based on our experience of small grants programmes and experience of other sectors running large scale programmes against time and expectations and also our position in terms of GBs and the reasonable ask of governance within their sport. Members also heard the department’s business case favoured option was rolling out within GBs; it was up to GBs to communicate it to their sports, ensuring they were affiliated to the sports system within the individual sports. Members heard Sport NI were not aware of any GBs who established any sub-criteria. In terms of the 21 January closing date there was an element of due diligence with GBs; GBs had their own processes to engage with clubs before Christmas to allow them time to do their check and challenge before submitting applications to SNI.

A member also queried whether GBs themselves were at an unfair advantage because of co-design and whether that left Sport NI open to challenge. Members noted that we don’t believe any GBs have been unfairly advantaged due to co-design.

A member queried female sport and asked for assurance on how female sport has been represented. It was advised any constituted club within a sport was eligible to apply. As part of the SHF process one of the questions asked was the club for men only, women only or both and 86% of the responses said they provided opportunities for both, 4% women only and 10% men only. There would appear to be a significantly lower amount of women only clubs.

In terms of the specific example of Gaelic sport, the Minister made it very clear the scheme was to be accessible to all parts of sport – women, men, grassroots, children etc. Ladies Gaelic couldn’t apply because they’re not recognised; Ulster Camogie and Ulster Council GAA had a discussion and agreed the camogie bid would come through the Ulster Council; therefore it is a GAA amount rather than Gaelic sports.

A member queried the position in cricket as there didn’t appear to be an application from them. It was advised cricket have submitted an application which is continuing to be assessed but it is below the threshold that requires Board approval, this will be contained within the delegated decisions paper.

A member expressed concern about large amounts being awarded to certain sports which are seen as businesses and run sports clubs differently to other smaller clubs and how this could potentially attract negative press.

Members were advised the amounts within appendix 1 for football are vouched amounts and the recommended awards amounts within appendices 2, 3 and 4 are requested amounts and are subject to vouching. We will be doing 100% vouching through payments. In sampling we identified queries and the full amount may not be awarded because we can’t vouch this. Members noted one of the points discussed was that sports and clubs would not be any better or worse off as a result of awards. In the past we asked GBs and clubs to become

	<p>more diversified and to not solely rely on Sport NI funding; as a result some sports have built up reserves through prudent financial planning. We were conscious when discussing the design of the plan not to take into account reserves to ensure we didn't penalise them for being financially prudent and building up a fund for future development.</p> <p>Members agreed this programme was about supporting sport at a really difficult time and following today's discussions this had provided confidence and assurances.</p> <p>Members also agreed there needed to be clear communication regarding the process and awards and queried was it possible for the Board to see this before being issued. The CEO advised this would be discussed at ET on Monday and would be shared with the Board before it goes out in the media.</p> <p>The Chair asked the Board for approval of the £9.5m of awards contained in the paper; members approved the awards.</p> <p>The Chair stated this had been a good meeting with Board questions being answered on a robust process. It is important we acknowledge the work that has gone into this in a short timescale to deliver on time which is an incredible achievement. The Board expressed thanks to everyone involved.</p>
5. AOB	<p>The Chair referred to the workshop scheduled for Tuesday 2 March to discuss the Programme for Government consultation with specific reference to physical activity and requested either a paper or slides on the pros and cons to inform discussion.</p> <p>The Chair also highlighted the Board Effectiveness session Monday 15 March arranged by DfC and requested Board members reply to the Board Secretariat regarding their availability.</p>
6. Date of next meeting	<p>Wednesday 14th April 2021 @ 9.30am.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 10.59am.</p>

George Lucas.

Approved by:
Sport NI Chair

Date: 14 April 2021