

FROM THE MINISTER



Department of
**Culture, Arts
and Leisure**

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**Cultúr, Ealaíon
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Our ref: SUB/254/2015

21 April 2015

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Jim a chara,

RE: ORAL QUESTION TIME ON 24 MARCH 2015

During oral question time on 24 March 2015 you referred to “the discriminatory practice operated by Sport NI of refusing to fund clubs that are not affiliated to the IABA”.

I am taking this opportunity to formally refute your comments on this matter and provide you with clarity around Sport NI’s funding practices in order to demonstrate that these are not discriminatory in any way. In 2013, Sport NI published a document called “Promoting Fair Play in Sport”. This document provides guidelines to sport in respect of the equality legislation in the north of Ireland. The document also set out Sport NI’s policy position in relation to funding sports clubs and governing bodies; and its recognition policy of sports governing bodies.

Sport NI’s Boxing Investment Programme was set up to address the needs identified for boxing clubs in order that they could improve facilities and provide essential boxing equipment. The Programme also recognised the need to provide boxing clubs with support to build capacity and increase membership and participation rates. An important aspect of this Programme was the appointment of a Club Development Officer by the IABA. This officer has been helping boxing clubs to be in a position to avail of the funding and has been developing capacity within clubs, which will assist with ensuring proper controls are in place, particularly in line with child protection requirements.

The Boxing Investment Programme was open to boxing clubs in the north of Ireland who were affiliated to an internationally recognised governing body for boxing i.e., a governing body affiliated to the International Amateur Boxing Association and who met the criteria set out in the Programme.

While it is the choice of each individual boxing club whether it affiliates to a recognised governing body or not, affiliation is a standard requirement for the majority of Sport NI’s funding programmes, including the Boxing Investment



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Programme. This ensures that a club's activities are independently regulated and adhere to clear and consistent standards of safety, coaching and child protection.

Both the Boxing Investment Programme and the Equality Impact Assessment for the Programme were subject to public consultation. All responses were considered and the implementation proposals agreed by the Sport NI Board. At all times the proper governance procedures were followed by Sport NI.

In addition, Sport NI continues to working with the Irish Amateur Boxing Association, the Governing Body for boxing in the north of Ireland, to ensure that the IABA recognises the birthright of amateur boxers from the north of Ireland to regard themselves as British, Irish or both. Sport NI has also committed to work with relevant authorities to enable any boxers with aspirations to compete for GB and NI to achieve this aspiration.

As I stated during Question Time, I completely refute any suggestion that either Sport NI or I act in a sectarian manner or operate discriminatory practices. I find your comments to be deeply offensive and completely unsubstantiated. I once again ask you to put on record that you withdraw your remarks. I hope that you will now take action in this regard.

Is mise le meas

CARÁL NÍ CHUILÍN.

CARÁL NÍ CHUILÍN MLA
Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Cc – The Office of the Speaker
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