



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

Ms Tracy Meharg AO DfC

Parliament Buildings

Ballymiscaw

BELFAST

BT4 3XX

Tel: (028) 9052 1208

Fax: (028) 9052 0366

Email:

[Committee.publicaccounts@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:Committee.publicaccounts@niassembly.gov.uk)

Dear Tracy

21 September 2021

**Further Committee Questions – Sports Sustainability Fund**

The Committee would like to thank you for your letter dated 23 August 2021 which the Committee considered at yesterday's meeting.

However, the Committee requested some further information on the following:

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?
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?

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.
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.
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.
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?
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

I look forward to hearing from you by **5 October 2021**.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William J. Humphrey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "W".

**William Humphrey MBE MLA**  
**Chairperson**  
**Public Accounts Committee**