



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn
Pobal

Depairtment fur
Commonities

**Level 9
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG**

Telephone: 028 9051 2662
e-mail: private.office@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our ref: AQW 19593/22-27

Date: 7 January 2025

Michelle Guy MLA
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw, Stomont
Belfast

Dear Michelle

**AQW 19593/22-27 – ACTIONS TAKEN BY HIS DEPARTMENT UNDER GOAL 2.1
OF ‘ACTIVE LIVING’ THE SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND**

You recently submitted an Assembly Written Question AQW 19593/22-27, asking that I detail (i) actions that my Department has taken under goal 2.1 of ‘Active Living’ the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland and (ii) any evidence of progress on this goal.

I have arranged for this information to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Yours sincerely

**Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities**

Actions contributing to delivery of goal 2.1 of 'Active Living' the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland as per AQW 19593/22-27

Actions taken by Sport NI

I have sought the requested information from the Chief Executive, who has advised me of the following information:

"Sport Systems Investment - Governing Bodies & New Governing Bodies

Investment in the sports system in 2023/24 and 2024/25 is through Sports Systems – Investing in Governing Bodies (SSI-GB). This was developed after Sport NI engaged with governing bodies of sports which led to the identification of 8 priority areas which sports have said investment in would support delivery. The Priority Areas that were identified included:

- 1. Retention & Growth - To create opportunities and environments that attract and retain participants in sport, members, spectators, etc.*
- 2. Medals & More - To build athlete centred environment which enables athletes to achieve success.*
- 3. Pathway Access - To strengthen and align the performance pathway.*
- 4. Workforce Planning - To develop an active, skilled, and supported workforce, to meet the demands of the sporting system.*
- 5. Data & Insight - Be able to make evidence led decisions, adapting to emergent needs.*
- 6. Knowledge Sharing - To set foundations for shared learning and development.*
- 7. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion - To work in ways that support trust, enable collaboration, and foster shared commitment to tackling inequality.*
- 8. Good Governance - To embed good governance practices within sporting culture.*

The New Governing Bodies investments targeted Recognised sports organisations who have not been eligible to apply for funding through the SSI-GB.

This investment is to help Recognised governing bodies, not currently funded in the sector, to have stronger systems in place. The programme opened on 24 May 2024 and closed 29 November 2024.

In 2023/24 Sport NI paid out over £7.58m to successful applicant organisations; and in 2024/25 £7.99m has been awarded with over £4.6m paid to date.

Your School Your Club

Sport NI recognises that schools are at the heart of our urban and rural communities and play a vital role in providing safe spaces for our young people to engage in a wide range of activities, including sport and physical activity. ‘Your School, Your Club’ (YSYC) was developed by Sport NI as a partnership with other government bodies, including DfC, DAERA and DE, to support schools to facilitate enhanced community use that could be sustained. Our investments to date have been hugely impactful, and we are pleased with an allocation of budget from the Communities Minister to enable further positive developments in 2024/25.

YSYC is an initiative designed to promote community use of school sports facilities, increasing participation rates in sport and physical activity, and widening the choices for engagement in and outside of school. In many schools there exists sport facilities that if available for community use would have a major impact on provision and access to adequate places for sports.

Over the past seven financial years Sport NI has invested c£3.6m into 37 YSYC projects. YSYC has a budget of £500k from Department of Communities for the 2024/25 financial year. Examples of the types of works delivered include:

- *Access arrangements*
- *Lighting*
- *Sports surfaces*
- *Synthetic sports facilities*

For more information on YSYC projects visit: <https://www.sportni.net/funding/your-school-your-club/>

Renewable Energy Fund

In 2023 Sport NI launched a Renewable Energy Fund (pilot scheme), a £1million pound National Lottery funded investment programme with two primary objectives:

- To reduce the environmental impact of sports club across Northern Ireland.*
- Develop SNI's understanding of the needs of the sports sector and how environmental interventions can impact the operations of sports clubs; the knowledge gained will inform how we invest in the future.*

The fund also seeks to reduce carbon emissions, produce greener sports clubs, make savings on energy bills, and create a more financially sustainable club sector. Although the programme does not stipulate how a club should use their savings, it is intended that should there be future iterations, savings be redirected into sports development.

Creating Opportunities Crowdfunder

Sport NI had initial engagement with Crowdfunder through Project Re-Boot Activate, a 2-year pilot scheme where Sport NI partnered with an online Crowdfunding platform (Crowdfunder UK), to facilitate the delivery of its small grants. More recently, Crowdfunder has partnered with Sport NI through Creating Opportunities (April 2024 – March 2025), with a further two years of funding to be delivered through this project beyond March 2025. Creating Opportunities aims to increase participation rates in sport and physical activity across the population and increase the number of and skills among coaches, administrators and other volunteers.

Within both projects, Parent Teacher Associations have been eligible to apply with the intention of widening the choices for engagement in sport and physical activity in and outside of school

Sport NI received 147 successful applications in Project Re-Boot Activate. Of these, 10 Parent Teacher Associations were successful with funding.

Sport NI recently launched the 2024/25 Creating Opportunities Crowdfunder small grants programme, which is available to local clubs. Clubs can apply for funding for any new and/or additional participation projects they wish to run within their club. The programme offers up to 50% match-funding support to a maximum of £5,000 from Sport NI through the Crowdfunder platform. Eligible costs include (but are not exclusive to) coaching costs, venue hire, workshops costs, equipment and capital costs required to deliver their participation project.

In 2024/25 the Crowdfunder programme has approved £141,015 of match funding to a total of 31 different projects to increase participation rates in sport and physical activity across the population.

*The programme is open for applications until **27 January 2025**. For more information on Creating Opportunities Crowdfunder visit: [Creating Opportunities | Sport NI](#)*

District Council Community Planning

Community Planning Partnerships provide a strategic opportunity to enable a more accessible and connected approach to delivery of the Sporting System locally; to improve sustained participation in sport and activity generally and specifically from under-represented groups, contributing to improving physical activity in communities.

Community planning aims to improve the connection between the different bodies including local and central government and wider society through partnership working to jointly deliver better outcomes for everyone, including schools. Sport NI has invested into sport and physical activity projects in district councils to support the delivery of shared community plan to increase participation across the Council areas, and also with school aged children inside and outside the school environment.

10 applications were received from Local Authorities (Ards & North Down didn't apply) in 2024/25. 5 applications at this stage have been deemed to be successful within the available budget to facilitate sport and physical activity opportunities. These are as follows:

- 1. **Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon's** 'Get Moving ABC'. The proposed project focusses on Walking Netball, Multi use games area programmes, a girl's active programme and a local basketball pathway programme.*
- 2. **Causeway Coast & Glens** will involve a range of projects from Boccia, ASD initiatives, swimming and other mainstream sports such as Gymnastics ,*
- 3. **Mid Ulster's** Promoting Inclusive Sport and Physical Activity in Mid Ulster. The proposed project aims to develop a range of sport and physical activity projects such as swimming and multi activity for neurodivergent people along with several forest walks for older people.*
- 4. **Lisburn & Castlereagh's** Commit to Fit 2025 programme. This directly links sport and physical activity projects into 3 of the 5 themes within the Community Plan namely:*
 - Children and Young People*
 - Health and Well Being*
 - Our Community*
- 5. **Antrim and Newtownabbey's** Take a Dive into '25 programme. This includes the Healthy Kids School Coaching Programme focusing on physical activity, mindfulness and healthy eating within 25 schools within the borough and is focused on the most socially deprived wards within the borough. They will also offer primary schools swimming programmes, also focussing on areas of social*

deprivation which would otherwise not have access to this sport and physical activity programme.

Fermanagh and Omagh's Community Active programme is first reserve. This project focusses on developing a range of physical activity projects specifically for children and older people who would not usually have access to these programmes.

Physical Literacy Development

Sport NI is committed to the promotion of physical literacy. Physical literacy can be described as the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding that provides children with the foundation for lifelong participation in physical activity. Enabling children to be physically literate supports their development as competent, confident and healthy individuals. Sport NI works in partnership with key education stakeholders to improve physical literacy for young people, including via school sport and physical education.

Sport NI has developed an Understanding Physical Literacy workshop through which participants gain invaluable insights into how physical literacy can reverse the sedentary lifestyle trend, empowering participants to take control of their health and vitality. Those who take part in the Understanding Physical Literacy workshop learn how to coach and teach with physical literacy principles, promoting lifelong participation in sports and physical activity.

The Understanding Physical Literacy Model is incorporated into the Teacher Training programmes at Stranmillis University College, where there are currently three tutors training within Stranmillis.

Tutors are also trained in the following institutions who have remit for teacher training:

- *Belfast Metropolitan College as part of Foundation Degree in PE & Sport*

- *Ulster University as part of PGCE in PE*

Sport NI is a member of the Northern Ireland Physical Literacy Forum, the second meeting of which took place at Fort Hill Integrated Primary School in June with representatives of Athletics NI, Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Council, Causeway Coast & Glen Borough Council, CORE Kids, Cycling Ireland, Dublin City University, IABA, Irish FA, Triathlon Ireland, Ulster Badminton, Ulster GAA and Ulster Rugby.

On this occasion, P6 pupils at Fort Hill also took part in a multi skills session with those in attendance seeing the principles of Physical Literacy in action and learning how best to coach primary school aged children. The meeting also included a session at Lagan Valley Island where the focus switched to how to implement Physical Literacy into your organisation.”

For any future queries relating to operational matters, you may wish to contact Sport NI directly. Making direct contact with Sport NI will ensure that you receive the information in the shortest possible timeframe and make best use of public resources.