



ANNEX B

**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 40235/22-27

Date: 23 February 2026

Justin McNulty MLA
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw, Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Justin

AQW 40235/22-27 – HOW FUNDING UNCERTAINTIES AND INCONSISTENCIES LEADING TO IMPEDIMENT FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE, STRATEGIC PLANNING, AND PODIUM FINISHES IN SPORTING ORGANISATIONS

You recently submitted an Assembly Written Question AQW 40235/22-27, in which you asked for my assessment of how funding uncertainties and inconsistencies are affecting high performance, strategic planning, and the achievement of podium finishes within sporting organisations.

Given Sport NI holds responsibility for administering funding for high-performance programmes, I sought further information from its Chief Executive regarding funding concerns. I have arranged for the response provided to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Yours sincerely

**Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities**

The Chief Executive of Sport NI response in respect of concerns for funding uncertainties and inconsistencies leading to impediment for high performance, strategic planning, and podium finishes in sporting organisations – as per AQW 40235/22-27.

The Chief Executive of Sport NI has provided the following update regarding its high-performance programmes:-

“Sport NI has already taken steps to mitigate the impact of funding uncertainty on high performance sport. Sport NI wrote to sports on 2 February, informing them that the Sport NI Board has decided to retain the overall funding for Governing Bodies at the same level as 2025/26. This was to ensure a level of consistency and to support strategic planning for the 2026 Commonwealth Games and protect athlete preparations.

Furthermore, the Sport NI Board met on Wednesday 11 February to review recommendations regarding funding for sports for 2026/27. Indicative Letters of Offer have now been issued to sports to confirm budget allocations for 2026/27, with applications opening on Monday 16 February.

Sport NI is also undertaking a full review of performance investment across all sports, with a renewed emphasis on pathway development, consistency, and long-term planning. This review will underpin a more stable multi-year funding approach for 2027–31, reducing uncertainty and strengthening the environment for athlete development and podium performance.

Sport NI are reviewing the funding that each sport has received to support performance improvement at national and international level, with a renewed emphasis on pathway development. Sports have been advised that this funding will change in line with new priorities, the natural cycle of competitions and

evolving athlete cohorts. Sport NI will work with individual Governing Bodies to define appropriate levels of funding for future years (27-31).

Sport NI continues to work closely with Commonwealth Games Northern Ireland (CGNI) to ensure that the investment provided for 2025/26 and the indicative allocation for 2026/27 supports effective Games planning and preparation. Sport NI and the Sports Institute are collaborating with CGNI to align investment with sport specific needs, ensuring that funding is directed towards athlete preparation, performance support services, and the development of coaches and support staff. This partnership approach ensures that CGNI has the clarity and stability required to plan effectively for Glasgow 2026, optimise the use of available resources, and strengthen the long-term development of the performance system.

Sport NI will also be opening its Athlete Award Programme in February, which places specific priority on athletes preparing for the Commonwealth Games. This provides an additional route of support for eligible athletes and further strengthens the performance environment around Glasgow 2026. This programme, alongside the confirmed and indicative funding already communicated to CGNI, ensures that Commonwealth Games athletes have access to targeted investment and tailored support services to enhance their preparation and performance.

Sports are also supported by Sport NI Sports Institute (SNISI) Services. Each sport is allocated support day plans, giving them visibility of the performance services available to them, such as sports science, medicine, strength and conditioning, and performance analysis. This will ensure that Governing Bodies and athletes have clarity on the level and type of Institute support in place, helping them plan effectively for preparation and performance at major competitions to protect and help deliver against athlete performances”.