

From: The Minister

Date: 8 May 2026

Paula Bradshaw MLA
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw, Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Paula

AQW 43701/22-27 – PLANS TO SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF CRICKET

You recently submitted an Assembly Written Question AQW 43701/22-27, in which you asked me to detail any plans to support the growth of cricket.

The Chief Executive of Sport NI has sent me details of their plans to support the growth of cricket. As this response contains substantial detail, I have arranged for it to be made available in the Assembly Library.

Yours sincerely



**Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities**

Annex A

AQW 43701/22-27 – response from Sport NI regarding its plans to support the growth of cricket

The Chief Executive of Sport NI has provided the following information regarding its plans to support the growth of cricket:

Systems Development

In 2025/26 Sport NI awarded £457,000 to Cricket Ireland to facilitate the growth and development of cricket in Northern Ireland through ‘Sport Systems Investment – Governing Bodies’ (Lottery programme). Cricket Ireland used this investment to deliver targeted outcomes across:

- Participation and Inclusion
- Community Engagement – Cricket Connects
- Workforce and Match Officials
- Club Capacity and Inclusive Environments
- Performance Pathway and Talent Development

Sport NI is progressing an award for 2026/27 with Cricket Ireland to continue the growth and development of cricket in Northern Ireland.

Club and Community Development

Sport NI supported 9 cricket clubs in 2025/26 through the ‘Olympic Legacy Fund’, which improved the quality of community cricket facilities and supported the growth of the sport. A total of £216,267

in Olympic Legacy funding was invested in cricket by Sport NI from exchequer funding.

Sport NI are currently evaluating a potential co-investment in a £7.5m multi-facility hub at the Northern Ireland Civil Service Sports Association (NICSSA) at their Stormont site, which will include participation and performance facilities for cricket, including new practice facilities (indoor and outdoor), spectator accommodation, media centre, and ancillary provision for players. If funding is secured by NICSSA, the project is due to be completed prior to the 2030 ICC T20 World Cup, with games to be hosted in Belfast.

Sport NI supported 18 cricket projects in 2025/26 through 'Creating Opportunities' Phase 2 lottery programme to the value of £78,500.

Sport NI's 'Creating Opportunities' funding programme will reopen to applicants in April 2026, and Sport NI would welcome applications from cricket clubs or community organisations seeking to develop cricket projects. For more information, please go to <https://www.sportni.net/funding/creating-opportunities/>

People Development

Sport NI have supported Cricket Ireland (CI) and their provincial unions Northern Cricket Union (NCU), the North-West Cricket Union (NWCU) and the Northern Ireland Association of Cricket Umpires and Scorers (NIACUS) through the attendance of staff / volunteers at a range of learning and development opportunities:

- **Coaching Collective:** Pathway coaches from cricket have attended the Coaching Collective. This provides a mechanism

to support regular, shared, targeted learning and development opportunities for coaches operating across local pathway and performance environments. It is an informal opportunity for local coaches to come together, hear the thoughts of subject matter experts and spend some time reflecting on three key areas: Focus on Self; Focus on the Athlete; and Focus on the Environment. The Coaching Collective meets 3-4 times per year.

- **Digital Learning Hub:** The NWCUs are a partner governing body on the Sport NI Digital Learning Hub. This lets the NWCUs develop e-learning content that can then be undertaken by their coaches, officials and volunteers to support their personal and club development.
- **Female Leadership Programme:** The NCU have participated in the Female Leadership Programme during 2025-26. Sport NI have supported a number of governing bodies to better understand: the challenges facing females in coaching, officiating, and volunteering roles; the opportunities that that targeted support can provide; and models of delivery. Sport NI will support these sports including the NCU to deliver bespoke female leadership programmes during 2026-27.
- **Officials Forum:** Cricket Ireland and the Northern Ireland Association of Cricket Umpires and Scorers (NIACUS) are partners in the Sport NI led Officials Forum. The Forum aims to share best practice and understand the challenges and opportunities that exist in this area of work. The first collaborative Officials Learning Event brought together 100 officials from 9 sports in October 2025.

- ***People Development Network***: Cricket Ireland, NCU and NWCU staff have attended the 3 People Development Network sessions which were facilitated in 2025-26. These sessions bring governing body staff together to look at the latest developments across coaching, officiating and volunteering as well as providing learning and development opportunities for the staff.
- ***Performance Pathway Network***: Cricket Ireland attended the first session of the Performance Pathway Network in March 2026. This Network is designed to collectively maximise the impact of investment and effort, through growing the expertise, knowledge, and leadership of key personnel within the Performance Pathway in NI/Ulster.