

The First Northern Ireland Angling Conference

Report



Everglades Hotel
Derry~Londonderry
7 June 2014



Introduction

The First Northern Ireland Angling Conference was organised by Sport Northern Ireland (Sport NI), in conjunction with the Loughs Agency (LA) and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL). The Conference set out to explore issues around the value and importance of angling in Northern Ireland, but also how participation in the sport can be increased through strategic developments over the next 10 years.

Background: Strategic Review of Angling in Northern Ireland

The Strategic Review of Angling in Northern Ireland had been prepared by external contractors through an intensive consultation process to help inform the development of an angling strategy for the north of Ireland. The review was commissioned by Sport NI, in partnership with LA, DCAL and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), and advised by a Steering Group involving the recognised governing bodies for the sport. The Review was published in February 2014 and highlighted 33 recommendations that could help to progress the development of angling, through the provision of better governance, improved facilities, and increased awareness and participation.

The Conference and Programme

The Conference was held at the Everglades Hotel in Derry~Londonderry on Saturday 7 June 2014. Unfortunately the hotel had been subject to an incendiary attack the week before the conference which presented some difficulties with respect to the workshops that were being run in the afternoon.

It drew a wide audience of over 75 delegates from across the freshwater and sea angling sector including representatives from national governing bodies; coarse and game angling clubs; private fisheries; tackle businesses; coaches, instructors and guides; public sector colleagues from Sport NI, LA and DCAL; and a variety of local government officials, charities and other public sector organisations.

The Programme was split into two sections: the morning consisted of five speakers including two keynote speakers, and the afternoon consisted of two optional workshop sessions.

The Conference was opened by John Pollock from LA and Aidan Cassidy, Head of Policy at DCAL's Inland Fisheries Group, and was facilitated by Mike McClure from Sport NI.



Conference Programme	
9.00am – 9.45am	Registration Tea/Coffee
9.45 – 10.00am	Welcome, introduction and opening remarks – DCAL LA and Sport NI
10.00 - 10.40am	Keynote speaker 1 Glenda Powell “Inspiring fishing”
10.40 - 11.20am	Keynote speaker 2 Sarah Collins “Get Hooked”
11.20 – 11.45am	Tea/Coffee
11.45 - 12.15pm	Speaker 3 Prof Ken Whelan “Sea Trout in NI”
12.15 – 12.45pm	Speaker 4 Suzanne Champion “The Economic Impact of Angling in Ireland”
12.45 – 1.15pm	Speaker 5 Jack Tisdall (NCFI) “Hosting a Major Event”
1.15pm – 2.00pm	LUNCH
2.00 – 2.45pm	Optional workshops series 1 a. Developing Coaching – Sport NI and Coaching Ireland b. Engaging Women and Girls c. Safeguarding – NSPCC d. Disability Awareness Training – Disability Sport NI e. Club Development – Tagit Fishing and Sport NI f. Scientific Basis for Angling Development – LA
2.45 – 3.15pm	Tea/Coffee
3.15 – 4.00pm	Optional workshops series 2 a. Developing Coaching – Sport NI and Coaching Ireland b. Engaging Women and Girls c. Safeguarding – NSPCC d. Disability Awareness Training – Disability Sport NI e. Club Development – Tagit Fishing and Sport NI f. Scientific Basis for Angling Development – LA
4.00pm	Final plenary
4.30pm	Conference close

Morning Session Speakers

Glenda Powell

Glenda is a world champion fly-fisher, and the only female casting instructor in the Republic of Ireland. She is currently Chairperson for the Association of Professional Game Angling Instructors in Ireland (APGAI) and has been an inspiration for many women and girls to get involved in angling.

Glenda discussed why women get into angling and it's not only about catching a fish, but she also cited motivational factors including: fellowship of anglers; awareness of the seasons; being at one with nature and water; unspoilt places; and childlike excitement which she described as "*Peter Pan syndrome*". Glenda went on to explain how equipment hasn't been traditionally geared for women or young people and highlighted that most women fished better with a rod measuring 8-9.5 feet, while children need 7-8' rods. Likewise, to find clothing and particularly waders for women was a battle in terms of cost effectiveness, given that most were imported from the US at high cost, or just not available for sizing, etc. Glenda concluded by talking about the need for female role models, and groups like NI Reel Women were providing an outlet for women wishing to fish. She emphasized that literature and campaigns should be written specifically with women and girls in mind.

Sarah Collins

Sarah, CEO of Get Hooked on Fishing, provided an insight into how the organisation has grown, how they engage with local communities particularly those who have a high level of economic or social deprivation, and how they monitor their impact into these issues around social inclusion.



Get Hooked on Fishing is a national charity to increase angling participation by working in partnership with regional and national partners, which includes local authorities, the Angling Trust in England and the Environment Agency. One initiative she outlined was the 'Angling in a Box' initiative which is a personal development programme designed to give young people the skills and confidence to make positive life choices. It is a three-part modular programme offering young people the opportunity to learn transferrable skills, develop self-esteem and confidence, improve community relationships, and to care for the environment.

Sarah then detailed a partnership between Get Hooked on Fishing and Sky Sports' charitable arm, Living for Sport, in which children from a London school spent a couple of hours per week fishing over a six-week period. The children follow the "Six Keys for Success" Programme: hunger to achieve; people skills; sport and life; knowledge; breaking barriers; and planning for success. The six-week partnership highlights how angling can enter the national curriculum in a socially beneficial way.

Professor Ken Whelan

Ken is a fisheries scientist with extensive international experience, and now works as a marine and freshwater fisheries consultant. He specialises in recreational angling and advises on all aspects of running freshwater or marine sport fisheries. Ken has a strong interest in the restoration of small streams and the potential for improving sea trout stocks.

Ken's talk focused on what he coined Northern Ireland's 'hidden resource' – the migratory sea trout. He commenced by taking a brief detour back in time to understand how the glaciers that had formed over this part of the world contributed to the evolution of the sea trout. Sea trout are comfortable in both fresh and salt water, with a preference for the semi-saline interface found in estuaries, etc.

The Celtic Sea Trout Programme has been instrumental in gauging a better understanding of the species, which act as a bio-indicator because of their ability to occupy both salt and fresh water. In fact there should, in Ken's opinion, be a push to get the sea trout onto the bio-diversity indicator due to this trait and queried whether the sector should be pushing this?

The key locations in Northern Ireland in which these 'hidden resources' frequent are the Bann Estuary, Strangford Lough, Carlingford Lough and the Foyle System: Roe, Faughan and Burn Dennett. Ken suggested a season for this species of 1 April - 1 November, with a bag limit for Finnocks between 25-32cm.

He further commented that the tiny coastal streams were not considered to be fisheries but as spawning channels and should be protected as such. He noted that the Water Framework Directive did not take into account these tiny streams, yet they can amount to up to 30% of the total river length.

Ken concluded by highlighting that he has been involved in a trial of a 'test manual' in Killyleagh that can be used as a means of capturing concerns for the river system. If this pilot is successful, it could be rolled out across the country.



Suzanne Campion

Suzanne is Head of Business Development for Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), who in 2013 commissioned a review into the socio-economic impact of recreational angling in Ireland. The study has revealed some fascinating statistics and information for the sector.

Suzanne's talk focused on the recent study carried out by IFI into the socio-economic benefits of angling to the Irish economy, which in turn is very important for justifying investment. She summarised that the overall impact of angling on the Irish economy is €755M, and €280M from tourist anglers, which includes €15M from Northern Irish anglers. Suzanne explained it was difficult to assign values to particular types of fishing, since anglers pursued multi-species fishing. Suzanne further highlighted that tourist anglers were loyal to Ireland, many of them returning to the same fisheries/region, and that the UK is Ireland's biggest 'overseas' market. 7% of the Irish population fish, compared to 4.8% in 1998. Their demographic is similar to the north with over 86% over the age of 35.

There are some interesting factors in why respondents to the survey chose to fish in Ireland identifying 'outstanding scenery' and 'friendliness/hospitality' as the most appealing aspect of Ireland as a destination for recreational angling. The Irish angling product is also highly rated in terms of:

- Restful/relaxed ambience;
- Quality of accommodation; and
- Reputation of the fishing product.

Over three quarters of anglers considered the overall quality of the Irish angling product to be 'very good' or 'good' but the perceived decline in fish stocks was cited as the primary reason for dissatisfaction.

Jack Tisdall

Jack is the Vice-Chair of the National Coarse Fishing Federation of Ireland (NCFI). In October 2013, he organised the very successful 2013 World Championships for Predator Boat Fishing with Lures. Jack shared his experiences of organising a very successful event.



Jack explained NCFI was established in 1964 and is structured across four regional councils with a central Executive. He went onto explain how Ireland/Northern Ireland had the capacity to tender for global competitions via the NCFI's membership of the Confederation Internationale de la Pêche Suportive (CIPS), and went on to explain how such bids had happened and what successes and opportunities there are for NCFI to bring major competitions to the island of Ireland. He

highlighted how these events can benefit the local economy through bed nights and associated visitor spend. Understanding and articulating the benefits that these events bring can be a major factor in being able to get funding bodies on board to support them.

The event in Fermanagh had attracted a record entry from 14 countries, including teams that had travelled from as far as South Africa and Russia.

Jack highlighted the importance of partnership working between event partners and local anglers in helping to deliver and manage the event.

A one-hour programme on the competition has been produced and screened on Sky Sports and also featured on Sky Sports angling programme “Tight Lines”.



Workshop Sessions

Engaging Women and Girls

This group was led by Sarah Collins, who used some reverse psychology on the group and asked them to think about ways you could alienate women and girls from participation in angling. Responses included: no specific programmes or literature aimed at females; lack of club support for female participation; lack of engagement with girls when in groups with boys; lack of funding to support women's programmes, and a lack of market research on female participation. There was a comment that there was a lack of venues which were suitable for beginners generally. There followed a discussion on the pathways into angling, and how by providing the right infrastructure and ensuring quality assurance, safety and getting support from the angling community, that there was no problem with launching programmes for females.

Developing Coaching

The coaching workshop was facilitated by Mike McClure from Sport NI, and provided delegates with information on the two schemes that are currently recognised by Sport NI for coaching. Firstly, the '1st for Sport Awards' that are administered through the Angling Trust and have been accredited by Sports Coach UK and UK Coaching Certificate. These awards have been adopted by the Ulster Angling Federation. The Level 1 Award is for assistant coaches, i.e. those who should be supervised by a Level 2 Coach; and the Level 2 Award which is a standalone award that demonstrates that the candidate is competent to plan, deliver and review angling coaching initiatives independently. Secondly, the 'Angling Council of Ireland Awards' that are accredited by Coaching Ireland and have been adopted by the Ulster Coarse Fishing Federation and the Irish Federation of Sea Anglers. An Introductory Award is a one-day course focused on understanding learning processes, feedback and safety issues; and a Level 1 Award which is a standalone coach award that also demonstrates that the candidate is competent to plan, deliver, and review angling coaching activities independently.

The delegates also discussed the importance of recruiting the right people within the club environment to be put forward to be a coach. Helping clubs to have active volunteer coaches so that there can be increased opportunities for participation by young people, women and girls, and new anglers in general was agreed to be an important priority for the sport. There was also quite a bit of discussion on the importance of retention and continual learning and development of coaches and the development of 'Coaching Committees or Groups' within National Governing Bodies (NGB's) was seen as instrumental in supporting this.

Disability Opportunities

The disability workshop was facilitated by Aubrey Bingham from Disability Sport NI but was rather under subscribed and as such took the form of a discussion rather than the pre-planned activities. The discussion focused on the topics of development of facilities, appropriate equipment, partnership working, and governance of clubs and facilities to facilitate increased participation among people with disabilities.

There was a genuine recognition both by the facilitators from Disability Sport NI and the delegates that angling has the potential to offer great opportunities for disabled people, but that there needs to be much more energy put into developing such opportunities. Issues associated with mobility disabilities and learning difficulties were discussed and there were a range of solutions and opportunities to these issues highlighted. Providing further disability awareness training for key coaches, clubs and facilities was seen as being an important step forward in the future.

Club Development

Scott Lonsdale from TAGIT fishing club facilitated the discussions around effective club development. TAGIT has been the first angling club in Northern Ireland to progress towards achieving the Clubmark standard.

The discussions focused around the issues of having an appropriate membership base to ensure sustainability on the club along with adequate volunteers to support the running of the club.

The issues associated with appropriate governance and policies were discussed in detail and Scott provided a list of the various policies and procedures that TAGIT have developed to ensure that they function effectively. The importance of having the right people involved in the right roles to take forward club development was also emphasised.

Safeguarding

This workshop was presented and facilitated by Kevin Doherty who is one of Sport NI's Coach Tutors. Kevin highlighted why it is essential for all sports clubs now to have safeguarding policies and procedures. He highlighted that this is not just about safeguarding children, but as much about:

- Attracting all sections of society to the sport;
- Creating 'active citizens' through participating in your sport;
- Growing your sport by increasing those participating in your sport; and
- Creating standards that ensure sustainability of your sport.

Kevin also highlighted the importance of each club developing a code of conduct that all volunteers, coaches and members agree to abide by. Kevin emphasised the reasons why having good systems in place was beneficial to the club and the sport as a whole. In concluding, he highlighted the following key principles for safeguarding:

- Devise, implement and review policies and procedures to safeguard children and maintain high standards;
- Develop a policy statement that has a child-centred ethos;
- Appoint a Children's/Designated Officer;
- Develop and maintain Codes of Conduct;
- Consider recruitment practices and procedures (Access NI);
- Train and re-train your members;
- Adopt effective reporting procedures;
- Communicate with stakeholders; and

- Monitor your Association, Clubs, etc. to maintain and improve standards.

Scientific Basis for Angling Development

Art Niven, a fisheries biologist with Loughs Agency provided a fascinating insight into the scientific studies and developments that they are undertaking in the Foyle and Carlingford catchments. Art highlighted that there could be negative economic, social and environmental impacts if angling development is conducted without due consideration of fisheries science. He indicated that a sound foundation for angling development should be built on the best available science and contributes towards setting scientific objectives. He argued that ultimately good fisheries management is the key to delivering both.

Art indicated that providing rod catch returns is an essential way to capture data and is essential for the sustainable management of future stocks. He argued that an unreported fish is a wasted opportunity for economic development, conservation, protection of our fishery resources, education, etc. Art also highlighted the value of partnership working and the benefits of developing 'citizen science' by working closely with clubs on specific projects.

He concluded by highlighting that:

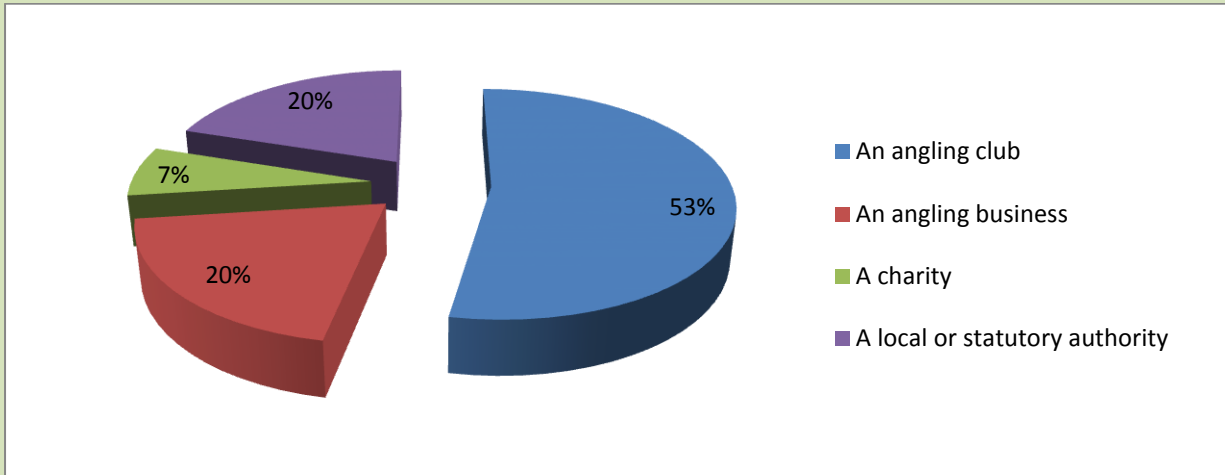
- Clubs need to get involved in practical habitat improvement delivery (wet feet);
- There are opportunities to get involved with monitoring programmes (survey); and
- Natural progression from scientific monitoring to identification of issues, to reporting (status reports) to partnership development, and finally to infrastructure development and angling development.



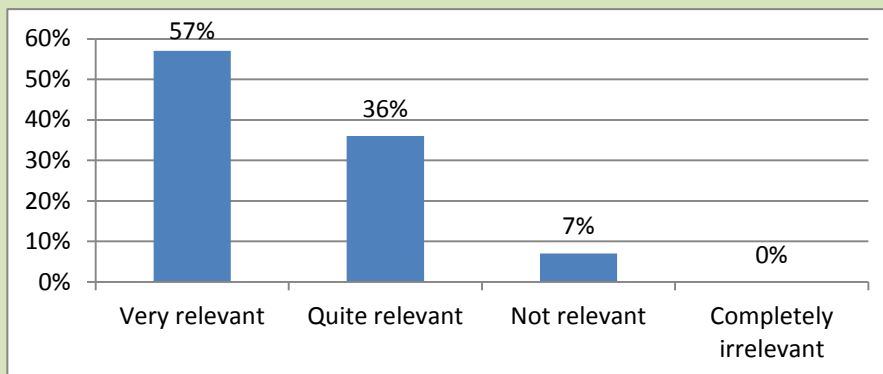
Feedback on the Conference

An electronic questionnaire was sent to delegates after the conference and the feedback from this is highlighted below:

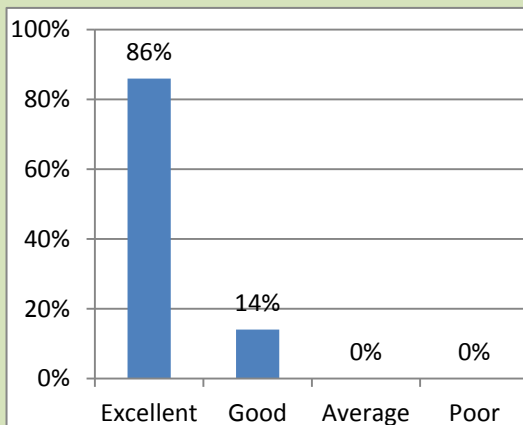
1. Please tick to tell us about the organisation you represent:



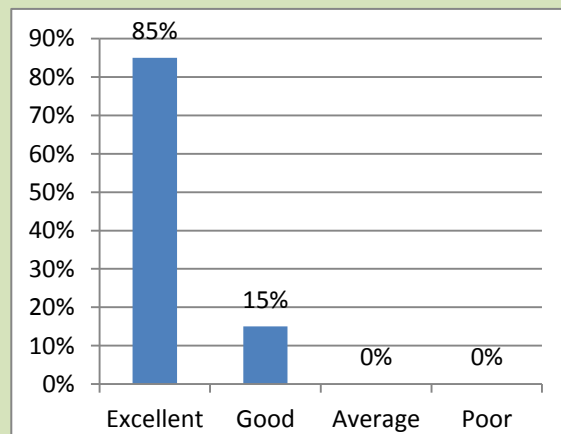
How relevant was the Conference to your area of work or to the development of your club?



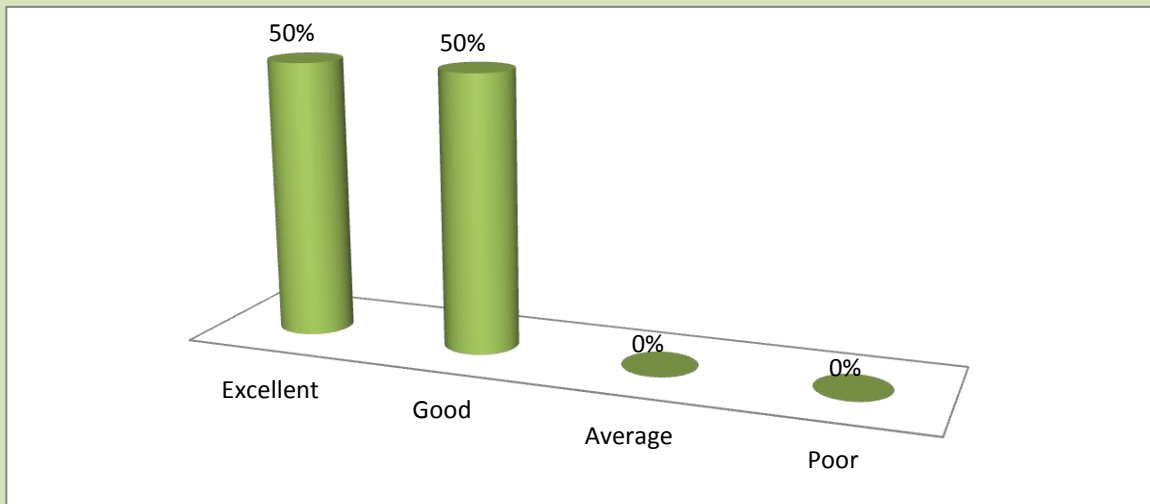
How would you rate the acoustics and screen visibility for the event?



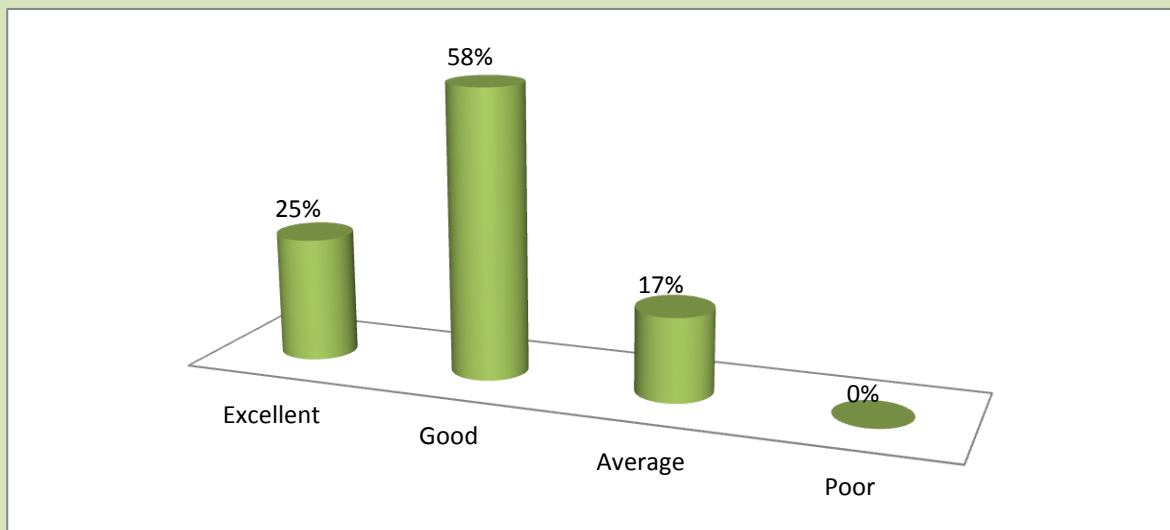
How would you rate the catering and comfort of the venue?



How would you rate the quality of the keynote morning speakers?



How would you rate the quality of the afternoon workshops?



Some of the comments from delegates:

"This was a very enjoyable conference and extremely useful get together for various interested parties, this conference has just scraped the surface of what needs to be done."

"Too much time allocated to each speaker - there should be more speakers with shorter slots. More scientific speakers such as Ken Whelan / Art Niven."

"The speakers covered a wide variety of subjects which made for a very interesting morning, especially as I had very little prior knowledge of some of the challenges."

"I found the comments and contributions from the participants in the Women and Girls workshop extremely valuable."

"Time was very limited, due to the need to locate some of the workshops in other hotels. Although all topics were very relevant, perhaps the range of areas covered was too broad for the time available?"

Conclusion

The Conference was well-received and people were appreciative of the wide range of speakers, who in turn demonstrated the value and benefits that angling can bring to society.

The speakers clearly articulated that angling can deliver a range of tangible benefits and outcomes including:

- Improved social inclusion and community cohesion.
- Education - including the personal and social development of young people especially those at risk of offending or exclusion from society.
- Sports events which can inspire and provide legacy opportunities for active lifestyles.
- A driver of economic development including opportunities for job creation and employment.
- Health and especially mental well-being through access to the natural environment.
- Volunteering whether through coaching and club administration or environmental work.
- Environmental engagement and habitat restoration.
- Partnership working and cross-sectoral engagement.

All of the above benefits fit with the Programme for Government and the Conference reinforced that angling needs to continue to have appropriate support to raise the profile so that these benefits and outcomes can be optimised.



This document is available
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www.sportni.net

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Sport Northern Ireland
House of Sport
2a Upper Malone Road
Belfast BT9 5LA

T: (028) 90381222

E: info@sportni.net

W: www.sportni.net



**Northern Ireland
Executive**

www.northernireland.gov.uk



Department of
**Culture, Arts
and Leisure**

www.dcalni.gov.uk