



**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE SPORT NI BOARD  
HELD ON FRIDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2021 @ 10.00AM (VIA ZOOM MEETING)**

<p><b>Present: Board members:</b> George Lucas Jay Colville Richard Bullick Wilma Erskine Kieran Harding</p>	<p><b>In attendance: Sport NI Officials</b> Antoinette McKeown, CEO Adrian Doherty, Director of Finance &amp; Governance Peter McCabe, Interim Director of Performance John News, Interim Director of Participation Ali Campbell, Executive Unit Manager Gillian Gilliland, Board Secretary</p>
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Agenda Item	Record of main discussion
<b>1. Apologies</b>	Apologies were received from Kyle Ferguson and Darryl Petticrew.
<b>2. Register of Member's Declarations of Interest</b>	<p>The following new declaration of interest was noted: Kyle Ferguson became a Committee member of British Irish Chamber of Commerce, Culture, Arts, Sports and Tourism (CAST) Committee with effect from 19 February 2021.</p> <p>In relation to today's meeting, members highlighted their current interests; it was agreed, during the meeting where these may be discussed in relation to a particular award, the member in question would leave the meeting until the discussion was concluded.</p>
<b>3. Chair's remarks</b>	<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the Board meeting to discuss and approve this tranche of the Sport Sustainable Fund, to assist NGBs and clubs cope with the impact of Covid-19.</p> <p>There has been engagement and communication with all stakeholders over the past two months and the Board paper reflects the criteria, evaluation and investment proposals.</p> <p>The commitment and extra work put in by the Executive Team and staff in trying to get these funds to NGB's and clubs before the year end 31 March 2021 is acknowledged by the Board.</p> <p>The Board also recognises the partnership and dedication of DfC colleagues and also take this opportunity to thank the Minister for obtaining these much needed funds for sport.</p>

**4. Sport Sustainability Fund – Investment Decisions SNI 21 03**

Members received paper number SNI 21 03 for decision.

Members noted the Sport Sustainability Fund, which had been given the go ahead in December, closed on 21 January 2021 and today's meeting was to approve the awards.

Members queried if, following receipt of funding, clubs were to recover would they have to repay the funding. It was confirmed this is a grant scheme as opposed to a loan scheme and therefore was not repayable. Members were advised in terms of a UK-wide approach to the pandemic each devolved administration adopted their own approach in respect of sport and Sport NI looked at what would work for Northern Ireland. Members noted applicants were asked to provide 3 years approved annual accounts, a further set of 9 month management accounts up to the date of submission and 3 years anticipated income to 31 March. Members noted it would have been preferable to have at least 5 or even 10 years accounts but this would have been disproportionate in terms of time available.

Members were advised this is not an income replacement scheme; this programme was looking at evidence of net losses to assist clubs and sports to get back on their feet in order to stabilise the sector for the future.

Members highlighted the issue of smaller clubs who may not have applied, some of which are in real need of support, in terms of how the media would focus on the large amounts of money being awarded and potential criticism on Sport NI. Members heard within the application process all sports and clubs were able to apply but we also asked them to take into account other Covid related awards they had received and factor this into the process so the smaller clubs may have already had funding from other sources. Additionally, upon completion of the application form were unable to demonstrate a net loss. Members noted some new clubs were unable to apply as they couldn't provide the necessary period of accounts required.

Members noted the figures recommended in the paper are the verified figures related to their accounts and in terms of governing body requests there will be 100% pre-payment vouching.

***A McKeown joined the meeting at 10.15am.***

A member requested assurance around the role of GBs in setting any criteria to ensure Sport NI are not exposed in anyway and also queried the limited number of woman's clubs benefitting from this fund.

A member also queried the terminology used as GAA as opposed to Gaelic games in terms of totality. Clarity was also sought in relation to the range of clubs which SGBs were bidding for and assurances were sought on women's sport. It was noted that currently the Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) are not officially recognised and it was queried whether the Ulster Council had made an application on their behalf as it was noted certain counties have got some amounts along with a number of ladies Gaelic and camogie clubs. Within some clubs the ladies are part of the Gaelic club and it was queried had this been

controlled by (Ulster GAA or LGFA in terms of inclusivity to ensure females are benefiting).

Members were advised the criteria for GBs and guidance notes describe the roles and responsibilities of GB. When looking at co-design of the scheme we looked at making it “a free for all for clubs” based on our experience of small grants programmes and experience of other sectors running large scale programmes against time and expectations and also our position in terms of GBs and the reasonable ask of governance within their sport. Members also heard the department’s business case favoured option was rolling out within GBs; it was up to GBs to communicate it to their sports, ensuring they were affiliated to the sports system within the individual sports. Members heard Sport NI were not aware of any GBs who established any sub-criteria. In terms of the 21 January closing date there was an element of due diligence with GBs; GBs had their own processes to engage with clubs before Christmas to allow them time to do their check and challenge before submitting applications to SNI.

A member also queried whether GBs themselves were at an unfair advantage because of co-design and whether that left Sport NI open to challenge. Members noted that we don’t believe any GBs have been unfairly advantaged due to co-design.

A member queried female sport and asked for assurance on how female sport has been represented. It was advised any constituted club within a sport was eligible to apply. As part of the SHF process one of the questions asked was the club for men only, women only or both and 86% of the responses said they provided opportunities for both, 4% women only and 10% men only. There would appear to be a significantly lower amount of women only clubs.

In terms of the specific example of Gaelic sport, the Minister made it very clear the scheme was to be accessible to all parts of sport – women, men, grassroots, children etc. Ladies Gaelic couldn’t apply because they’re not recognised; Ulster Camogie and Ulster Council GAA had a discussion and agreed the camogie bid would come through the Ulster Council; therefore it is a GAA amount rather than Gaelic sports.

A member queried the position in cricket as there didn’t appear to be an application from them. It was advised cricket have submitted an application which is continuing to be assessed but it is below the threshold that requires Board approval, this will be contained within the delegated decisions paper.

A member expressed concern about large amounts being awarded to certain sports which are seen as businesses and run sports clubs differently to other smaller clubs and how this could potentially attract negative press.

Members were advised the amounts within appendix 1 for football are vouched amounts and the recommended awards amounts within appendices 2, 3 and 4 are requested amounts and are subject to vouching. We will be doing 100% vouching through payments. In sampling we identified queries and the full amount may not be awarded because we can’t vouch this. Members noted one of the points discussed was that sports and clubs would not be any better or worse off as a result of awards. In the past we asked GBs and clubs to become

	<p>more diversified and to not solely rely on Sport NI funding; as a result some sports have built up reserves through prudent financial planning. We were conscious when discussing the design of the plan not to take into account reserves to ensure we didn't penalise them for being financially prudent and building up a fund for future development.</p> <p>Members agreed this programme was about supporting sport at a really difficult time and following today's discussions this had provided confidence and assurances.</p> <p>Members also agreed there needed to be clear communication regarding the process and awards and queried was it possible for the Board to see this before being issued. The CEO advised this would be discussed at ET on Monday and would be shared with the Board before it goes out in the media.</p> <p>The Chair asked the Board for approval of the £9.5m of awards contained in the paper; members approved the awards.</p> <p>The Chair stated this had been a good meeting with Board questions being answered on a robust process. It is important we acknowledge the work that has gone into this in a short timescale to deliver on time which is an incredible achievement. The Board expressed thanks to everyone involved.</p>
<p><b>5. AOB</b></p>	<p>The Chair referred to the workshop scheduled for Tuesday 2 March to discuss the Programme for Government consultation with specific reference to physical activity and requested either a paper or slides on the pros and cons to inform discussion.</p> <p>The Chair also highlighted the Board Effectiveness session Monday 15 March arranged by DfC and requested Board members reply to the Board Secretariat regarding their availability.</p>
<p><b>6. Date of next meeting</b></p>	<p>Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2021 @ 9.30am.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 10.59am.</p>

*George Lucas.*

Approved by:  
Sport NI Chair

Date: 14 April 2021