



BUSINESS PLAN 2025-26

THE POWER OF SPORT

CHAIR'S FOREWORD

2024-25 is set to be another busy year for Sport NI as we move into the fourth year of our five-year corporate plan, the Power of Sport.

At Sport NI we believe in the power of sport to change lives. By 2026, we want the power of sport to be recognised and valued by all.

2024 is an important year for sport with the Olympics and Paralympics taking place in Paris in the summer. Our athletes will compete on the world stage after months and often years of preparation, hard work and determination. We are proud to play a key role in supporting them to do so through our work within the Sports Institute and our support to sports governing bodies.

Events like the Olympics capture the public's imagination and inspire many people to try a new sport or get active. This year we will place a focus on the legacy of major sporting events including the Open which returns to Portrush next year. Events like these are an opportunity to showcase what NI has to offer and to inspire local communities to get involved in sport, whether that be playing, volunteering, coaching or officiating.

This business plan sets out our plans and programmes for the year as we continue to support athletes, governing bodies, clubs and other stakeholders. Throughout this plan you will see our commitment to developing sport and physical activity for everyone in society, from grassroots to elite, regardless of race, age, gender, sexuality, disability or background.

George Lucas
Chair, Sport NI



ABOUT US

Sport Northern Ireland (Sport NI) is the public body for the development of sport and physical activity in Northern Ireland. As an Arm's Length Body of the Department for Communities (DfC), we are the main statutory body through which public funding for sports in Northern Ireland is channelled. We distribute funds on behalf of the Exchequer and The National Lottery.

ACTIVE LIVING – THE SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, SETS OUT A VISION OF: “Lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity will deliver an active, healthy, resilient and inclusive society which recognises and values both participation and excellence.”



At Sport NI we are passionate about maximising the power of sport to change lives. By 2026, we want the power of sport to be recognised and valued by all.

Our work is driven by two strategic outcomes:

- *People adopting and sustaining participation in sport and physical activity*
- *Our athletes among the best in the world*

Sport NI is based at the House of Sport in Belfast and operates a National Outdoor Training Centre at the base of the Mourne Mountains – Tollymore National Outdoor Centre and the Sport NI Sports Institute (SNISI), the High-Performance arm of Sport NI based in Jordanstown. SNISI prepares Northern Ireland's best athletes to perform on the world stage by providing an environment that nurtures elite athletes and coaches.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



MEMBERSHIP

Clubs are at the heart of sport, and the heart of communities, and that is why we will invest more money into more sports to strengthen the offering of clubs through our Sports System Investment.

We have set ourselves an ambitious plan to increase club membership to 500,000 by 2026. Meeting this target would help achieve our objective of people in Northern Ireland adopting and sustaining participation in sport and physical activity.

WOMEN IN SPORT

Equality and diversity is at the heart of our corporate plan and our Sports System Investment programme as we strive to level the playing field and make sport a welcoming environment for everyone in society, regardless of gender, age, ability, ethnicity or background.

The Rise Female Leadership programme in the North West is empowering the next generation of female leaders in sport. Rise was designed to develop and enhance leadership behaviours and support women to thrive in leadership positions and influence positive change in their sports.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



HIGH SOCIAL DEPRIVATION

Sport is not immune from the effects of the rising cost of living but we are striving to provide opportunities to ensure finance is not a barrier to participating in sport.

Our Renewable Energy Fund is providing clubs with the opportunity to lower bills through new energy efficient initiatives that will future proof their clubs and potentially lower the cost of opening facilities to the public.

Accessibility and inclusion are at the heart of Creating Opportunities, which will support clubs and other organisations to set up new initiatives to remove the barriers preventing people from participating in sport and playing an active role in their club.

DISABILITY

Participation in sport must be regardless of ability and we will be working closely with Disability Sport NI, Special Olympics Ulster and other para-sport organisations to ensure that sport is truly inclusive and welcoming.

Our Sports System Investment programme is driving governing bodies to better understand who is participating within their sport and how to improve access and opportunities for people with a disability.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

LIFE-LONG PARTICIPATION

Sport plays a powerful role in enhancing and protecting people's health and wellbeing throughout the spectrum of life. We want to support sports to keep their members engaged in sport throughout their lives and offer opportunities for people of all ages.

Our ambition is to invest in more sports to broaden the offering so people recognise a greater diversity of sports in which to remain active and involved.

We look forward to working towards these ambitious goals with the support of our sports sector colleagues, government, National Lottery and many other key stakeholders as we maximise the Power of Sport to change lives.



	Power of Sport Theme	Power of Sport Action	Business Plan Objective	Responsibility	Business Plan Delivery
1	Connected Communities	Support our health and local government partners to get people active in our communities and deliver strategic partnerships with education, tourism, economy and infrastructure to demonstrate the benefits and tell the compelling story of the value of sport in the context of a healthy, prosperous society	By 31 March 2026, to have an agreed monitoring and evaluation framework for Active Living Strategy, in line with DfC expectations.	Sport Directorate	<p>Continuation of 2024-25 Objective</p> <p>Continue to work with DfC to promote and report on the Active Living Strategy, maximising a collaborative partnership approach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting framework established • SIG meetings (once per quarter) <p>Establish Active Living Research Consortium to further enhance the data and research available to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify appropriate partners • Identify research needs
2	Connected Communities	Meet local need and maximise local sports impacts by enabling, supporting and leveraging regional partnerships, through community planning.	By 31 March 2026, to have delivered community programmes targeting wider community engagement and inclusivity.	Sport Development	<p>Continuation of 2024-25 Objective</p> <p>In 2025-26 this objective will seek to better engage key partners such as local authorities and National Governing Bodies to facilitate the delivery of the community programmes.</p> <p>Community Planning Investment Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in each of the 11 local authorities • Contingency programme, that includes phased approach.

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme overview meetings with all 11 Councils prior to launch and end of programme. <p>Creating Opportunities Crowdfunder Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 2 launches April 2026 6 promotional webinars. 6 Key partner visits. Aim for 150 applications to be received in 26/27. Capital investments to be 10% of all applications. <p>Parkrun</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to support ParkRun through in year bidding. <p>Physical Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to deliver on the all-Ireland Physical Literacy Action Plan.
3	Quality Clubs and Effective Governing Bodies	Support governing bodies of sport to identify and close development gaps in their sport.	By 31 March 2026, to plan, develop, consult and launch the new Sport System Partner Investment programme to support NGBs and other sport and physical activity partners.	Sport Development	<p>Evolution of 2024-25 objective (number 3)</p> <p>Continue Sport system investment to transition NGBs to the new System Partner Approach.</p> <p>Plan, consult and launch the new System Partner Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a System Partner Programme Consult with public and key organisations Launch applications (July 2025)

	Power of Sport Theme	Power of Sport Action	Business Plan Objective	Responsibility	Business Plan Delivery
					<p>Deliver Sport System Governing Body Investment (SSIGB+)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment provided to Governing Bodies of Sport Continued monitoring and evaluation of programme ongoing Integration of New Governing Bodies into programme <p>Deliver New Governing Body Investment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment into a minimum of 4 New Governing Bodies <p>Design a Club Development Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult stakeholders to create robust club development model.
4	Accessible Quality infrastructure and safety	Work in partnership with education, DAERA and district council partners to continue leveraging a range of investment opportunities for sports facilities and spaces for all.	By 31 March 2026, to have delivered programmes to enhance sporting and physical activity infrastructure.	Infrastructure	<p>Evolution of 2024-25 Objective</p> <p>In 2025-26 this objective will seek to better maximise partnerships to leverage investment into the sector to maximise spaces and places for sport and physical activity, by enhancing partnerships with local and national government bodies.</p> <p>Sports Spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using themes drawn out from the sports infrastructure review, engage with local and regional government to establish investment priorities, and support the development of quality spaces for sport. <p>Outdoor Places</p>

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support through partners to enhance places that will increase opportunities for physical activity such as walking, jogging and cycling, etc. <p>The School Estate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish new programme and develop a pipeline of quality projects that need investment and will have an impact on community sport and physical activity. <p>Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support through partners to enhances safety in sport. Effectively manage relationship with stakeholders and partners who have duties under the Safety at Sports Ground Order (2006). Progress will be measured against annual objectives set out within the Sport NI contract with the SGSA. Deliver safety programmes as budget permits.
5	Connected Communities	Create a 'level playing field' so that accessibility and inclusion is felt and experienced by those who have traditionally been excluded from sport. This will be driven by aligned action plans	By 31 March 2026, to have delivered programmes across key equality and inclusion agenda areas.	Culture and Integrity	<p>Continuation of 2024-25 Objective</p> <p>Continue to engage in forums and through investment for targeted projects that are focused on "levelling the playing field".</p> <p>Delivery of Sport NI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plans which encompass the following Engagement and Delivery Plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women and Girls

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review IDOG partnership and SOI to ensure value for money.
6	Accessible, Quality Infrastructure and Safety	Provide thought leadership on outdoor sport and activity and its many benefits, maximising our expertise from Tollymore National Outdoor Centre, aligned to NI Executive's Green Growth Strategy and NI Executive Environment Strategy.	By 31 March 2026, to support a unified outdoor sport and physical activity.	TNOC	<p>Evolution of 2024-25 Objective</p> <p>Provide a strategic direction that harnesses the benefits of the outdoors, and leverages partnerships to accomplish this.</p> <p>Outscape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued support for Outscape as leaders in the outdoor space. To establish and drive an Outdoors Forum that will unite the outdoor sector. <p>Tollymore</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become a hub of excellence in providing seminars and workshops for those that work in the industry. 350 individuals on gov body leadership training and assessment courses 1,000 individuals on skills courses Successful AdventureMark reaccreditation
7	People Development	Develop, promote, support and celebrate people development opportunities for the sports sector. This	By 31 March 2026 to develop and deliver people development programmes to enhance the sector.	People Development	<p>Continuation of 2024-25 Objective</p> <p>Provide a suite of courses and programmes to develop the workforce across the Sports Sector, including:</p> <p>Coaching Leadership Programme</p>

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		includes supporting athletes and enabling governing bodies and clubs to nurture talent and access a range of resources to strengthen pathways.			<p>Mentoring support to participants following completion of the initial element of the programme.</p> <p>Collaborative partnership with sportscotland and Sport Wales.</p> <p>Rise Female Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative and tailored support, for female coaches, officials and sport administrators, who are committed to diversity and inclusion and can influence change within their sport. <p>Workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership delivery with Governing Bodies, Local Authorities, Clubs, Universities to provide workshops for coaches / sports administrators in Safeguarding; Coach Development; and Club Experience. <p>Supporting People in Pathway & Performance Environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanisms of coach development for coaches and practitioners who support athletes in the performance and pathway environments.
8	International Sport	Develop and implement a high-performance sports framework aligned to GB and Ireland systems that seeks to leverage benefits, through investment in key strategic partners, to impact	By 31 March 2026 to develop a Performance Framework for Sport Northern Ireland.	Performance	<p>New objective for 2025-26</p> <p>Develop a Performance Framework which will inform investment of both human and financial resource</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represent NI in the UK and Irish Systems, aligning practice and seeking opportunities to develop the NI System and to create an integrated performance sport sector working strategically with UK Sport and Sport Ireland (HPSAG)

Our Budget

The NI Executive returned in February 2024 and agreed a budget on the 28 May for NI Departments. The Executive's Budget 2024-25 settlement provided the Department with £856.0m Resource DEL, £133.4m Capital DEL and £29.8m Financial Transactions Capital. For the Department, this budget represents significant shortfalls of £115.8m on Resource and £167.3m on Capital against 2024-25 requirements.

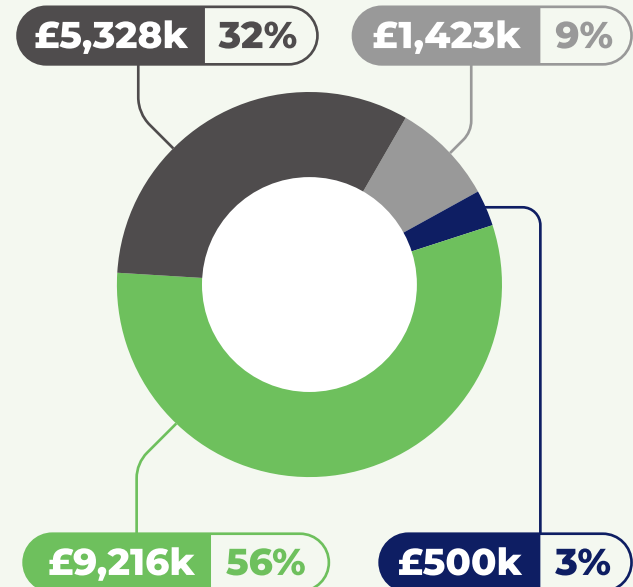
After a period of consideration, the Department provided indicative budget allocations to Sport NI in June 2024 for the 2024-25 Financial Year. The Minister decided that funding for the Department's Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) would be protected at prior year levels and Sport NI's Exchequer resource budget allocation was confirmed at £7m.

Capital funding is a scarce resource in the NI Executive budget for 2024-25 and as such only £0.5 m of Capital funding was provided to Sport NI and this was specifically provided by the Minister for the "Your School Your Club" programme. Budgets to cover the technical accounting requirements of depreciation costs (£0.627m) and changes in the pension liability (1.062m) were also provided by the Department.

Sport NI uses these budgets to satisfy its administrative responsibilities as well as combining with Lottery funding to invest as much money into sport as possible. In 2024-25, Sport NI has committed to expenditure of £16.47m directly into sport in Northern Ireland.

SportNI Planned Investment 2024-25

£16.47m



■ NI Public Funding ■ NI Public Capital Funding
■ Lottery Funding ■ Lottery Capital Funding



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