



# **BUSINESS PLAN 2023-24**

## Who We Are

Sport Northern Ireland (Sport NI) is the lead development public body for sport and physical recreation in Northern Ireland and an Arm's Length Body of the Department for Communities (DfC) and as such is the main statutory body, through which public funding for sports in Northern Ireland is channelled. Sport NI operates on three sites, the House of Sport, Tollymore National Outdoor Centre and The Sports Institute.

Tollymore National Outdoor Centre (TNOC) is the only recognised National Outdoor Centre on the island of Ireland. As part of a wider network of UK National Outdoor Centres, TNOC plays a key role in leading and assisting the development of outdoor adventure sports and working with and supporting a range of partners including governing bodies of sport, private sector providers and various sectoral training bodies. TNOC is unique within Sport NI in that it provides a range of services direct to the public which in turn provides insights into their experience of sport and the shifting patterns and trends in participation in sport and physical activity. TNOC's reach extends far beyond those who visit the centre each year. Since its inception TNOC has built capacity and expertise through those who complete skills and leadership training at the centre and we continue to provide these cascade benefits to thousands more individuals every year.

The Sports Institute focuses on improving sport performance through the provision of science, medicine and programme support to National Governing Bodies. Institute staff work directly with coaches and athletes to maximise the training gains needed to enhance performance. The institute's work demonstrates strong collaboration with other institutes within the UK and Ireland and this reflects the organisation's unique position at the intersection of both UK and Irish pathways.

Sport NI is funded by grant in aid from the Department for Communities and the National Lottery. Sport NI works with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to ensure we meet our obligations.

# Active Living - The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland

Sport NI's partner department, Department for Communities (DfC), has led the development of a new NI Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity\* (launched in March 2022), linked below

[Active Living- Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](https://communities-ni.gov.uk/active-living-sport-and-physical-activity-strategy-for-northern-ireland).

The Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity sets out 'Active Living' strategic context in pursuing programme for government outcomes; as well as its vision, key themes, cross-cutting principles, and departmental themes. Sport NI will play a key role in the delivery of the strategy and work closely with departmental colleagues to realise the ambitions set out in this plan.

Sport NI will be responsible for establishing and chairing a Strategic Implementation Group to oversee the delivery of the strategy and to ensure progress on implementation. This will include the co-development and implementation of a Delivery Action Plan that will contribute to the achievement of the key Themes and Goals set out in the strategy across all sectors.

Successful delivery of Sport NI's Corporate Plan, aligns with delivery of a number of key themes within the DfC Strategy Framework. The Strategy recognises that successful delivery will require cross departmental and cross sectoral partnerships and collaborations. It recognises the importance of encouraging the use of new and innovative approaches to deliver our strategic goals and positive change. Our 2023-24 business plan objectives support quality relationships with delivery partners that will impact on the ongoing delivery of the NI Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity and contribute to PfG outcomes.

# Sport NI Corporate Plan, “The Power of Sport”

Sport NI’s Corporate Plan, The Power of Sport was launched in March 2022 and covers the period 2021-2026. The corporate plan pursues **two outcomes** for Sport NI over the **next five years**:

## Mission:

*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.*

## Strategic Outcomes

**Outcome 1: People in Northern Ireland adopting & sustaining participation in sport & physical activity; and**

**Outcome 2: Our athletes among the best in the world.**

## Sport NI DNA: Values and Behaviours

Sport NI remains clear that the values and culture of an organisation drive its commitment to excellence and our values and principles set out our pledge to provide people in Northern Ireland with quality sporting experiences:-

The graphic is a green-themed infographic for Sport NI's DNA. It features a central DNA double helix structure. The text 'sport Northern Ireland DNA' is prominently displayed in the center. Surrounding this are four quadrants, each representing a core value with a list of associated behaviors. The values are: Excellence (Relentless about being better), Collaboration (Strong teamwork & partnerships), Integrity (Do the right thing, even if nobody is looking), and Learning (Grow yourself, the organisation & the sector). Each quadrant includes a list of specific actions or attitudes.

**EXCELLENCE**  
**RELENTLESS ABOUT BEING BETTER**

- Drive high standards in all we do, rejecting mediocrity & challenging underperformance.
- Demonstrate confident leadership to make positive impact.
- Be innovative, take intelligent risks, driving positive change.
- Deliver with pride, passion & expertise, going above & beyond.

**COLLABORATION**  
**STRONG TEAMWORK & PARTNERSHIPS**

- Support teammates & partners to be their best & achieve their potential.
- Communicate effectively with the team & partners.
- Recognise & value the contribution of others.
- Act as one cohesive Sport NI team.

**INTEGRITY**  
**DO THE RIGHT THING, EVEN IF NOBODY IS LOOKING**

- Build trust by acting with honesty, authenticity, transparency & consistency.
- Be respectful of others.
- Be mindful of everyone's wellbeing.
- Be accountable for decisions & actions.

**LEARNING**  
**GROW YOURSELF, THE ORGANISATION & THE SECTOR**

- Be self-reflective & drive personal learning.
- Embrace challenge, learn from all experiences.
- Recognise & celebrate success.
- Stay agile, adaptable & current.

**sport Northern Ireland DNA**

**sport Northern Ireland**

To achieve our Mission, we recognise that we must build towards it in steps. 2023-24 is our third year within the cycle of our 5 year plan The Power of Sport.

We have achieved a significant amount in our first two years. A major piece of work was designing Phase 1 of a new Sports System investment programme that will see us boost direct investment to sports by at least 58%. In collaboration with colleagues in Sport Ireland, we have launched an all-Island physical literacy consensus statement. This puts in place a key foundation in sports development for young people and will help us shape how people grow in sport throughout their lives. Work is well underway on our review of Infrastructure in sport, to establish a clear and authoritative picture of how well facilities meet demand.

In establishing our activity for this year we have set ourselves an overarching ambition, and with it some priority areas.

We will be building on those foundations of our Corporate Plan and this year focusing on the following themes:

- Connected Communities
- Quality Clubs and Effective Governing Bodies
- Accessible, Quality Infrastructure and Safety
- International Sport
- People Development

### **Over 500,000 people involved in sport**

When our athletes embark on their path to success, they set themselves ambitious goals. A target that motivates them and establishes a clear direction of travel. In this plan, we are excited to do likewise.

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

Getting people involved in clubs helps them realise the full power of sport, not simply the physical and mental benefits, but also a vital sense of belonging, and connection to their community.

With Objective 1 of our 5 Year Plan in mind - *People in Northern Ireland adopting & sustaining participation in sport & physical activity* – Sport NI aims to increase club membership from current levels of circa 400,000 to exceeding 500,000 by 2026.

We will do this by supporting governing bodies of sport to identify and close development gaps in their sport, improving knowledge and understanding of what an outstanding club looks like, and empowering clubs to be open, inclusive places where they see opportunities to grow by welcoming people not previously involved in sport.

Ambitious though that half-a-million people figure is, it is not the complete picture, and we cannot simply focus on driving that overall number up. We must look at its constituent parts.

Across every aspect of our work we are seeking to raise awareness of inequalities throughout sport. Our funding programmes are geared towards tackling these barriers, and our conversations with partners are shaped by our intent to make sport fair and accessible for all. This year we will work to close many of those demographic gaps that are significantly limiting the impact and reach of sport.

## **Women in Sport**

We will bring a significant focus to increasing participation of women in sport, at all levels be it on our playing fields, our sidelines or in our boardrooms. Many sports have made tremendous progress in this area, and we want to see those exemplars share the foundations of their success with others.

One of the key components of our major new Sports System investment programme is its focus on diversity and inclusion. We have been challenging sports to be ambitious and in the implementation of this programme we will be highly attuned to seeing that investment make a true difference for women and girls.

Working with other groups and stakeholders we will develop plans that will encourage greater support of girls and females participating in sport, and educating those that can influence these changes.

We will also advocate sport as powerful vehicle for change to improve the lives of women, tackling issues such as violence against women and girls.

## **High social deprivation**

If sport is to truly change lives, we must recognise the hidden biases and inequalities that exist in sport, as much as they do in a myriad of other areas. The cost of living crisis has brought the demands on people and families into sharp relief. Personal and family budgets are under pressure, and we cannot presume that sport will be immune to hard choices people may have to make. Through our sports system investment programme we are challenging sports to look for those structural inequalities and mitigate these where possible.

We want to better understand the challenges clubs face with the costs of heating and lighting their facilities, investigate ways of saving clubs money, sharing this information with the sector but also initiating projects that can make a demonstrable difference on the ground, with an emphasis on areas of high social deprivation.

We will also build on previous innovative work with CrowdFunder to support clubs and projects that demonstrate strong community engagement, and create legacy skill-sets for raising their profile including a focus on communities experiencing the highest social disadvantage.

## **Disability**

With stand-out para-athletes like Bethany Firth and Claire Taggart, we have made great progress at the top level, but we know people living with a disability are still under-represented in sport.

Participation in sport must be regardless of ability, and we will be working closely with DSNI, Special Olympics Ulster and other para-sport organisations to ensure that sport is truly inclusive and welcoming. In our sports system investment programme, we are driving governing bodies towards greater understanding of who is participating in their sport, with a clear expectation of increasing participation by under-represented groups including persons with a disability.

Our work in understanding the sporting infrastructure will also create a clearer picture of the inclusive nature of facilities and we also anticipate creating better and more opportunities for people with disabilities through our Community Planning investment where we can improve the offering using the knowledge and networks of local groups.

## **Life-Long participation**

Sport plays a powerful role in enhancing and protecting people's health and well-being right throughout the spectrum of life. Often the perception can be that sport is the pursuit of young people, that it is too fast or too physical for people of a particular age demographic.

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

In building relationships with more sports we want to increase opportunities and improve experiences right across the sporting landscape. We will also showcase sports who have demonstrated foresight

and flexibility, by making alternative options and formats available that allow people to play regardless of age.

### **Powering Sport**

As well as those specific areas above we will continue with important work already underway. We have changed how we engage with sports, but we recognise we must go further and faster. We will broaden the range of sports we support and invest in and will work with new organisations whose values and objectives align with our own. We will continue in our work developing the volunteers and others who are central to making sport happen, as well as shaping a positive culture within sport and protecting those involved in it.

We will be a voice for sport and advocate its value clearly, engaging in discussion with other organisations and exploring our role as custodians charged with shaping the future of sport.

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.

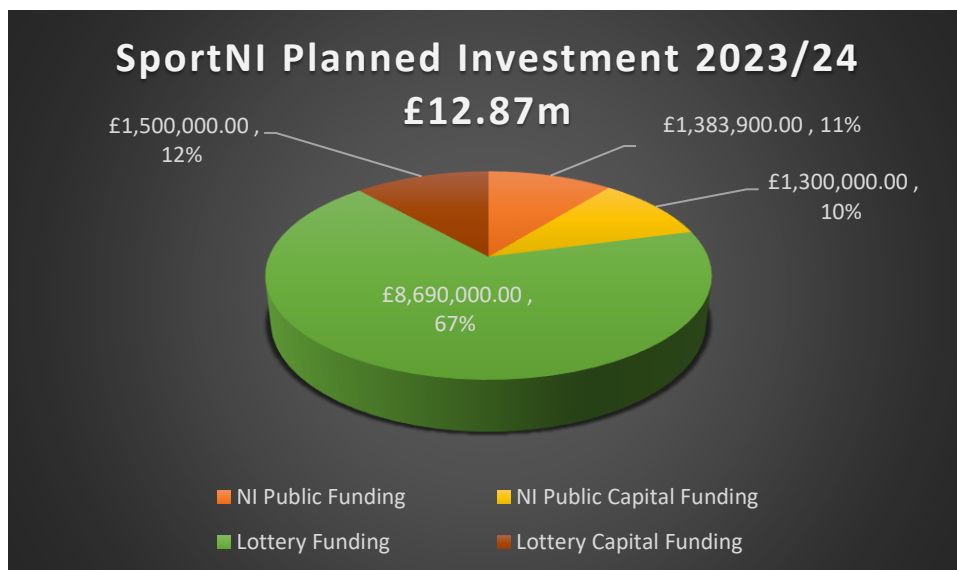


# Our Budget

In the absence of a NI Executive, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced the 2023/24 Budget for Northern Ireland in April 2023. The total amount allocated to Departmental budgets reduced by 0.4% however, in an environment where Departments face significant inflationary pressures this is extremely challenging.

The SportNI resource budget allocation for 2023/24, confirmed by the Department for Communities in June 2023 has been reduced by 5% in this context. The baseline resource budget of £7m has been complimented by an additional ringfenced budget of £0.171m for Special Olympics expenditure. SportNI has an increased capital budget of £1.3m for 2023/24, which is a significant increase from last year and budgets to cover the technical accounting requirements of depreciation costs £0.613m and changes in the pension liability of £1.184m.

SportNI 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 2023/24, SportNI has committed to expenditure of £12.87m directly into sport in Northern Ireland.



## Sport NI Business Plan 2023-24

No.	Corporate Plan Theme	Business Planning Activity	Business Planning Milestone	Responsibility
1	Connected Communities	Meet local need and maximise local sports impacts by enabling, supporting and leveraging regional partnerships, through community planning.	By 31 March 2024, to have delivered an investment programme to support Community Planning.	Sport Development
2	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 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Women in Sport and Tackling Racism and Sectarianism in Sport, based on principles of consultation and co-design with expert and 'lived-experience' panels.	By 31 March 2024, to have developed plans across key equality and inclusion agenda areas for implementation from April 2024.	Culture and Integrity
3	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 2024, to have progressed the Active Living Strategic Implementation Group in line with DfC expectations.	Sport Directorate
4	People Development	Develop, promote, support and celebrate people development opportunities for the sports sector. This includes supporting athletes and enabling governing bodies and clubs to nurture talent and access a range of resources to strengthen pathways.	By 31 March 2024, to have delivered people development programmes to enhance the sports workforce.	People Development
5	People Development	Develop, promote, support and celebrate people development opportunities for the sports sector. This includes supporting athletes and enabling governing bodies and clubs to nurture talent and access a range of resources to strengthen pathways.	By 31 March 2024, to have delivered a celebration event for the sports workforce.	People Development
6	Quality Clubs and Effective Governing Bodies	Support governing bodies of sport to identify and close development gaps in their sport.	By 31 March 2024, to have delivered an investment programme to support Governing Bodies of Sport.	Sport Development
7	Quality Clubs and Effective Governing Bodies	Advocate agreed definitions of what a modern, fit for purpose sports club looks like; supporting governing bodies of sport to embed a positive and inclusive culture in their clubs.	By 31 March 2024, to have refreshed information for clubs on the Sport NI website.	Culture and Integrity
8	Infrastructure - Accessible, Quality & Safe	Advocate for and support the delivery of a modern, fit for purpose physical sports infrastructure to meet the local and regional needs of communities, and sports clubs in delivering increased, inclusive and safe sustained participation in sport and physical activity.	By 31 March 2024, to have delivered programmes to enhance sporting and physical activity infrastructure.	Infrastructure
9	Infrastructure - Accessible, Quality & Safe	Work with our partners in tourism, infrastructure, local councils, governing bodies and others to maximise the power of our sports infrastructure and build consensus on the best use of spaces for sport and physical activity.	By 31 March 2024, to have progressed the Infrastructure Review by drafting a 5-year investment plan.	Infrastructure
10	Infrastructure - Accessible, Quality & Safe	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 December 2023, to have reviewed TNOC support over the 22-23 season and plans in place for 23-24 season.	TNOC
11	International Sport	Provide focused athletes services that maximise the training gains needed to enhance performance and minimise days lost from training and competition.	By 31 December 2023, to have reviewed athlete support over the 22-23 season and plans in place for 23-24 season.	SNISI
12	International Sport	Provide focused athletes services that maximise the training gains needed to enhance performance and minimise days lost from training and competition.	By 31 March 2024, to be progressing the delivery of an implementation plan following the strategic review of SNISI.	SNISI