



A Sport NI Statement from SNI CEO to Governing Bodies of Sport and their clubs

Communities Minister Deirdre Hargey MLA launched a £500,000 Hardship Fund for the sports sector on 14th April 2020, administered by Sport NI. Sports clubs and sporting organisations from the voluntary and community sector that were unable to access support from other Government Covid-19 Mitigation Funds, were eligible to apply to Sport NI for a small grant of £2,000 to help with immediate financial commitments to maintain their facilities during the Covid-19 restrictions.

The Sports Hardship Fund opened, with confirmation from the Department for Communities of an initial funding investment of £500,000; this would resource small awards (£2,000) to 250 clubs and organisations. The Sports Hardship Fund had received completed 402 applications by 6pm on Thursday 16 April. The Sports Hardship Fund is now oversubscribed.

Acknowledging the effort already expended by clubs to apply to the Sports Hardship Fund, Sport NI staff identified additional funding within our exchequer budget for 2020-21; to ensure that all of those eligible applications already in the system could be funded. At 5pm on 16th April 2020, Sport NI advised our Department colleagues that we had released an additional £250,000 from our 2020/21 exchequer budget to meet this additional pressure.

Sport NI has escalated this issue, and will do everything we can to try to secure additional budget for the Sport Hardship Fund, but until such times as additional budget is secured, we do not want to raise expectations of clubs and sports organisations or ask them to complete applications that cannot be funded at this time. Therefore Sport NI and Department for Communities has taken the reluctant decision to suspend the Sport Hardship Fund.



We are all too aware of the acute challenges facing our whole community at this time, and the needs of our local sports clubs. Many hundreds of our sports clubs, and thousands of volunteers, have spearheaded community support projects over the last four weeks; I have no doubt that those same clubs and volunteers will be enthusiastic to, and pivotal in, helping our society emerge and strive once the current lockdown phase ends.

Sport NI believes it was important to support this important intervention and prioritised every available resource to make sure that the programme was implemented as quickly as possible. Significant as this funding is, we know that it only scratches the surface of the immediate financial need facing each of you and your clubs as we collectively navigate the turbulence caused by Covid-19.

An early analysis of the first batch of applications received, indicates that applications have been received from a wide range of sports (>25) - from boxing & bowls to tennis & taekwondo; we were also content to see a geographic spread, with applications received from clubs in each of the 11 district councils.

I want to assure you that Sport NI will do everything it can to secure additional funds for this specific Sports Hardship Fund, we

are also already working on future phrases of funding for the sector.

Antoinette McKeown

CEO, Sport NI