

27 June 2014

AMcK/LB



Ms Suzanne Wylie
Chief Executive
Belfast District Council
Belfast City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Chief Executive's Office		
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Dear ~~Chief Executive~~ *Suzanne,*

SPORT NI INVESTMENT IN SPORTS PARTICIPATION AT A COMMUNITY LEVEL

You may be aware that Sport NI has committed around £12.5m to the Active Communities programme since its launch in 2008 with 116 coaches now active in communities across the 11 district council consortia, enabling over 3 million participant sporting opportunities. Among its many achievements the Active Communities programme has been publicly recognised (SportscoachUK 'Coaching Intervention of the Year' 2012) for its twin impacts on strengthening coaching provision in NI and increasing participation in sport, especially among its prioritised target groups (women/girls, people with a disability and older people).

As the programme approaches the midpoint of its final year investment cycle (September 2014), Sport NI is considering options for future investment in community sport to build on the progress achieved over the last five years and to ensure our Active Communities brand continues to bring fresh innovation, energy and relevance to community sport here.

SNI has consulted extensively with stakeholders in relation to what next for keeping NI communities active. Going forward, the strategic environment is subject to considerable change; RPA will bring new opportunities for sport, in particular in how we plan for sport and deliver it, however the process of restructuring local councils and transferring additional duties will undoubtedly require a focus which risks sport becoming a distraction from core change priorities. Sport NI needs to take account of this in our planning for Lottery investment in sport at a time when we are also bringing forward our new Corporate plan (2015-19). The development of our new plan also creates opportunities for new synergies between new local councils and Sport NI for the future.

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Over the term of our Active Communities investment, SNI has invested up to 100% **eligible** costs associated with the programme. Sport NI recognises that the District Councils and some governing bodies, as delivery partners for the programme, have made a significant contribution to programme delivery costs and we are grateful for the added value that has brought.

Sport NI is currently considering a range of options in terms of investing in increasing sports participation at community level (especially among target groups). That includes an extension for a short period to a refreshed Active Communities programme, termination of the programme to allow for a new investment aligned to corporate plan priorities and other options in between.

In considering these options, the relative benefits and the likely affordability issues, Sport NI is advising that any extension to Active Communities will require additional investment from our partners as Sport NI cannot commit to 100% coaching costs. We have a clear responsibility to ensure Lottery Funding is truly additional and continuing to fund the now established Active Communities coaches at 100% is contrary to the principles of additionality and sustainability.

Sport NI is committed at a fundamental level to securing strong partnership with new local councils and we would like your commitment to sport and working with Sport NI to be reflected in the contribution which we make together to the programmes which benefit both organisations and local communities here. Sport NI has a range of targets, partners and aspirations for the development of sport in NI. It will never be possible to commit resources of this scale on an ongoing basis.

To assist us with our consideration of the options available for the next 18 months and beyond Sport NI is keen to secure your commitment to exploring a 30% contribution from your local council to Active Communities Coach costs. This is an approximate cost of £10k per coach if the programme was to be extended for 12 months beyond the current March 15 date. This will enable Sport NI to make an assessment on whether or not we can extend the current programme in a refreshed format and to take account of your needs for this programme during a period of change. Sport NI fully recognizes that some decisions on the future of our investment programme need to be made in the shorter rather than the longer term especially in light of the employer responsibilities of the district councils in relation to the 116 coaches.

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In light of this I would appreciate the opportunity for Sport NI officers to engage with you over the summer months with a view to a formal response before the end of August 2014.

As you may also be aware, Sport NI has begun a process of procuring consultants to undertake a review of sporting facility needs regionally and at local council level. This is a fully funded significant resource being offered to local councils to support you at a time of considerable change to reach consensus on a facilities strategy for your area, aligned to a regional sports facilities strategy. The work may also inform the second tranche of our new capital facilities programme which we aim to open later this year. We ask that you commit some officer time to work with our consultants so that the facilities strategy for your council area meets your sporting needs and builds political consensus (from a strong evidence base) on your priority needs. On behalf of Sport NI I want to thank your senior staff who have engaged with shaping this work to date and we look forward to working with you on this in the coming months ahead.

Many thanks for giving these matters your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you over the coming weeks. Nick Harkness, Director of Participation and Facilities with Sport NI is leading on this work and will be in touch soon to discuss further with you and colleagues. If you require any clarification in the interim, please do not hesitate to contact Nick on 028 90 383862 or at nickharkness@sportni.net.

Yours sincerely



Antoinette McKeown
Chief Executive

Copy. Chief Executive, Belfast City Council

congratulations on the new post! Looking forward to
working with you.
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