



# NORTHERN IRELAND SPORTS FORUM ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



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## ABOUT US & WHAT WE DO

The Northern Ireland Sports Forum is the recognised umbrella organisation for the voluntary sector of Sport in Northern Ireland.

The majority of recognised sports and recreational activities in Northern Ireland are governed by their own official bodies. The Forum works on behalf of these organizations to protect, promote, and advance their interests.

Our membership encompasses a huge range of sports and activities with member organisations ranging from elite sport to organised recreation. Through our membership and support services the NI Sports Forum benefits around 480,000 individuals involved in sport and recreation. It is the breadth of our members and representation that lies at the heart of the NI Sports Forum and is what makes us unique.

***The NI Sports Forum is committed to the provision of services, benefits, and representation of our members.***

# FOREWORD FROM CHAIRPERSON

In my first year as Chairperson of the NI Sports Forum we have seen a much greater sense of normality across the sector. I would like to thank Ashley Hunter for his years of input to the organisation and his leadership over the last three years.

The Olympics and Paralympics showcased sport once again in such positive light and it must be recognised that the performances of our athletes across two nations highlighted the work being done across Governing Bodies here. To maintain this, it will be paramount that investment and funding remain across all aspects of the sector.

Funding from the NI Executive remains a challenge for sport and is an area the Forum will continue to advocate further on. With the Executive back up and running, we now see a draft Programme for Government, that, whilst recognising sport to a certain degree, should act more as a means to drive the agenda and meet needs of the sector.

The All Party Group continues to be an important platform for our members to raise issues with the political parties and local MLA's. Meetings this year have progressed solutions on the Road Closures Order, raised challenges including access to school facilities, increased insurance demands, SportNI underspend, Commonwealth Games and Martyr's Law.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Mike Nesbitt MLA, who had chaired the Group since its inception in 2015 but had to step down following his appointment as a Minister. I would also like to thank Aisling Reilly MLA and Andrew Muir MLA, who had stepped down earlier in the year due to having to take up Ministerial positions. We welcome David Honeyford MLA as the new Chair of the group – I know David has been a keen advocate for sport and look forward to working with him in his role to advance the agenda for sport and physical recreation.

Our services continue to support our members and the wider sector. Aside from the day-to-day calls and engagement with members, the Board Recruitment Programme has been in high demand with 10 NGBs engaged in the process with two more placements on Boards. Processing AccessNI applications for our members continues to increase and our Disputes Resolution Service saw more engagement with support offered to three members. Our Finding Funding service and job advertising have been busy with more opportunities offered across the sector. Full details can be found in the report.

In 2023, the NI Sports Forum Board agreed to develop a new Strategy and appointed Sheffield Hallam to undertake a period of consultation and develop the strategy. This has been in conjunction with our members and wider stakeholders with a view to addressing how the Forum can best support the sector over upcoming years. I would like to thank all the Board, staff and members that engaged in the process and to David Barrett and his team for leading on the development and we look forward to launching the Strategy and engaging in this with members. I hope it will resonate with our members on the priorities for the NI Sports Forum going forward.

I would like to express my thanks to the Board, staff team led by the Executive Manager, Richard Honeyford, our Members Services Officer, Rebekah Rutherford, Inclusive Participation Officer, Natalia Niederman and Finance Officer, Sharon Crossan. I would also like to thank Sport NI, The Department for the Communities and the Rank Foundation for the investment in these roles without which we could not provide the same level of support and services.

Yours in Sport

*Marc Scott*

**Chairperson**



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# OUR STRATEGIC GOALS 2020-2024

## COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIPS

The NI Sports Forum will facilitate collaboration and develop relationships with our member organisations and the wider sport and activity sector. NISF will lead increased networking and engagement opportunities between members and relevant stakeholders across the sector.

## MEMBER SERVICES

NI Sports Forum will develop relevant services to empower and strengthen our member organisations relevant to their own needs and aspirations.

## REPRESENTATION

NI Sports Forum will act as a strong representative for members and the sector on various groups and committees including central and local government and impact on development of research and evaluation to ensure the best interests of the sport and physical activity sector are upheld.

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

NI Sports Forum will build capacity of the Forum through seeking new opportunities and to provide support to develop our members.

## LEADERSHIP

NI Sports Forum will invest in staff and board skill development for the growth of the organisation to enhance services and operations.





## OUR PURPOSE

“To guide, support and empower our members in their role to govern and promote sport and physical activity in Northern Ireland.”

## OUR VALUES

### LEADERSHIP

The NI Sports Forum will act as a strategic leader for the sport and physical activity sector and will be a strong advocate for members and stakeholders.

### INTEGRITY

The NI Sports Forum is committed to acting with strong principles and engaging with stakeholders with honesty and respect.

### INDEPENDENCE

The NI Sports Forum expresses its freedom to represent the interests of member organisations and the sector without influence.

### INSPIRING

The NI Sports Forum is committed to supporting our members to be progressive organisations and assisting them to realise their full potential.

### INCLUSIVE

The NI Sports Forum strives to embed inclusivity in its own operations and promote best practice with member organisations and the wider sector.

### PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION

The NI Sports Forum is committed to developing partnerships which will benefit our members and facilitating collaboration to allow members achieve their aims and objectives.

# EXECUTIVE MANAGER'S REPORT

2023-2024 has been a busy year for the NI Sports Forum, with demand for our services and support increasing in the likes of AccessNI, Board Recruitment and Disputes Resolution. With the resumption of the NI Assembly, this also saw more by way of representation and advocacy.

We have seen new staff and Board Members in place, with Marc Scott taking on the Chair after Ashley Hunter completed his term last year. So many give their time and expertise to support the work of the organisation and ensure we remain relevant to our members' needs. It is always great to get out to events delivered by our sports and continue to get an understanding of their challenges and requirements going forward.

## REPRESENTATION

Coming into this year, there had not been advancements in the return of

the Executive, leaving pressures on Departments, budgets and public funding. We welcomed seeing increased investment through the Lottery for sports' bodies from SportNI and a widening of investment into new organisations, but Exchequer funding remained (and continues to remain) stagnant, with increasing pressures, particularly on Capital projects that are much needed.

The work of the All Party Group (APG) for Sport and Physical Recreation, engagement with MLAs and local representatives remains a key cornerstone of our work as an organisation. With five APG meetings held throughout the year and MLAs supporting members on issues such as Road Closures Order, Stadium Capacity and Martyn's Law, this has been a key means to keep sport and challenges faced in the spotlight.



## RESEARCH

Over the past year, we strengthened our collaboration with Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and Ulster University (UU) through their Science Shop, advancing research in critical areas. We were also pleased to welcome Kaitlyn Eadie for a 12-week placement, supporting the Forum's work and conducting research on barriers to delivering Physical Education in schools. These partnerships continue to deepen our understanding of the sector, its pressures, and challenges, guiding future support proposals for sport. As we move forward, gathering evidence remains a top priority, particularly in light of constrained budgets for the NI Executive.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Through the work of the staff, we have seen increased social media presence with a LinkedIn page for NISF set up and already gaining traction. This has allowed us to target specific messaging to a new audience, including promotion of our events, jobs, and Board Roles.

Our monthly updates to members were refreshed early in the year and we continue to get positive feedback on the information included. Please feed back to us on any aspects you feel should be included going forward.

## SERVICES

As you will read in this report, demand for our services post Covid continues to increase and we have been assessing other means to support members, including social media support, and linking with the WSA Procurement Portal. All information on these services is available on our website, or please contact Rebekah, our Member Services Officer for more.

Since late 2023, we have been working to develop a new five-year strategy to drive our organisation forward. Extensive consultations, facilitated by David Barrett (Sheffield Hallam University), Dr Paul Donnelly and Marc Scott, have been instrumental in shaping the strategy's key themes and objectives. As of this report, we are approaching a final draft, ready to

present to our members for review and input.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our small staff team, who work diligently to best support member organisations. Sharon Crossan continues to ensure our finances and reporting are on track and Natalie Niederman has been making inroads with the Female Sports Forum. I would also like to welcome Rebekah Rutherford onboard after competitive recruitment process as Member Services Officer.

Thank you to the members of the Board and our Sub-Committee Volunteers, who put their own time in to help progress the work of the Forum.

Niamh MacManus sadly left the team early in the 2024 year. Niamh's work had helped develop the Member Services role, through our communications and I would like to thank her for her time with us and wish her all the best in the future.

Thank you to all our 99 Members for your continued support and ongoing engagement to help direct the work of the Forum.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support of our Funders and Corporate Partners: SportNI, Rank Foundation, DfC, Sports Law NI, Kingsbridge, Cathedral Eye and Attis Insurance. It is only through this support we are able to deliver the services of the Forum and support our members.

Yours in Sport

*Richard Honeyford*  
Executive Manager

# OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR'S WORK & ACTIVITIES

## REPRESENTATION

Through the year, the All Party Group met on five occasions, with 16 items tabled at meetings and an additional 14 matters the NI Sports Forum were engaged to support sport in. These included meetings with the PSNI and Departments regarding the Road Closures Order, cessation of KS2 Sports Curriculum Funding, Martyn's Law and developments by sports and other organisations.

Through the work of the APG 14 MLAs sat on the group, with 105 representatives attending across 30 different sports/organisations.

## MEDIATION AND DISPUTES

Through the course of the year, the NI Sports Forum assisted with five areas of dispute, with three offered to go to mediation. Work in mediation and disputes has been both proactive and reactive with the delivery of a session on restorative justice at the Sports Law Conference 2023.

## BOARD RECRUITMENT PROGRAMME

NI Sports Forum engaged with 10 organisations seeking Board positions, with 90% organisations asking to engage with 16 potential candidates. Towards the end of March 2024, we had helped find placements for RYANI and Paddle NI with more engagement taking place into the spring of 2024. If this is something your organisation wishes to access or if you are aware of individuals who may wish to provide an expression of interest for potential positions, please contact us.

## ACCESS NI

The NI Sports Forum completed 246 Access NI checks from 21 bodies with 1:1 support also provided. The requirement for checks has increased year on year overall and in particular following a return to activity. If this is a service that your organisation may benefit from, please contact us.





## CONSULTATIONS

We engaged in 14 Consultations across eight Departments, whether through sharing with member organisations or direct returns made including EQIAs for DfC and DoFEd, DoF Non Domestic Rating Review, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework and the Charity Commission NI Scheme of Delegation.

## FINDING FUNDING

We continued to highlight and promote relevant funding for sports organisations throughout the year through our website with 59 funds posted and 14 individual requests for advice. These would be further highlighted through our communication channels, including Monthly Updates and social media. We progressed our finding funding database that is available for members when seeking potential opportunities. We promoted the DfC Jobstart Scheme with a workshop to sports on the new scheme.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

We delivered eight workshops over a number of topics, including GDPR, Sports Law, Female Sports Forum and social media

for members, with over 248 individuals attending across 64 sports organisations. 68% of attendees reported increase in skills/ knowledge through the workshops. 1:1 support was provided to 14 organisations in areas such as governance and HR. We also supported sports with recruitment, sitting with two organisations panels as an independent for roles.

## SAFEGUARDING SUPPORT

The NI Sports Forum has engaged with Paul Stephenson of the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit to provide support for nonfunded members and directing enquiries. We also remain engaged in Safeguarding Strategic Group and attended AccessNI Stakeholder Forum.

## NEW MEMBERS

We would like to welcome Sport Changes Life and Active Youth NI onboard as Members. Full details on both organisations can be found through our Members Webpage.

# NORTHERN IRELAND SPORTS FORUM PARTNERS

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## REPRESENTATION

The NI Sports Forum represent our members on a number of groups and committees. We act as the voice of sport and recreation. Here are some of the groups and committees.

- Secretariat to All Party Group on Sport and Physical Recreation
- Active Living Monitoring Group
- Developing Good Governance Group
- Active Living No Limit's Forum
- Northern Ireland Wellbeing in Sport Forum
- Home Countries Sports Associations
- Sport Resolutions UK
- Female Sports Forum
- Safeguarding in Sport Strategic Group
- Belfast City Council Sports Awards
- NI Sport & Human Rights Forum
- UU Employers Advisory Board
- AccessNI Stakeholder's Forum
- Belfast Hills Partnership



# Sports Membership

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**Kelly McVeigh** (Vice Chairperson)  
**Marc Mulholland** (Company Secretary)  
**Stuart Hollinger** (Treasurer)  
**Cath Quinn**  
**Chris Morrow**  
**Dr. Paul Donnelly**  
**Karen Rollo**  
**Amina Martin-Ross**  
**David Johnston**  
**Allison Mercer**



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# MEET THE BOARD

## **CHAIRPERSON: MARC SCOTT**

Marc is currently the CEO of Ulster Hockey. Prior to his current role Marc has gained significant experience in the sports sector in various roles: Governance and Management Consultant with Sport NI (2009 – 2018), Development Officer with Scottish Hockey (2008-2009) and Programme Manager with the Scottish Institute of Sport (2003-2008).

Marc is Chair of Volunteer Now and has been a member of the NI Sports Forum Board since 2020. When not working and volunteering in sport, Marc will be taking his two sons to judo or other sports sessions.

## **VICE CHAIRPERSON: KELLY MCVEIGH**

Kelly joined the board of the NI Sports Forum in 2015. Kelly is currently Head of Corporate Affairs at Open Strategic Communications which specialises in integrated communications, strategic PR and Media Relations, Public and Corporate Affairs, Crisis and Issues Management, Sustainability and Digital communications.

Kelly currently sits on the Board of the Southern Area Hospice Services, providing strategic advice and guidance. An Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), a member of the Northern Ireland Government Affairs Group (NIGAG) and The Association of Professional Political Consultants (APPC). Kelly also sits on the Department for Communities Sport Matters Monitoring Group.

## **HONORARY SECRETARY: MARC MULHOLLAND**

Marc stepped into the Company Secretary role last year and has been Director on the board of the NI Sport Forum for the past 4 years. Following a lifelong involvement in Basketball, representing Ireland and Ulster, Marc joined Basketball NI over five years ago as a volunteer board member and now Vice Chair heading up all things strategic.

Post pandemic, Marc founded the Belfast Bulls Basketball in 2021 delivering Baby Steps to Basketball, FUNdamentals, Game Time, Ma Bulls and Da Bulls. Creating a social space for learning the sport of basketball.

Marc became the first Executive Director and Executive Producer of Broadcasting for the Basketball Hall of Fame Belfast Classic in 2017 & 2018, held at the SSE Arena Belfast, helping to bring the first Division 1 NCAA College Basketball tournaments to Europe.

With a vast experience wide in basketball operations, broadcast media, digital content, strategy and commercial law, Marc worked as Executive Director for Inspirus Sports helping them bring their NCAA College Basketball events series to a global audience across Ireland and the UK. Marc founded his own SCRAM Films which developed into SCRAM Sports management, media and entertainment consulting. Recently, he helped deliver the FIBA Olympic Qualifiers in Puerto Rico for the Paris Olympic Games in 2024 and has recently joined the NBA's Senior Management Team for Business Basketball Operations in London managing European and Middle East projects.

When not obsessing over sport, Marc loves spending time with his family and friends. He loves nothing more than time with his wife, Maria, and his two young sons Luca (8) and Leon (5).

## **TREASURER: STUART HOLLINGER**

Stuart advises the NI Chamber Board of Directors as the Director of Finance & Performance. He has overall responsibility for the finance, export documentation, governance and operational performance. He has been with the NI Chamber since March 2017, previously Stuart worked in finance roles at Titanic Belfast, Finlay Communications (Sky TV) and Translink. A passion for Physical Activity he likes to spend his leisure time getting out for long walks with his wife and 2 children, Sam and Hannah or at his local leisure centre. He is

a Fellow of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and a member of the Institute of Directors.

## **CATH QUINN**

Cath Graduated from Queen's University Belfast in Accounting and completed her Accountancy charter with the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants. Cath started her Accountancy training in the Construction and Facilities Management Industry and was subsequently employed there as a Company Accountant. Currently, Cath works as an Accountant in Financial Management and Budgeting in the Department for the Economy.

Outside of work she has been a member of the Ulster Hockey Union Management Board as Treasurer and Chair of Finance (2013-2016) and was a player and volunteer at her local club. Recently Cath has become involved in the disability sports sector as a player and volunteer within Wheelchair Basketball.

## **CHRIS MORROW**

Chris is Director of Membership and Services Development at the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NI Chamber), having joined the business membership organisation in 2009.

He has held a number of senior roles there including Head of Communications & Policy; Head of Communications & Engagement and Acting Chief Executive. In his current role he is responsible for NI Chamber's membership growth, retention and engagement, in addition to service development and establishing partnerships with a wide range of organisations across Northern Ireland.

He is also a member of the Institute of Directors in Northern Ireland, and Chair of the Northern Ireland Sports Forum Business Development Sub-Committee. As a father of three young children, Chris is passionate about creating an environment for local sports to continue to thrive into the future.

## **DR PAUL DONNELLY**

Paul has been a Lecturer in Sports Development and Coaching in the School of Sport at Ulster University since February 2021. He is a graduate of Ulster University (1993-1998) and Sheffield Hallam University, England (2013) where he completed his PhD investigating Physical Activity, Health and Wellness Levels Amongst Adults in Northern Ireland.

Paul leads the sport development curricula on Ulster University's undergraduate and post-graduate programmes, and has a particular interest in sport policy, strategy, and practice. He has worked with several universities in the UK and Ireland as an external examiner.

Previously, Paul was the Regeneration Director with the Gaelic Athletic Association (2018-2021) and Head of Policy, Planning and Research at Sport Northern Ireland (2002-2018). Currently, Paul is the Chairperson of The Camogie Association's National Development Plan Implementation Committee (NDPIC).

## **KAREN ROLLO**

Karen has been Chief Executive of Netball NI since 2015 having previously worked as a Club and Workforce Development Officer. She is currently Chair of Ards and North Down Sports Forum and Trustee on the Newforge Community Development Trust (NCDT).

While her employment is focused on the business and administration side of sport, with particular attention to finance, governance, HR and commercial partnerships, Karen's passion for sport stems from personal involvement with Netball at her local club where she plays and coaches, and within the wider Netball NI family as an umpire, umpire tutor, assessor and mentor. Sport has given her so many opportunities, supported her to develop many skills and created lifelong friendships. Her ambition is to ensure opportunities are made available and accessible to everyone. She believes that being a part of the NISF is some way to achieve that.

## **AMINA MARTIN-ROSS**

Amina has worked across a wide range of sports; as an Outdoor Recreation Instructor, a Level 2 Gymnastics Coach, a Level 1 Rowing Coach and a P.E teacher and sports coordinator in a secondary school. She has been the Project Officer and then the Digital Marketing Officer with the Female Sports Forum. She then became a Risk and Conflict Analyst with a consulting firm.

Amina is currently the Northern Ireland Development Officer and Women in Sport Programme Support with Triathlon Ireland. Her focus is currently on participation, inclusion and club development. She is also the Female Lead on the Equality Sub-Committee of the Canoe Association NI which has the remit for inclusion for the organisation.

## **DAVID JOHNSTON**

David graduated from Ulster University in Sport and Exercise Science and currently works for Ulster Rugby, where he specialises in Funding, Public Affairs, Project Management, Capital Development and Strategic Planning. He has over 10 years' experience working in sport, with previous roles in the community and voluntary sector as well as private sector. He has delivered major projects for Ulster Rugby and has a wealth of knowledge of the sports sector. Previously, David was Board member of the Special Educational Needs Advice Centre and enjoys being a father to young twin boys, whom he is passionate about giving a wide range of sporting opportunities at an early age.

## **ALLISON MERCER**

Allison graduated from Queens' University Belfast in Biochemistry and Agricultural Chemistry, during which she was Irish Universities Champion and represented Ireland at the Equestrian World Student Games.

Allison has had a love for most sports all her life, but particularly the equestrian section. She completed the relevant coaching and judging courses and going forward as an Irish Pony Society and Dressage Judge.

She has been the Horse Sport Ireland Youth showjumping chairperson for 3 years, a director of Show Jumping Ireland, currently a director of the Northern Ireland Horse Board and a member of the RUAS Council.

Allison is very focused on youth having opportunities in sport, and women being encouraged to come back into sport.

# GOVERNANCE SUB-COMMITTEE

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

2023-24 has been a reasonably quiet year for the Governance Sub-committee. Whilst the formal operation of the committee has been limited, there have been some key highlights:

- Oversight of the development of the new Strategic Plan 2024-2029;
- Review of Business Case proposal to Sport NI;
- Continued review of the Board structure and governing documents;

Over the course of 2023/24 the NI Sports Forum has assessed and appointed a lead of the consultation and Strategic Review through Sheffield Hallam university. Working through the year, this has led to

the publication of recommendations and subsequent development of a Strategic Plan. This will provide a key plan for the NI Sports Forum looking forward for the next 5 years in how best it can support the sector.

In conclusion, as we enter the planning phase for the new strategic plan, these are positive times for the Forum, and we have a great opportunity to create a clear pathway for our future and ensure we continue to make a significant impact for our members.

*Marc Scott*  
**Chairperson**

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# COMMUNICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

The communications and engagement work of the Forum continues to advocate on behalf of our members and the wider sports sector in Northern Ireland. The Communications Sub-committee has served as a support to this function, monitoring progress across a range of areas.

With the return of the NI Executive earlier this year and the recent publication of a draft Programme for Government, there are a range of platforms for the forum to engage and inform decision makers across government. Some highlights include:

All Party Group on Sport and Physical Recreation – five meetings took place during the reporting period, providing a platform for members to engage directly with MLAs. Examples of key policy areas we were able to engage on, include:

- Road Closures Order
- Access to School Facilities for Community use
- Funding for the KS2 Curriculum Sports Programme
- Legal requirement for Enhanced AccessNI checks

Consultations – the forum responded to 14 consultations across eight departments, advocating on behalf of members on areas such as departmental budgets, the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Draft Strategy and the Healthy Futures Strategic Framework (DoH).

Considerable direct engagement and communications with members ensures they are up to date and informed on a wide range of areas, from funding streams to new policy or legislation, events, and latest news. Through the forums' monthly members ezines, social media and direct contact with the team, members can avail of information, advice, and guidance.

A key area of focus for the forum is to build capacity of our members to engage and communicate across their key stakeholder groups, from elected representatives to local media, partners, and other sector organisations. Two successful social media workshops were delivered, and plans are in place to deliver further workshops going into 2025.

Finally, a significant amount of work has gone into the development of a new long-term strategy for the future of the forum, and the sub-committee will support the forum in communicating and engaging on this in due course.



**Chairperson**

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Over the past year, the Female Sports Forum has experienced growth in both activity and impact, staying closely aligned with the goals of the Active, Fit, and Sporty plan. Several initiatives have been launched or expanded, all aimed at elevating the visibility of women and girls in sports across Northern Ireland.

This year, we connected with the other Home Nations and participated in a meeting to discuss sector-wide issues. The gathering included members from Women in Sport organizations across the UK, and the Female Sports Forum had the opportunity to show the unique challenges facing Northern Ireland. We discussed collective concerns and gained a deeper understanding of each organization's progress. We found this insight-sharing and ability to gain knowledge as everyone is at different organizational stages as extremely useful. The being able to meet quarterly as a productive agreement, with continuing to have these discussions in the future.

We successfully launched the Women's Sport Series, an event designed to foster networking and knowledge-sharing among women working in the sports sector. The event featured a diverse range of speakers from various sports, including an elite athlete panel. The speakers focused on the different types of programs that exist in sports and how to engage participants at various levels. Information-sharing played a key role in the event's success, and it also facilitated meaningful networking opportunities for attendees, helping them connect with both familiar and new faces in the sector. With over 60 people in attendance, the event was a resounding success, and the Female Sports Forum is eager to hold similar events in the future.

In March, we participated in multiple events to celebrate International Women's Day. A highlight was being invited to speak at the Northern Ireland Assembly, where we represented the sports sector, highlighting our current progress and future aspirations, as well as showcasing some of the outstanding programs that exist in sport. It was an honour to be part of such an impressive event, where the Female Sports Forum was presented as a key voice for women in sports in Northern Ireland. Additionally, we took part in an event hosted by Ulster Boxing, where we led an activity around role models and how the girls liked to stay active. Being able to engage with young girls gave insight into how they view sport and being active.

This year saw the creation of two workshops aimed at developing leadership skills and supporting the transfer of skills from sports to the workforce. These workshops were designed to complement a National Governing Bodies (NGBs) leadership program, focusing on areas such as imposter syndrome and skill transfer through networking. Feedback was positive, and based on this success, we would love to expand this type of offering and run the workshops again when possible.

This year, we also created a research document that compiles data and insights on women in sports, including Northern Ireland-specific statistics. This resource provides valuable information on participation rates, barriers to involvement, and the progress being made to enhance visibility and support for female athletes. The document has been shared with various stakeholders across the sector, when they are in need of further resources for either training or assistance in funding with the hope that improve opportunities for women and girls in sport. It has become an essential tool for correlating data and understanding sector.



The Role Models Project has remained a cornerstone of our visibility strategy, allowing us to highlight a variety of sports and athletes. This year, we featured sports such as cricket, Olympic handball, netball, and sailing. We also continued to share various projects and successes across social media, aiming to demonstrate not only the opportunities available to participate in sports but also the many untold stories of women athletes. This project has helped to increase both our social media following and engagement, growing our presence to over 2,100 Instagram followers and 5,000+ followers on Facebook.

Our Monthly Sports Update has also remained an effective tool for promoting the achievements of Northern Irish female athletes. Shared across social media, the Female Sports Forum website, and the Northern Ireland Sports Forum members' report, these updates continue to spotlight often-overlooked accomplishments. We've highlighted events, research, and smaller

sports, helping to address the ongoing issue of visibility for women's sports.

Throughout the year, we have continued to reassess the goals and focus of the Female Sports Forum to ensure alignment with the evolving landscape of women's sports. We held two committee meetings, the first in two years, to review our plans and proposals for future programs. These meetings were essential for reinvigorating our strategy, and we recognize the need for continued engagement to ensure long-term growth and progress.

*Angla Platt*  
**Chairperson**

# BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Over the past twelve months, the forum has identified new commercial partners, explored new member services and sourced new income revenues, as we seek to further grow NI Sports Forum and make a meaningful difference to the organisations which we represent.

Sponsorships and partnerships continue to make the forum as effective as what it is, and I'd like to thank Kingsbridge Healthcare Group and Cathedral Eye Clinic for their continued support. The forum was also delighted to welcome Attis Insurance as a new Corporate partner in 2023, providing a new service to members whereby they can seek advice around insurance needs.

During 2023-2024, we have provided a varied programme of events and training. We ran a number of workshops which covered how to get the best out of your social media and also provided the latest update around GDPR and what members should be aware of. Towards the end of the year, the forum also introduced a number of sports briefings for members on key topics including AccessNI and safe recruitment, along with the launch of the inaugural Women in Sport event which was a huge success.

The last 12 months also saw the forum host the 11th annual Sports Law Conference, in conjunction with the Law Society Northern Ireland and Sports Law NI. The event now runs successfully in a hybrid (recorded) format, with over 110 attendees in person. It was extremely well received with topics ranging from international matters affecting sport to insurance and concussion. Thank you to Keith McGarry, Ken Nixon and Patricia Kirk from the NI Law Society who make such a great effort in supporting the delivery of this event.

To date, these initiatives have all been extremely well received, with nearly 250 individuals attending our events, workshops and conference from across 64 sports.

As well as some new events for the year, several new services have also been introduced, including a social media audit for members. Also, working closely with our colleagues at the Welsh Sports Association (WSA), we agreed access to the WSA Procurement portal for NI Sports Forum Members, to help enable collective procurement and in turn, potentially reduce costs. The team has also started exploring a Resources Hub for members and work on this exciting new service is ongoing.

A full breakdown of our services and events can be seen in this Annual Report as we continue to explore how to improve and expand services that best support our members, particularly into the new Strategy.

Thank you to committee members Marc Mulholland, Amina Martin and David Johnston, as we now look forward to an exciting twelve months ahead for the forum. To get involved, or to find out more about partnering with the Forum, please feel free to reach out to the committee or Executive team.

*Chris Morrow*  
**Committee Chair**

# FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

As the newly appointed treasurer to the Sport Forum, this is my first report; I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board for appointing me. I would also like to thank my predecessor, Cath Quinn, for over 6 years as Treasurer at the forum and for handing over the position in great shape. With Cath Quinn as Chairperson, the Finance Subcommittee met this year virtually to review quarterly management accounts and budgets, review future projections, provide financial oversight to grant applications and recommend approval of the Financial Statements to the Board.

The committee frequently reviewed the membership debtors and monitored bad debts for potential removals from membership. New membership applications were approved by the board and this year we have welcomed Active Youth NI and Sport Changes Life. They have monitored NI Sports Forum payroll, reviewed the market and approved salary rates were appropriate.

In 2023/24 the Sports Forum produced a surplus for the year with additional income from Sport NI, Rank Foundation, Sports Law Conference and Membership Income. These funds were invested in staffing and strategic development through a strategic review that will shape the future of the forum. Whilst some savings were made on staff in the year due to a gap in recruitment, the forum now has two positions supporting the membership body and the Female Sports Forum. This year's surplus ensures that the

Sports Forum is in a strong financial position and resourced to provide for our members.

The outlook for 2024-25 will be challenging from a funding perspective, however the investment in the Strategic Plan is shaping the way forward for the forum and the strong financial reserves contributed this year means the Sports Forum is resilient and building for the future.

Many thanks to the members of the Finance Sub Committee for welcoming me with their support and smooth operation of the financial procedures all year and with a good financial position. Thank you to Sharon Crossan who provides the detailed financial information for the committee and ensures the financial procedures are adhered to and the key transactions are carried out, Richard Honeyford for his knowledge as Executive Manager and Richard Johnson for continuing to contribute his experience from his role as Sports Forum Chair and Treasurer.

*Stuart Hollinger*  
Treasurer

*Cath Quinn*  
Treasurer & Interim  
Finance Committee Chair

# INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024

	2024 £	2023 £
<b>Income</b>		
Sport Northern Ireland	40,000	31,500
Membership Income	16,171	14,924
Other Income	70,649	55,620
Bank Interest	163	245
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>126,983</b>	<b>102,289</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Wages & Administration	99,168	86,043
Printing and Stationery	2,150	3,450
Accountancy Fees and Sundries	12,493	4,919
Programme Costs	5,349	12,785
Access NI Fees	1,366	1,148
Course Fees	66	275
Website Expenses	1,200	1,128
<b>Total Expenditure:</b>	<b>121,792</b>	<b>109,748</b>
<b>Surplus (Deficit) for the Year:</b>	<b>5,191</b>	<b>(7,459)</b>

# BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST MARCH 2024

	2024 £	2023 £
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Debtors	15,959	36,705
Cash at Bank	89,065	85,821
	<b>105,024</b>	<b>122,526</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Sundry Creditors and Accruals	19,057	41,750
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>85,967</b>	<b>80,776</b>
<b>Capital Fund</b>		
Opening Balance	80,776	88,235
Surplus / (Deficit) for the Year	5,191	(7,459)
<b>Total Charity Funds</b>	<b>85,967</b>	<b>80,776</b>

# REPRESENTATIVE & ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

## REPRESENTATIVE MEMBERS

American Football Ireland  
Archery NI  
Association of NI Car Clubs  
Association of Irish Indoor Bowls  
Athletics NI  
Basketball NI  
Baseball Ireland  
British Horse Society  
British Gymnastics  
British Taekwondo  
Cricket Ireland  
Cycling Ulster  
Golf Ireland  
Gymnastics Ireland  
Horse Sport Ireland  
IABA Ulster Branch  
Inline Hockey Ireland  
Irish Indoor Bowling Association  
Irish Football Association  
Irish Underwater Council  
Irish Bowling Association  
Irish Coastal Rowing Federation  
Irish Women's Indoor Bowls Association  
Irish Women's Outdoor Bowls Association  
Motor Cycle Union of Ireland Ulster Centre  
Motorcycle Racing Association  
Mountaineering Ireland  
Mounted Games Association  
Netball NI  
NI Association of Aeromodellers  
Northern Ireland Cross Community Angling  
NI Horse Board  
NI Ju Jitsu Association  
NI Judo Federation  
NI Orienteering  
Northern Ireland Pool Association  
NI Smallbore Shooting Association  
NI Volleyball  
NI Women's Football Association  
NI Weightlifting  
Northern Ireland Fencing Ltd  
North West Cricket Union  
Northern Cricket Union  
PaddleNI  
Parkour UK  
Pitch and Putt Union Ireland  
Racquetball Association of Ireland (Ulster Council)  
Rowing Ireland Ulster Branch  
Royal Yachting Association NI  
Showjumping Ireland Ulster Region

Softball Ireland  
Swim Ulster  
Table Tennis Ulster  
Triathlon Ireland  
Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs  
Ulster Provincial Council of Sea Anglers  
Ulster Angling Federation  
Ulster Badminton  
Ulster Camogie Council  
Ulster Coarse Fishing Federation  
Ulster GAA  
Ulster Hockey Union  
Ulster Rifle Association  
Ulster Rugby  
Ulster Squash  
Ulster Tennis  
Ulster Clay Pigeon Shooting Association  
Ulster Gliding Club  
Ulster Council Ladies Gaelic Football  
Yoga Fellowship NI

## ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

2 & 4 Wheels  
Active Communities Network  
Active Youth NI  
Ards and North Down Sports Forum  
Belfast City Marathon  
Commonwealth Games NI  
Community Games  
CIYMS  
Disability Sports NI  
Ethnic Minority Sports Organisation NI  
Fermanagh & Omagh Sports Forum  
Inclusive Skating  
Ireland Esports  
Leave No Trace Ireland  
Mary Peters Trust  
Multi Ethnic Sports and Cultures  
Northern Ireland Boys' Football Association  
NI Civil Service Sports Association  
NI Deaf Sports  
NI Football League  
NI Schools Football Association  
Outdoor Recreation NI  
Royal Lifesaving Society  
Sport Lisburn & Castlereagh  
Sport for Life  
Special Olympics Ulster  
Sported Foundation  
Train To Be Smart Soccer  
Ulster University Sports Union



VOICE OF SPORT AND RECREATION IN  
**NORTHERN IRELAND**

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Companies House no: NIO10440  
Charity Commission NI no: 100895