


A Manifesto for Sport and Active Recreation in Northern Ireland



THE VOICE OF SPORT AND RECREATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The logo for the NI Sports Forum is displayed in a blue rounded rectangle. It features a large, bold, blue 'NI' followed by the words 'SPORTS' and 'FORUM' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, stacked vertically.

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WE ARE THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF VOLUNTARY SPORT IN NI



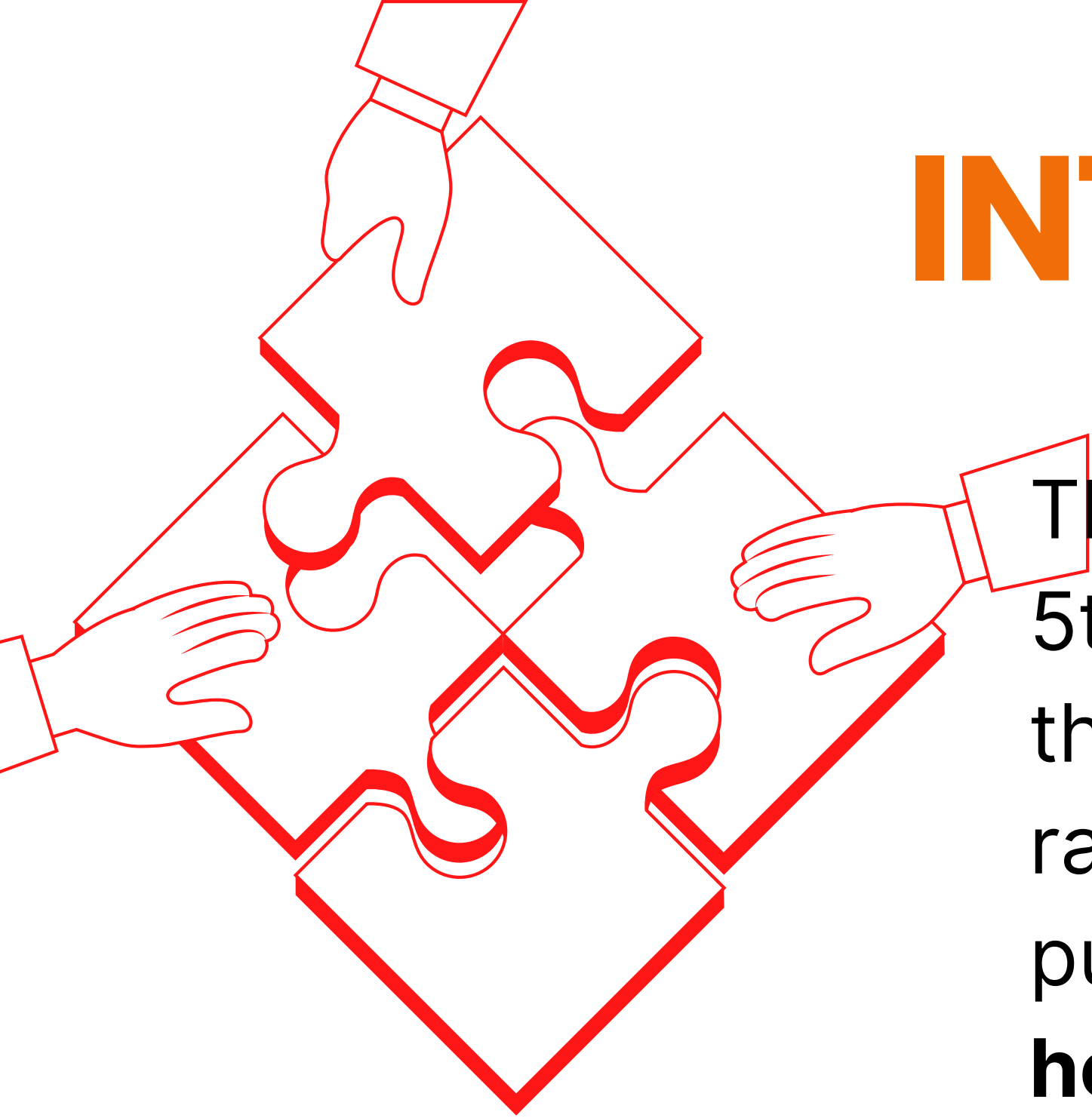
We exist to promote amateur sport and physical recreation, which results in improved overall physical and mental health.

We are a voluntary association whose membership consists of **70+** Full Members, who are governing bodies of sport. **20+** Associate Members and **14** Individual Members with an interest in sport and physical recreation.



Through our members we can reach stakeholders at all levels from sports clubs to volunteers benefiting approximately **480,000** individuals.





INTRODUCTION

The NI Assembly Election on the 5th of May is an opportunity for the next assembly to mark a radical change in direction and put sport and recreation at the **heart** of its policy agenda.

It is clear we now face **crises** on many fronts: childhood inactivity and obesity is ruining some children's life chances, our NHS is under immense strain, our young people face the daily threat of knife crime and our communities are **divided**.

Sport and recreation provides a **solution** to these challenges – it improves our physical and mental wellbeing, saves the NHS money, helps tackle crime and brings our communities **together**.

While some progress has been made in the last few years, it is time to make a step **change**. Sport and recreation must be put front and centre of decision-making and be **funded** properly so that we can change more lives and transform more communities. Active Living - The new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for NI provides an excellent framework for further development.

MANIFESTO AT A GLANCE

Following engagement with our members and to dovetail with the new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, we have developed 4 asks which we urge our new NI Executive to prioritise.

We are asking the Government for a joined-up, cross departmental approach to deliver:



**New and Improved
Sporting Facilities**



**Increased Investment
In Sport**



Support For Event Bids



Female Sport

1 NEW AND IMPROVED SPORTING FACILITIES

Demonstrable need. A recent Sport NI programme was many times over-subscribed, but there were difficulties in delivery due to the limited budget available and the burdensome procurement process involved.

The applications and the high scoring of these against Sport NI criteria show evidence of the need for upgraded facilities and equipment, in particular to support Female and gender-neutral activity.

We are way behind annual allocations in the rest of UK and Ireland, a long-term annual financial allocation would enable developments to be planned and delivered effectively. Investment has become so limited that specific needs of some sports and participant types are not met.

Sports have been unable to plan for the future post-Covid without fresh support and encouragement from funders and government.



Facility and equipment needs have changed over the last 50 years and clubs in particular have been unable to make provision in the way that local councils have, for example.

Investment in places and spaces is essential to the sport and physical activity ecosystem as identified in the new Strategy.

2 INCREASED INVESTMENT IN SPORT

For sustainability. A 3 year minimum cycle would enable bodies to plan support and development, avoiding waste and inefficiencies. For example educational, council, and club facilities could be better co-ordinated to reduce under-utilisation.

Despite a common Programme for Government and progress on the new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, there is still a lack of coordinated support across Departments. The Strategic theme of Partnership and Integration is most relevant.

Participation could be increased locally if clubs/organisations were supported. Strategies for Volunteering and Sport & Recreation should demonstrate this.

Health & Wellbeing outcomes can be delivered cost effectively through Sport and Recreation investment. Sugar tax and Proceeds of crime funding could be used better.

Uncertainty has led to a lack of confidence in organisational leadership, so development and implementation of strategies has been slowed or reversed. An example is Covid 19.

A new High Performance Multisport Centre in Greater Belfast would be a massive boost and asset to the sector.



SUPPORT FOR EVENT BIDS

Sporting events attract visitors, publicity, increased spending and bed-nights. Events are good for the local economy, raise morale and enhance participation and engagement. They also showcase NI as a venue, and NI athletes as role models, without the cost of sending teams elsewhere.

The variety of outdoor recreation venues available within easy reach in NI provides a strong argument for hosting multi-activity events. The heritage for motorsport events for example, should be developed further.



A strong level of public awareness and support for NI athletes and teams across many years and a variety of sports, contributes to the strong cultural ties to larger scale events. Strong connections to other UK and Irish regions and bodies should allow collaborative events to be attracted, and supported.

The existing and proposed stadia and larger scale training venues are generally under-utilised, and there is an improving level of suitable accommodation for potential visitors. In the aftermath of Covid there is a real need and opportunity to re-launch NI as a host region of choice.

We will promote Excellence in Sport, and the development of National and International linkages through seeking support for event bids.

#4bigasks



FEMALE SPORT

Female sport is still severely **underrepresented**.

Opportunities and facilities are simply inadequate in many cases. At senior management and senior coaching levels in particular, roles are often dominated by one gender, to the exclusion of the other.

It is well known that young people are much more likely to take up a sport if influenced by female parents, than by male ones.

Increasing parity of opportunity in competitions, pay, and recognition, will increase the scope for larger scale participation and performance by females, but will create increased demand for associated coaching, leadership, facilities, and other support structures.



The more recent recognition of diverse gender permutations can be a challenge to organisations and more traditional viewpoints. This may affect the treatment of opportunities and risks for any one underrepresented group.

Women's Rugby 7's is being held in Kingspan - showcasing the sport to a significant audience across NI.

Top 2 international cricket womens teams coming to NI - but currently NWCUC don't have sufficient facilities / pitches.

We are keen to continue the work of the Female Sports Forum and engage through partnerships to promote inclusion and inclusive spaces.

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL: What we need from you

Ensure policy makers acknowledge the vital impact sport and physical activity has on both our mental and physical wellbeing.



Highlight the need for adequate investment in sport and its wider impact on a society as a whole.

GET IN TOUCH!
Email us at [**info@nisf.net**](mailto:info@nisf.net) to find out about local sports and recreation clubs in your constituency and arrange a visit to see some sporting action first hand!





CONCLUDING REMARKS

We want all of our members and partners to promote these asks, challenge their local election candidates and to share with us the outstanding work they already do in creating a stronger society and happier and healthier communities.

Please get in touch and tell us how the issues above effect your organisation.

You can do this by using **#4bigasks** on social media or by contacting us at [**info@nisf.net**](mailto:info@nisf.net)



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