



NI & Ulster Age Groups Proposal to relocate Indoor Championships

Following the consultation carried out with Athletics NI and Ulster Athletic Council athletes, coaches, officials, parents and associates, there was a clear indication that the sector was dissatisfied with the facilities currently on offer at Meadowbank Stadium, Magherafelt for the NI & Ulster Indoor Championships. Although the location was ideal, the conditions were far from acceptable for athletes, officials and spectators.

Although the new indoor arena at Abbotstown in Dublin was the preferred option, a number of schedule clashes and restrictions meant we were unable to find a suitable date, so it has been decided to host the 2018 Indoor Championships at the indoor arena in Athlone on Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th February.

We are aware that this move will cause mixed reactions and the distance to travel will restrict some athletes from competing, however the majority of the survey showed a clear indication that this was preferable to remaining in Magherafelt.

Athletics NI will be running two open competitions in Ulster University, Jordanstown on 11th January (jumps & throws) and 13th January (sprints & hurdles) in order to provide indoor competition opportunities to those athletes who chose not to travel to Athlone. However, these will not be qualifying meetings for the AAI National Indoor Championships.

The results of the survey are summarised below.

Summary of Survey Results

1. Would you like to see Indoor Championships move to Abbotstown?
88% said yes
12% said no
2. Would you like the Indoor Championships to move to Athlone?
70% said yes
30% said no
3. Would you pay a small increase in entry fees?
12% said no
80% said yes
(8% said not applicable)
4. Would you be interested in a Senior Championship?
69% said yes
21% said no
(10% said not applicable)

Comments raised:

Pros to changing venue

- More spectator friendly and higher quality track
- Magherafelt too cold and lacks warm up area (many comments!)
- Magherafelt not up to standard
- Risk of injury for athletes doing jumps as they can't stay warm or warm up properly
- Anything would be an improvement
- Support of trialling the move for one year and then review
- Not ideal not to have it in Northern Ireland, but having it in a proper facility in Dublin is worth having
- Would be super for all athletes to compete in a top class stadium
- In support of anything that develops our sport
- Magherafelt does not prepare athletes for the National Championships – they would benefit greatly from a banked track rather than a carpeted floor
- Great idea and long time coming
- Would raise profile and stature of the Championship
- Better experience for NI athletes who don't get to compete in bigger, more professional venues

Cons to changing venue

- This is a NI & Ulster Champ so should be held in Northern Ireland
- Will discourage athletes who may not medal due to travel
- Expense and inconvenience in this economic climate
- Logistics of distance or inconvenience
- Longer drive
- Would not encourage younger athletes to 'have a go' at competing due to long journey

Other comments and responses from Athletics NI

- Senior Indoors worthwhile but hold on a different weekend
 - This would not be financially or logistically viable, so needs to be incorporated within the Age Groups Championships. The Senior Championship would be an Open competition to encourage entries
- Upgrade Magherafelt
 - This is not an option for Athletics NI as it is a facility run by Mid-Ulster Council. Upgrading facilities takes years of planning, fundraising and then actually carrying out the work. (Likewise the facility at Jordanstown, which is run by Ulster University and doesn't have a 200m track)
- Include Masters competition
 - Masters athletes are welcome to enter as Senior athletes if we run a Senior Competition, however a separate Masters Competition would need to be run by NIMAA as they are a different organisation to Athletics NI

- Hold an Indoor Schools Championship
 - Ulster Schools is a totally separate organisation so they would need to hold a separate competition
- Make Magherafelt warmer
 - The practicalities of this are almost impossible. The venue is constructed of steel and canvas so won't retain any heat no matter how many heaters Mid-Ulster Council would be able to provide.
- Hold in mid-February so athletes are properly prepared and date would be closer to AAI Juvenile Champs
 - We are restricted as to when the venue is available. We also have to consider a number of other cross country events already in the fixture list and other indoor meets scheduled by AAI. Athletics NI will hold two open meets at Ulster University, Jordanstown in January to help prepare athletes for the Championships
- Hold Championships on one weekend to reduce travel
 - This would seem to be the preferred option and we would endeavour to hold all events for one age group on one day to allow athletes to travel there and back on the one day if they preferred.
- Build a new facility in Northern Ireland
 - If only it was that simple. If anyone has a spare £4m that they would like to put towards a new track then we would be delighted to build one.
- Make sure there are enough officials for the Championships to run smoothly and on time
 - The Indoors is a massive event and requires a huge amount of experienced officials to give up an entire weekend. While as many officials as are available volunteer their time we are always looking for additional help on the day. Anyone who would be willing to help out would be very much appreciated, and this would certainly help ensure the Championships go smoothly and to time.
- Market and make available to athletes outside Ireland
 - Generally the NI & Ulster Championships are predominantly for the NI & Ulster athletes to compete within their region and qualify for the National Championships, and while athletes from outside NI & Ulster may compete as guests they are not eligible for NI & Ulster titles. Due to the uncertainty of entry levels in a new venue it is likely that the Age Group Indoors will be a closed competition and only open to NI & Ulster athletes until we can gauge numbers.
- A lot of juveniles have other sports on Saturdays. Sunday events would be easier with the additional travel
 - Due to the size of the Championships the competition has to be held over two days so we will need to include a Saturday