



The Northern Ireland Belfast Agreement In Relation To British Biathlon and Snowsport Ireland

The Northern Ireland Act 1998

Within Northern Ireland all citizens have the following birth right;

“It is the birth right of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves . . . as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose, and accordingly . . . to hold both British and Irish citizenship.”

This internationally recognised agreement called the Belfast Agreement is encompassed in legislation through the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It allows the citizens within Northern Ireland to choose their identity and subsequently hold either a British or Irish passport or both if desired.

Impact On The Sporting Environment

The Northern Ireland Act 1998 impacts on every area of life in Northern Ireland and sport is not immune, however the sporting landscape within Northern Ireland is very complex and diverse. They do have a number of Governing Bodies within Northern Ireland, however, there is no recognised Biathlon National Governing Body. Therefore the sporting pathways for an athlete in Northern Ireland would be through the British Biathlon Union or Snowsport Ireland.

Snowsport Ireland and British Biathlon Union

Both Snowsport Ireland and the British Biathlon Union have Memorandum of Understanding to provide collaborative opportunities to training, however, will not seek to influence an Athletes’ decision to compete for Ireland or Great Britain.

All Governing Bodies in the UK and Ireland have a duty to honour this international agreement which both the British and Irish Governments have signed up to. To honour this agreement we must allow the people of Northern Ireland personal choice to identify themselves as British, Irish or both.

Should a NI Athlete wish to be considered to represent Ireland then through the existing Memorandum of Understanding with Snowsport Ireland the British Biathlon Union are able to support the Athlete to make this successful transition across.