

PE1319/R

RESPONSE FROM HENRY McLEISH TO QUESTIONS FROM PETITIONER

It was not possible to consult with everyone associated with youth football but as your petitioner's state I did meet with them briefly in Stirling and received some comment from them.

I had extensive consultation within the game and my report details the people and organisations involved.

My report outlines my views and the SFA and Government are now looking closely at the recommendations.....again the breadth of consultation is reflected in the report's findings.

It is important for the SSFA and the SYFA to work closely together. For this to happen the status of the youth, grassroots and elite development aspects of the game must be given a higher profile and status. Excellent discussions were held with David Little of the SYFA and John Gold of the SSFA, and these discussions are ongoing.

In terms of consultation a very extensive programme was undertaken with inputs and meetings with the National Coaches for men and women.

I inserted comments and a recommendation re the "duty of care issues". As the review was undertaken there was some concerns raised about certain aspects of the youth game and as a result my recommendation suggested that this be the subject of a more detailed and rigorous consideration.

It is not my role to comment further on the views of the Petitions Committee. I had a brief discussion with the Commissioner for Children and Young People and a meeting is about to be arranged.

My comments on the pro-youth system are in my report. The SFA is currently working on my recommendation for a "National Performance Framework" to be established. This will include measures to improve the monitoring and measurement of progress throughout all aspects of the game. There is a need to have a fully integrated youth development programme covering the youth action plan and the youth initiative.

The answer to this question has to await the outcome of further discussion and assessment of the facts and evidence. My recommendation in the report was designed to achieve this.

The recommendations in my report are based on the need to dramatically improve all aspects of the youth game. Scotland, the Government and the game need a more significant return on the investment we are making.

The taxpayer has a limited but important role to play in the development of football, especially in relation to the fitness, health, sport, wellbeing and confidence aspects of children, young people and adults of all ages and for both sexes. But we need to ensure that finance from the game, the taxpayer and other stakeholders is coordinated and focussed on a more rigorous regime of value for money and return on investment. We all have an interest in using money as wisely as possible.

This is an impossible question to answer. The emphasis should be on quality not numbers. For far too long we have relied on inaccurate information about numbers. The role of the National Performance Director will address this issue and ensure elite/talent development in our country is radically improved.

Every aspect of the petition has been addressed in the comprehensive review of the youth, grassroots and recreational development contained in the report "Facing the Future" The recommendations are the start of a period of hard work and a comprehensive process involving all aspects of the game. The issues are complex- nearly 370,000 children, young people and adults are involved in the game, with thousands of clubs and a remarkable group of coaches and volunteers- and will require a sustained period of national effort if we are to achieve world class standards and close the gap between our expectations and current achievements.