

Minute of Meeting held at the Scottish Parliament

PRESENT

Margo MacDonald MSP, Shona Robison MSP and Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport, James Kelly MSP, Jenny Marra MSP, Drew Smith MSP, Peter Warren, Kim Atkinson, Lee Cousins, Alan Miller, Colin Rennie, Stephen Harrod, Kenny Stewart, Charlie Raeburn, Gemma Cheek, Stewart Harris, James McDougall, Oliver Barsby, Ronnie Sloan, Alan Murray, Jim Gunn, Jacqui Dunlop, Anne Smillie, John Clayton, Christine Rankin, Ron Sutherland, Pam Scott, Walter Mcadam, Fraser Walker, James Stuart, Diane Cameron, Derek Grieve, Andrew Russell, Steven Birrell, Morag Arnot, Stew Fowlie, Jane Campbell Morrison, E Hemdey, Craig Miller and Nick Rennie.

APOLOGIES

John Lamont MSP, Humza Yousaf MSP, Lachlan Bruce MSYP, David McColgan, Euan Miller, Dougi Bryce, Ashley Howard, Robert Heatly MBE, Duncan Hamilton, Gavin McLeod, Bruce Crawford, Hugh Hall, Nigel Holl, Susan Jackson, Campbell Ogilvie, Stewart Regan and Stuart Smith.

Previous Minute:

The minutes from the June 2010 AGM were approved as an accurate record.

Cross Party Group Convenor

Margo MacDonald MSP (Independent) was proposed to continue as Convenor. Margo accepted this nomination. No other nominations were received and Margo was duly appointed.

Cross Party Group Vice Convenors

The following were all approved as Vice Convenors:

- Jim Hume MSP (Liberal Democrat)
- James Kelly MSP (Labour)
- Liz Smith MSP (Conservative)
- Paul Wheelhouse MSP (SNP).

Cross Party Group Secretariat

Margo confirmed that Peter Warren from her office had carried out this function for a number of years. However, Margo was keen to further involve the sports sector in this, in line with the purpose of the Group, and as such proposed that the Secretariat for the Group be jointly undertaken by Peter and the Scottish Sports Association. This was accepted by the Group.

Cross Party Group Work Plan

Margo presented the draft proposed work plan for the coming year. She explained that she was keen to ensure that the Group consider cross cutting issues across sport and look at different structures for the Group meetings to make them as accessible as possible to MSPs and the wider sporting sector; these are reflected within the work plan.

Round Table Discussion

Margo welcomed Shona Robison MSP, Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport, expressing her delight at the appointment of a Minister for Sport. Margo clarified for those present that the Minister is attending the meeting to share some initial thoughts with the Group, that Ministers are not accountable to Cross Party Groups and that the Minister is most welcome to the meeting.

The Minister thanked Margo for the invitation to the meeting and stated that she is keen to hear views and ideas as we move forward and she welcomes this opportunity for an exchange of information. The Minister shared Margo's pleasure in there being a dedicated Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport, which she is aware that Margo, the SSA and the CPG called for. She was pleased that this would provide her with more dedicated time to focus on sporting and Commonwealth Games opportunities and issues. The Minister particularly

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recognised the huge contribution of volunteers in sport, as highlighted by the SSA and this Group, citing as an example the 10,000 volunteers who enabled the 5 million Active Schools sessions last year.

The Minister outlined her sporting priorities. School sport and activity were high on this list. Community engagement was cited as another priority in helping communities to feel involved and, if they are able, to enable sports facility ownership. The Minister announced that 100 Community Sports Hubs would be established by 2014 and that these would all be community-led. Having visited a number of these Hubs, the Minister reflected on their strengths in pulling clubs, athletes, SGBs and schools together and to better utilise resources: personnel, facilities and financial resources. The Minister also announced a new fund to oil the wheels of community ownership to support eg planning, compiling a business case or establishing a social enterprise.

In reinforcing the priority of school sport, the Minister stated that it is important to her to get this right. It is also important to acknowledge the successes that have been achieved, the Active Schools programme being one of these. The Minister was clear that the Active Schools programme is not an alternative to curriculum PE and reaffirmed her commitment to 2 hours of PE in primary schools and 2 periods of PE for S1-S4 pupils. However, it is important that this is understood as a minimum, that this is still not enough. Thus the importance of school sport (including the work of Active Schools in mornings, playtimes, lunchtimes and after school) and school-club links, in supporting weekend, evening and sustainable participation, are vital. Success is each of these working well in all schools and in providing a positive start to encouraging a lifetime of interest and activity in sport for all children.

The inspiration from the 2014 Commonwealth Games, the Ryder Cup, and the World Artistic Gymnastics Championships in Glasgow in 2015 will showcase Scotland as a great venue for sport. It is also vital that there is a legacy from all this excitement and opportunity and that young people are encouraged to try new sports.

The Minister announced the introduction of a new School Sports Awards programme, and thanked the SSA for their support with this new opportunity. The aim is to create a school ethos with sport at the heart and to support friendly competition between schools. Schools can aspire to gold, silver and bronze awards, with bronze being awarded to schools who are meeting basic requirements (eg 2 hours/2 periods of PE), while gold will be awarded to schools who are offering a full programme of activities including eg Active Schools, school-club links, senior pupil programmes, coaching and leadership. The importance of parental pressure presents an opportunity in this regard – schools will be able to fly the flag demonstrating their achievement, inspiring parents to ask questions and to recognise achievement. This will provide a visible record to recognise and reward sporting schools. The Minister also suggested that this may present an opportunity for potential sponsors.

Volunteering was also raised as a priority by the Minister, highlighting that they are the lifeblood of sport in Scotland. It will be important to harness this opportunity and to encourage more people to volunteer. For the Commonwealth Games alone, 15,000 volunteers will be required and the Minister urged SGBs to use this as a mechanism to encourage more sporting volunteers.

Margo thanked the Minister for her thoughts and opened the floor for discussion and questions.

Margo asked about the structure and management of the Community Sports Hubs and whether there had been a difference between urban and rural communities in how they have responded to the opportunity. The Minister responded saying that there hadn't really been a difference, but that there had been commonality in seeing communities coming together. Some communities had seen it as an opportunity immediately and some had utilised the opportunity as a result of a proposed facility closure – both examples exist and both are important and supported. What is important is having a strong group and strong leadership who are prepared and determined to see the project through and who recognise the value of the approach and the project. There is no blueprint for the Hubs, they simply require to compile a business case that stacks up. Some Hubs have been initiated by parents, clubs etc. Diane Cameron noted the great work that many social enterprises undertake in this area, which is supported through SenScot by **sportscotland** and The Robertson Trust. Stewart Harris supported this saying that leadership and seeing the opportunity are the most important things. Funding to support the Hubs is available from **sportscotland**.

Margo reiterated that the importance of accessibility, in relation to inclusion and pricing of facilities, is vital. She then asked who sets the standards for the School Sports Award. The Minister responded saying that this was an idea conceived by members of the SSA and that clear criteria will be communicated for gold, silver and bronze awards to ensure this is accessible for Head Teachers. Active Schools will be critical, as will Active Schools Co-ordinators in helping to assess the Awards. The Awards need to be accessible but robust and need to be supported beyond 2014. The Minister is aiming to launch the Awards in Autumn 2012. James Stuart supported the idea of the Awards and their importance in instilling a cultural change in parents as well as pupils. He also

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agreed that while the Commonwealth Games is a great vehicle to launch the Awards, they must last longer than the lead up to the Games.

Charlie Raeburn asked about the UK School Games and investment in participation and performance sport in Scotland. The Minister informed the Group that the UK School Games in 2012 will take place within the Scottish exam period. Unfortunately, this time is fixed because it is part of the Olympic test event series. She confirmed that participation data is gathered through the Scottish Household Survey, by Active Schools and by SGBs. Currently, **sportscotland** invests £13 million per year into Active Schools, with an 80% to 20% ratio of support from **sportscotland** and each local authority. The Minister also highlighted the 22 medals won by the Scottish Commonwealth Youth Games Team and praised the medal winners and many developing performance athletes who made up the team. Building participation, the ability to get involved and to maintain interest, and performance will remain key priorities.

Stewart Harris noted the importance of local leadership and reflected that the challenge is in bringing the right people together. Margo asked if there were any problems in relation to PPP school contracts. Stewart agreed that there were, but confirmed that **sportscotland** is happy to sit down with partners to discuss any challenges and is keen to work with local authorities in this regard. The Minister reassured the Group that opening the school estate is a priority within local authority discussions and in Community Sports Hub models. While there may be challenges, if there is a will to achieve this there is no barrier that cannot be overcome. We need to keep working on this issue and using leverage to achieve this aim. Stewart confirmed that **sportscotland** meets with all 32 local authorities and that, although these are local decisions, this will form part of the discussions. Margo supported this as a priority and reminded members that it is an item for a future CPG agenda within the work plan.

Nick Rennie welcomed the Awards to increase school sport. He added a plea for appropriate extra-curricular competitive sport to be part of the Awards, highlighting the extra experiences and skills young people gain from competitive sport. The Minister agreed to take this on board and confirmed that the school ethos is moving more to competition.

Ron Sutherland asked the Minister about progress in relation to the proposed merger between UK Sport and Sport England and targets for *Reaching Higher*. In relation to the first issue, the Minister confirmed that the Scottish Government had raised strong concerns and, therefore, this was now being presented as a coming together of background functions. A question still remains in relation to whether there will be one or two CEOs. However, the Minister expects the governance and the management of the new body to be representative of the Home Nations and has been given some assurances around this. In relation to the *Reaching Higher* targets, the Minister stated that these were laid out in discussions with **sportscotland** and SGBs and the latter are now on the **sportscotland** website to ensure clarity of targets. Stewart reminded the Group that it was vital to have realistic ambitions to realistic investment – and that over 80% of investment in sport is made locally.

Margo thanked the Minister again and everyone for their attendance. Margo also reminded MSPs and previously invited guests that she was hosting the Scottish Sports Alliance's 'Sporting Champions' Reception in Parliament this evening and was keen to see a strong attendance from MSPs, who had all signed up as Scottish Sporting Champions prior to the elections.

The meeting ended at 1.55pm

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