

Scottish Sports Association

Scottish Parliament Health & Sport Committee Report

Report on the Committee's Inquiry into
Support for Community Sport

A submission on behalf of the Governing Bodies of Sport in Scotland

27/03/2013



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Inquiry into Support for Community Sport

Submission from the Scottish Sports Association

The Scottish Sports Association (SSA) thanks the Health and Sport Committee for the invitation to respond to this report.

Our members welcome the Committee's Inquiry and this report which highlights a number of key aspects and opportunities within Scottish sport. Our response has been compiled, as ever, following discussion with our members. Rather than reflecting on each recommendation in turn, our response will focus on the key themes from the recommendations (whilst recognising that the areas are interlinked), following some general reflections.

While the Inquiry was broad in scope, it importantly touched on a number of topical agendas. Notably, our members were pleased with the inclusion of the contribution of sport and clubs to the preventative spend agenda in the Inquiry's scope. While our members appreciate that the majority of Parliamentary preventative spend discussions appear to revolve around fiscal prudence, the unique contribution of sport to this agenda, in enabling people to live longer lives and increasing the quality of life, appears to be absent. Surely people living longer and happier lives should be a key outcome for any agenda. The report states that there is a "good public understanding that a more active lifestyle brings health benefits". Our members would question as to whether the public know enough about these benefits and would suggest that further communication of these benefits, and how people can become more physically active, is required. While it is clear that the Committee members understand the contribution that sport makes to the preventative spend agenda, this could have been more strongly reflected in the recommendations from the report to encourage other Committees and other partners to consider sport in relation to ongoing preventative spend discussions.

While the report demonstrates progress in many areas, our members remain clear that further collaboration is still required between local authorities, health, education, sport and other partners towards a "more integrated and strategic approach to the support of community sport".

Volunteering

Our members welcome the focus within the report on volunteering; rightly identified as the lifeblood of sport in Scotland. However, our members would raise caution in relation to the definition of terms contained within the report and recommendations pertaining to volunteering, in making distinctions between: volunteers, coaches and officials; volunteer development and club development; volunteers at national, regional and club/local level; and between workforce and volunteers/coaches/officials. Terminology is also important in specifying qualified coaches from active and deployed coaches, the latter two being the most crucial to the development of community sport.

Following discussion with our members, it is understood that few Scottish Governing Bodies (SGBs) of sport have documents specifically entitled 'volunteer strategies'. However, it is understood that the majority of

SGBs have documents which “would provide a lead on crucial matters such as recruitment and retention” for volunteers. Commonly such documents would include: Strategic Plans, Annual Business Plans, Event Plans, Club Development Plans etc. Volunteering is at the heart of every sport in Scotland and, as such, supporting and developing volunteers are at the heart of the work of SGBs as part of their core business and are integrated within every aspect of an SGB’s work.

Examples, such as the example on the ‘Volunteer Manager’ work within the Scottish Orienteering Association, contained within the SSA’s initial submission, and the recent volunteer recruitment figures for Scottish Athletics through the Club Together programme, suggest that one of the factors making a significant and positive difference to the recruitment of volunteers is a specified individual within each club with a responsibility for recruiting and supporting volunteers; that one of the best mechanisms for volunteer recruitment is through face to face contact. This is echoed by Triathlon Scotland which has witnessed a legacy following the World Duathlon Championships in Edinburgh in 2010 of an increased number of volunteers, which is a result of a specific member of staff being allocated with a responsibility for supporting volunteers within the sport.

In relation to supporting the volunteer “workforce” two examples which will hopefully be of interest to the Committee include that between 2007-2011 fourteen sports, supported by **sportscotland**, undertook ‘Workforce Development Plans’ to review the current and future needs of coaches and coaching. In addition to these, which focussed on coaching, a number of SGBs are currently working with **sportscotland** to compile plans to support their technical officials – another key aspect of the “workforce”.

The readiness of sports clubs for the increase in demand for club sport on the back of Glasgow 2014 and the Ryder Cup is vital and extends beyond just coaches. Sharing lessons learned from 2012 will provide information in this regard but there remain opportunities to further identify roles and responsibilities in establishing and meeting the needs/gaps/training/processes required to ensure such opportunities are maximised for all sports. It would be beneficial to understand from some case study clubs which were prepared and benefitted from an influx of new members following the Olympics and Paralympics, as to the measures they took to prepare themselves and what planning, recruitment and training was required to capitalise on this opportunity.

In addition to this, there is an area of work for identifying the capacity needs of clubs and to work with clubs to establish what support they would need to make the most of this legacy opportunity; “capacity” of clubs needs to be considered holistically, not simply in relation to the volunteer capacity. An aspect of legacy planning is required within clubs: for clubs to be supported to consider their current capacity, the current barriers to expanding this capacity, the actions/requirements which could expand this capacity (including required timeframes), what their potential capacity would be if such barriers could be removed/requirements fulfilled and what support is available to them to undertake this process. Already a number of SGBs report clubs with waiting lists where facilities cannot meet the demand for club participation. Our members wish to highlight that different barriers to increased participation may exist within different clubs; certainly many clubs could deliver more activity with more volunteers, but for other clubs the availability and/or affordability of facilities, or other issues, will be the key barrier to expansion; it would be imprudent to assume such barriers without clubs undertaking such a process. Our members are unsure if such work is being undertaken and are keen to work with partners to ensure that any necessary processes are in place to support the recruitment and training of volunteers and the development of solutions to barriers required for clubs to be ready to capitalise on this once in a lifetime opportunity.

Our members welcome the work being undertaken by **sportscotland** and Volunteer Development Scotland in relation to the development of a volunteer portal. In addition to this, however, there is an action required to

encourage and support clubs to consider their volunteering 'vacancies', to write these as an interesting role description which considers the interests of a volunteer and how they may benefit from the volunteering opportunity and to actually submit these roles to the portal. This isn't currently common practice in sport, hence further support is required for clubs to undertake this process, which is highly complementary to the 'capacity planning' outlined above. Consideration is also required as to the marketing and communication of this portal to the general public.

Leadership within the Scottish Government and the sporting sector in relation to supporting volunteers in sport is welcomed, but considerable emphasis must also be given to the opportunities presented by other sectors too and the benefits and interest in Employer Supported Volunteering. This is recognised within the recommendations in the body of the report and our members would endorse that same breadth of recommendation, to incorporate all employers and all sectors, to be highlighted within the summary of recommendations at the beginning of the report. Our members would recommend that further emphasis is placed on the opportunities for all employers to consider the benefits and opportunities of Employer Supported Volunteering and for their staff to volunteer on a more frequent basis within local sporting organisations. There is currently a mis-match between standard employer volunteering policies and the needs of sport and local sports clubs – bridging this gap, through Employer Supported Volunteering, could leave a significant and sustainable legacy for Scotland. This is a most topical agenda, as many employers are currently considering granting employees additional special leave to volunteer at the Commonwealth Games. While this is a positive start, the opportunity for this short-term thinking to be broadened for employers to think about the longer-term opportunities for and benefits from their employees volunteering more frequently at a local level is an opportunity which we cannot afford to miss.

Clubs

Our members welcome the Committee's recognition of the contribution of both Community Sports Hubs (CSHs) and also, critically, of the other 13,000 sports clubs in Scotland and the plea to support all clubs. Our members are clear that it is vital to support the identification of opportunities for clubs beyond the CSH model, along with the sharing of best practice generally between clubs, which they see as a significant opportunity.

The question of affordable facilities, as intimated above, remains an ongoing question for community clubs. We are aware that there is research which indicates that cost is not a barrier to participation, but anecdotally our members report that in fact cost can be and is a barrier to club activities. There is no apparent definition for 'affordable' sports facilities, which hinders any discussion in this regard; the question remains as to what the cost of access to sports facilities should relate for them to be 'affordable' (and importantly to whom), along with how this should relate to the cost of the health vices which sport is proven to prevent/address. Following consultation with our members, the SSA compiled a 'Vision for Sport' document in Summer 2012 which floated the idea that any facility, which has received any investment of public funding, should provide free access to its facilities for community sports clubs. This opportunity is certainly worth consideration and would leave a phenomenal legacy and opportunity for community sport and clubs.

The Committee's Inquiry highlighted many good examples and best practice of community and club sport in Scotland. The challenge in this regard remains two-fold:

1. Sharing best practice at grassroots level with other organisations involved in grassroots sport throughout Scotland (including CSHs and the 13,000 other sports clubs)

2. Sustaining, embedding, replicating and resourcing this best practice to make a lasting difference throughout Scotland.

CashBack for Communities

Our members very much welcome the investment of CashBack for Communities finance into Scottish sport and would be keen to input to and work towards a strategy for the investment of CashBack for Communities funding into Scottish sport.

While some sports are pleased to continue an agreement related to longer-term support from CashBack investment, other sports have completed their initial agreement in this regard without further investment being available. A strategy, as detailed above, would enable further integrated planning in this regard across a range of sports and partners.

Local Authorities

Our members support the recommendation that all local authorities produce local sports strategies and implementation plans, but would add to this stipulation the following requirements:

- 1.) That these are produced in consultation, and in partnership, with all the local sports clubs (not just those which are based within a local authority/Leisure Trust facility) – recognising that many are produced already through such a partnership approach
- 2.) That these are considered an integral process and partnership within the local Community Planning Partnership process.

Partnerships with local authorities remain a priority for SGBs, and also a challenge for many, frequently due to resource constraints. New partnership opportunities may be presented by the construction of local sports strategies and implementation plans, including partnerships between local authorities, SGBs and clubs. Such strategies present an important opportunity to welcome into the fold sports clubs which are not based within local authority premises. As such, our members welcome the recommendation that the sports strategies developed by local authorities should take into account “all sports and active recreation taking place in the locale” and “having awareness of all local sporting facilities” to ensure a holistic and co-ordinated approach to community sport. Our members would also stress the requirement for the inclusion within such strategies of clubs and activities which are based in one area but whose activities are undertaken elsewhere – for example a number of outdoor pursuits clubs where club activities can be held in a wide range of areas.

The currently poor link between community sport and Community Planning Partnerships also remains a concern and our members echo the comments in the report which highlight the need for sport to be considered within the Community Planning Partnership Review. However, the process for constructing such strategies and plans, and the priority placed on the strategies and plans by the local authority, each present an opportunity in this regard. The opportunity to clarify the role and impact of Leisure Trusts within this setting would also be welcomed, as such entities may be perceived as more financially driven than local authority led. Issues related to this, such as local competition between different ownership/management models of facilities as well as the balance between community use and pricing policies for Leisure Trust managed facilities are also pertinent for consideration.

Consistent information on facilities charging was also welcomed, particularly in relation to a better understanding of an integrated policy for this across a local authority which addresses issues of competition between facilities – including local authority/Trust facilities and the school estate. The priority, access and charges for community clubs in this regard continue to prove a challenge for clubs, particularly in relation to

the club then providing affordable opportunities for the local community. As intimated previously, the availability of facilities also continues to be a driver in relation to participation and towards a participation legacy from Glasgow 2014.

Our members requested clarification as to a definition for “sweating assets”. An interpretation of this as the integration of a portfolio of assets (including leisure, community and education) to ensure best utilisation poses questions as to the clarity of a balance of aims between income generation, societal benefits and diversity of opportunity, which are not always compatible aims. Clarity on this balance in relation to the responsibilities for leisure which have been outsourced to Leisure Trusts is also of interest.

Our members await with anticipation the results of **sportscotland’s** review of access to the school estate and are sympathetic to the challenge of accessing and compiling such a comprehensive collection of this data; while noting that this challenge in gathering information may be symptomatic of the challenge of a consistency of policy at a local level as regards the community use of school facilities. Our members welcome the Committee’s definition of an ‘open’ school estate as one which is “open in the evening, at weekends and during holidays”. Our members also wondered whether a similar audit exists for private school facilities.

The potential of the school estate to facilitate additional community sporting activities is well recognised. However, our members would strongly urge for further proactive action in this regard, to ensure that all new schools are built with this community engagement opportunity at their core. As such, our members would recommend the statutory requirement for **sportscotland** to be party to the development of all new school builds prior to the submission of planning permission, ie at a stage when **sportscotland’s** expertise can be utilised and brought to bear to ensure that all new schools have community access at the heart of their ethos and built infrastructure.

The significant contribution of local authorities to sports development also requires highlighting; local authorities/Leisure Trusts provide a fundamental role in this area, in addition to their role as a facility provider. Local authorities/Leisure Trusts are frequently the employers of sports development staff on the ground – the people who work with the clubs to assist and support them. This is a vital function, especially as the vast majority of SGBs do not have the resource to employ sports development officers, and one which cannot be lost within a focus on local authority facilities.

The role of local authorities in promoting, encouraging and enabling access to the outdoors, as with all related partners, also remains a priority. As such, our members welcome the recommendation that “more consideration should be given to making the most of the sporting potential of Scotland’s outdoors, the natural environment (even in urban areas) and adventure sport”. In case it is of interest to the Committee to reflect the scale of outdoor activity sport in Scotland, the SSA currently has 52 Full Member SGBs, 20 of which are members of our Outdoor Pursuits Group and therefore have a link to outdoor pursuits/adventurous activities.

Equality

Through the Equality Standard for Sport, and beyond, SGBs have been working to challenge and eradicate inequalities of all kinds. To date 36 SGBs have completed various levels of the Standard, from Foundation to Intermediate, with further working towards each of these levels and beyond. As evidenced through a range of examples within the Committee’s report, SGBs remain committed to, where possible, supporting interventions which are linked to evidence of need and are keen to further understand the factors driving success in best practice case studies in this regard.

Our members are unanimous in their support for the work of Scottish Disability Sport and their inclusive approach to informing cultural change and practice more widely in relation to disability sport.

Physical literacy

Our members commend Scottish Swimming in relation to recommendation 15.

Recommendation 15 also raises the question of monitoring for the other four key components of physical literacy as identified within the report – ie running, jumping, throwing and catching (in addition to swimming). Our members would strongly recommend a commitment to every young person having an entitlement to physical literacy, along with suggesting detailed reporting of standards of physical literacy on an individual and collective basis. Such an entitlement within every school would ensure an equality of provision and opportunity for all young people. Strong leadership and direction is also required within every school to encourage and promote activity, not to inhibit activity or raise barriers to activity. Our members would recommend a strong commitment in this regard, particularly for young people with a disability.

Our members welcome the Minister's comments about "better equipping primary school classroom teachers to teach PE in the same way as they teach other subjects" and the focus on developing the skills and competence levels in PE for all primary teaching staff. Our members also welcome the requirement to better link the teaching of sports in secondary school PE with the local sports club provision to encourage school-club links and sustainable participation.

The current legacy debate south of the border following the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and the impact on legacy through schools and physical literacy aspects are both interesting, and provide learning for us ahead of 2014 in Scotland. The recent announcements of further investment by the UK Government into direct coaching and Physical Education support in primary schools – as a legacy component - raise questions about the potential for similar approaches in Scotland. However, the difference in Scotland is that we can start that work as pre-legacy, if decisions were to be made sooner rather than later, and prepare our young people and our clubs ahead of the undoubted inspiration that will follow in Scotland in the summer of 2014.