

Lewis MacDonald MSP
Convener, Health and Sport Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

25 November 2020

Dear Lewis,

Health and Sport Committee consideration of the impact of COVID-19 on sports clubs and other local recreational facilities

Thank you for your letter of 12 November 2020. Firstly, I welcome the Committee's interest in this area for what has been an extremely challenging period for sport clubs and local recreational facilities. I appreciate this response will be mainly focussed on football but acknowledge this will form part of the Committee's wider inquiry into the effects of the pandemic. I have addressed your questions in the order they were asked.

We have been working closely with the football authorities from the outset of the pandemic to ensure clubs at all levels have access to the support and advice they need at this difficult time. A range of general financial assistance has already been made available by the Scottish Government and the UK Government and many football clubs have accessed this funding. We are aware this is an extremely challenging time for football clubs at all levels in Scotland – particularly given their relative reliance on gate receipts.

Currently, football clubs and other sporting organisations at all levels are able to apply for any appropriate general support from the Scottish Government or UK Government, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. More information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>.

Sports clubs were also brought within scope for recent funding if they operate a hospitality facility, as many larger ones do.

In addition to this, the Scottish Government - in conjunction with sportscotland - has also worked closely with partners to understand their specific circumstances in supporting community sport to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. We are helping sporting organisations and groups to access the various funding streams available. More information can be found at:

<https://sportscotland.org.uk/covid-19/support-for-clubs-and-community-sport-organisations/>.

The Scottish Government has also worked with the third sector to develop funds. The Community and Third Sector Recovery Programme (CTSRP) was announced in the Programme for Government 2020-21, as part of Scottish Government's £350 million emergency response to coronavirus.

The CTSRP aims to support third sector organisations who are supporting people and communities through the move from lockdown to recovery. There are two distinct strands to the programme:

- Adapt and Thrive aims to support organisational recovery and change.
- Communities Recovery Fund aims to support the delivery of current and new community services.

More information can be found at:

<https://scvo.org.uk/support/coronavirus/funding/scottish-government/community-recovery/crf>.

Turning to the Committee's questions about spectators in Stadia, our approach and principles remain those we set out in our *Framework for Decision-Making*, based on clinical evidence, expert advice, and a balanced assessment of the risks. Given that the situation with the virus remains fragile – with many cases and continuing pressure on the NHS – we are taking a cautious approach, based on a maximum of 300 spectators initially.

In terms of other types of events currently permitted in level 1, 'Outdoor open spaces live events' are permitted. These are events which take place in open spaces so that spectators are dispersed over a wide area, for example a golf event. Outdoor seated live events are also permitted in level 1. Capacity for both types of event should be calculated based on ensuring 2m physical distancing up to a limit of 200 attendees at any one time in Level 1 for this type of event.

'Indoor Small seated live events' are also permitted in level 1 areas. Examples include music concerts, plays, comedy shows, opera, sporting events and business conferences and dinners. Capacity should be calculated based on ensuring 2m physical distancing up to a limit of 100 attendees. Guidance for event organisers to help events restart safely is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-events-sector-guidance/>.

This guidance includes definitions of the types of event that are permitted in different levels. The limits on attendee numbers at events will be kept under review based on learning as events restart.

Our events sector guidance does not extend to minor sporting events and competitions being organised where there are no spectators permitted. In this case organisers should refer to sportscotland guidance and relevant sport-specific guidance.

In terms of football, rugby etc, a maximum of 300 supporters are allowed in areas with level 0 and level 1 restrictions. We are considering how and when this figure may increase – but it is important to emphasise there is no immediate prospect of an increase given the fragile situation with the virus. We have no plans to extend admission to supporters in level 2 or level 3 areas.

Information on transmission risks and options considered in relation to Events and Stadia in the Strategic Framework can be found in the BRIA for The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020; https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2020/344/pdfs/ssifia_20200344_en_001.pdf

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We recognise the pivotal role community clubs play within local communities, not just in delivering sport and physical activity. We welcomed the announcement of the £300m UK Government support scheme for sports impacted by the loss of spectators during the pandemic, and we are seeking urgent clarification on the Barnett consequential funding as a result in order to support the sector in Scotland. While many sporting organisations have been able to access wider support packages as noted above, the Scottish Government will continue to work with the sector to ensure their long-term sustainability and survival.

Yours sincerely

Joe FitzPatrick

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