

Scottish Sports Association

Christie Commission

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

David McColgan
1/28/2011



Christie Commission

Submission from Scottish Sports Association

Introduction

- 1 The Scottish Sports Association (SSA) thanks the Christie Commission for the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry.
- 2 The SSA is the independent voice for sports governing bodies in Scotland. We represent their interests and currently have 54 full members and 18 associate members. The governing bodies of sport are responsible for the governance, development and delivery of their individual sports and provide a formal structure for over 12,000 sports clubs in Scotland. Many of these organisations are run on a not-for-profit basis and are managed by volunteers. They provide coaching, competition and youth participation development opportunities for their local communities and most of the 150,000 people who volunteer in sport do so within the club structure.
- 3 The Governing Bodies of Sport along with the Scottish Sports Association recognise the unique contribution of sport to Scottish society and the important role it plays throughout our life in every community across Scotland. Whether it is Physical Education, club sport or supporting the local team; whether it is shinty, badminton or cricket; sport plays a pivotal role from Dingwall to Dumfries and Oban to Montrose.

The current playing field

- 4 1 in 5 people in Scotland are members of a sports club, a total of 900,000 individuals across all 32 local authorities; sport is truly Scotland's greatest social movement. While these 900,000 individuals take part on a regular basis there are many more thousands that join them through recreational participation and as supporters/spectators. Many of these individuals, and indeed many of the 12,000 sports clubs, are reliant on accessing a wide range of Local Authority provisions from sports halls to town halls and sports fields to school fields; the role of local authorities in sport is significant at all levels in Scotland.
- 5 Local authorities have a huge role to play in the delivery of sport in Scotland and some 68% of the population believe that local authorities have the primary responsibility for meeting demand for sport and recreation.¹ Parallel to the public's expectation is the responsibility of local authorities for 90% of the £558million annual national budget for sport in Scotland.

¹ Sportscotland; Sport 21 – Shaping Scotland's Future 2003-2007

Local authorities hold sport's purse strings to the tune of £511 million a year in Scotland, making them the single biggest investor in sport in Scotland.²

- 6 Local authorities have a statutory requirement to provide sporting facilities for their local population³. This requires them to determine local needs and to take account of national objectives. Many sports rely on local authorities as the main providers of indoor sports centres, swimming pools, playing fields, synthetic pitches and athletics facilities.⁴
- 7 Local authorities are identified as one of the main partners in *Reaching Higher*, the National Strategy for Sport.

Solutions & Problems

Health

- 8 Scotland has one of the highest levels of obesity in OECD countries, with over a million obese adults and over 150,000 obese children. These figures are predicted to worsen with adult obesity levels reaching 40% by 2030.⁵
- 9 Obesity is undoubtedly a huge problem in Scotland today; it is not an issue that is new to Scotland but is one that can be avoided. Obesity brings with it a number of societal problems from quality of life to challenging economic growth.
- 10 2,447 people in Scotland die prematurely every year due to physical inactivity⁶; that is nearly 2,500 deaths that could have been prevented through an introduction to physical activity. Dr. Harry Burns, the Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, stated in his 2007 Annual Report that, "improving [the population's] physical activity by even a small percent will reduce the levels of heart attack and stroke."⁷ This sentiment is echoed by estimations that for every 1% of the population that becomes active, each year 157 lives can be saved, amounting to £85.2 million of savings to the NHS⁸ per year.
- 11 The whole of society are key to this battle against Scotland's label as "the sick man of Europe". The debate about improving our nation's health is one that should be undertaken across society, and local authorities are vital to fighting this epidemic.
- 12 Local authorities should put in place the appropriate environment to allow and encourage our nation to lead a healthy and active life from early-years to later-years. The structures

² Audit Scotland; A performance overview of sport in Scotland; April 2008

³ The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1982 sets out Councils' responsibility to "ensure that there is an adequate provision of facilities for the inhabitants in their area for recreational, sporting and cultural and social activities." Adequate is not defined in statute.

⁴ COSLA; Implementation of the national cultural strategy: Guidance for Scottish Local Authorities; March 2003

⁵ The Scottish Government; Preventing Overweight and Obesity in Scotland: a route map towards healthy weight; Edinburgh, 2010

⁶ <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/what-we-do/active-travel/active-travel-information-resources/physical-activity-and-health-facts-and-figures>

⁷ The Scottish Government; Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report; Edinburgh, 2007

⁸ The Scottish Government; Let's Make Scotland More Active; Edinburgh, 2003

should be in place to facilitate and encourage the people of Scotland to be active and barriers to participation/activity must be removed.

- 13 At a local level, local authorities have the power to instil these habits and from an early age children should be introduced to regular physical activity. Local authorities cannot influence what individuals do in their free time but have a unique opportunity to develop physically active children through the delivery of 2 hours of quality Physical Education per week.
- 14 To date it is very disappointing that only 2 local authorities deliver 2 hours of PE in all of their schools, which equates to only 6% of local authorities providing this for all of their primary and secondary pupils. Life-long habits start in the early years and it appears local authorities are missing a huge opportunity to support the health of our nation.
- 15 The benefits of being active include not only improved physical health and fitness, but also related improvements to psychological health, of confidence and mental welfare.⁹

Other areas in which sport impacts

- 16 *Table B: Other activities in which culture plays a part*¹⁰ highlights sport's role within the wider Local Authority agenda. Sport is not only a past-time but provides support for outcomes ranging from social justice and inclusion to lifelong learning and beyond.
- 17 The full range of areas in which sport has an impact covers all major policy areas within local authorities. Although many of these areas do not have sport as the central aim, sport can be used to help to achieve them. It is with this in mind that sport cannot be ignored by local authorities or seen as the easy choice when tough financial decisions have to be made. This is recognised by COSLA who state: "Increasingly, authorities were using cultural activities to help to achieve objectives in priority areas such as health, lifelong learning and social inclusion [and] it is good practice to ensure that cultural matters do not become lost among or unduly marginalised by the local authority's many other duties."¹¹

To the future

- 18 The Scottish Sports Association and its members, the Governing Bodies of Sport in Scotland, welcome the opportunity to input "recommendations for the future delivery of public services."¹²
- 19 As detailed above [paragraph 5] local authorities are vitally important to sport in Scotland, but so too is sport to them. If sport is to be used, as COSLA suggest, to meet targets in other priority areas then local authorities must play their part in supporting sport.

⁹ COSLA; Implementation of the national cultural strategy: Guidance for Scottish Local Authorities; March 2003

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/publicservicescommission/>

- 20 Whilst budget cuts, and the economic situation, in Scotland begin to take effect it will be important to protect services that are seen as “important” to society. When these “important” services are identified we must remember that 1 in 5, that’s 900,000 people, in Scotland are members of a sports club, many of whom will rely on local authority sports centres, playing fields and running tracks to participate.
- 21 If we are to tackle the problems faced in Scotland we cannot do it in isolation but local authorities can lead the way by developing a new ethos in Scotland; one built on quality of life rather than prevention of death; one built on lifelong participation rather than lifelong inactivity.
- 22 Many of the solutions are simple, yet many of them are currently undertaken in isolation. East Renfrewshire successfully delivers 2 hours of physical education a week to all its pupils¹³ so why can’t every other local authority?
- 23 School is where many young people are introduced to sport either through Physical Education classes or extra curricular activity. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education has reported that 60% of schools have good programmes of Physical Education. Only a third, however, have very good programmes and therefore there is scope for improvement. Particular concerns have been raised by HMIE about the provision for PE in primary schools (HMIE, 2001). Research indicates that the average number of hours of Physical Education in secondary schools is lower than ten years ago (Littlefield et al, University of Strathclyde, 2001, quoted in *Sport 21*, 2003).¹⁴
- 24 COSLA recognises that “providing indoor and outdoor facilities include school provision”¹⁵. Communities do not always need brand new sport centres, and quite often they have sports facilities in the shape of Public Private Partnership (PPP) Secondary Schools. We recognise that as finances become smaller so too do budgets for capital build; “the scope for making better use of existing facilities should be considered. Community use of sports facilities in schools, particularly secondary schools, could be increased in many areas although this is likely to require action being taken by local authorities in relation to letting and charging policies and arrangements for staff cover.”¹⁶
- 25 We support COSLA’s statement that “Local authorities should ensure that adequate provisions is made within school PPP contracts for sufficient and affordable access by local clubs and for general community use.”¹⁷

Conclusions

- 26 The Scottish Sports Association and its members, the Governing Bodies of Sport in Scotland, strongly and passionately believe sport has a strong role to play in Scottish society. Whilst

¹³ Figures obtained through Freedom of Information

¹⁴ COSLA; Implementation of the national cultural strategy: Guidance for Scottish Local Authorities; March 2003

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ *ibid*

there is a national strategy (Reaching Higher), sport must play a more prominent role in the work of local authorities.

- 27 As the Commission looks at the role of local authorities and makes recommendations it must remain at the forefront that many of Scotland's ills are avoidable. The statistics regarding obesity and premature death in Scotland have for too long been an embarrassment. By instilling, promoting and supporting active life in every community across Scotland local authorities can shift the momentum by working towards long term outcomes for increased activity and improved health to change this culture.
- 28 At this time local authorities have a huge opportunity to lead the charge towards promoting quality of life rather than prevention of death. Too long have we been focussed on the end of life rather than the quality of our nation's lives.
- 29 COSLA appears to recognise the role of sport in delivering outcomes across the policy landscape, which suggests that sport and active lifestyles should play a more prominent role in Scottish society.
- 30 The Scottish Sports Association asks the Commission to consider sport as the "missing link", after all it is the only the activity that 1 in 5 of the population undertakes socially that can improve our nation.