

Scottish Sports Association

Scottish Government

Consultation on the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill

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

September 25th 2012



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Submission from Scottish Sports Association

The Scottish Sports Association (SSA) thanks the Scottish Government for the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry. We feel that a Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill has the potential to offer great opportunities for the Governing Bodies of sport in Scotland, sports clubs and others. We welcome the chance to engage with its development.

The SSA is the independent and collective voice for sports governing bodies in Scotland. We represent their interests and currently have 52 full members and 21 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 the over 900,000 individuals in Scotland who are members of one of Scotland's 13,000 sports clubs. Most 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.

The SSA has compiled this response following consultation, as usual, with our member Scottish Governing Bodies (SGBs). We have distilled our findings into twelve main points, which we list below. We are happy to elaborate on any of them:

1. The Bill should recognise both Communities of Place **and** Communities of Interest. These usually cross the boundaries of local areas. In this instance, members of a sports club and users of a sports facility may come from all over the country. The voluntary sporting community (as a community of interest) comprises one-fifth of our population. All are members of one of Scotland's 13,000 sports clubs.
2. In its bringing together of interested groups across communities, the Bill has potential for sport and sports clubs to be at the centre of social regeneration.
3. The Bill offers the opportunity of pooling the resources of those communities, for example expertise and volunteers.
4. Community Planning Partnerships will be vital in the delivery of this Bill's intentions. We believe that sport should have more involvement at the Planning stage. This would help ensure viable, suitable and desirable facilities are the norm. To this end, the SSA calls for the creation of a 'Sport and Physical Recreation Sub-group' within each Local Authority's

Community Planning framework. This would function as, for example, Health or Education sub-groups currently do. It could, perhaps, contain representatives from Local Sports Councils, Regional Sports Partnerships, Leisure Trusts and **sportscotland** Partnership Managers.

5. The consultation has an element of focus on Community Councils. We would ask that all interested groups are given equal status when it comes to decision making and implementation; as this is an empowerment Bill, no one group in a community should have higher decision-making status than any other.

6. Facility management is likely to be more important – and viable – to sport than ownership. Sports are unlikely to be able to buy properties outright, but long-term tenancies may be an attractive proposition.

7. Volunteers are critical to the success of this Bill; they are its key enablers. The Bill can help to empower them but we also need to enable their involvement. They will drive projects from their conception through to delivery and then maintain them. As such, we believe that the Scottish Government and business across the country should strongly encourage measures to increase the numbers of volunteers and ensure individuals are able to commit support to such projects. These measures should also enable a constant wave of new volunteers. As such, the SSA asks for wider backing for Employer-Supported Volunteering to sustain regular (week in, week out, month in, month out) volunteering, reinforced by a public database of volunteering opportunities to help match people to openings.

8. The question of subsidies should be debated at this stage. Is a community group that takes over a facility fulfilling a Council role and providing an asset, or is it keeping open a liability? If it is the former, then will that group receive Local Authority subsidy? If a community-run facility fails, do another group get the opportunity to run it, or will it be sold off and to whom?

9. We would also welcome more discussion around who exactly will be able to bid for properties. Will, for example, Leisure Trusts, as charities/social enterprises, be able to run a facility, or the charitable arms of commercial organisations? There is a danger that power will only be devolved to those with the resources to use it.

10. Our members have found it difficult to answer this consultation without a clear picture as to the kind of facilities and properties we are discussing. The publication of a register of assets even before the Bill's passage would be incredibly helpful, and may inspire new ideas.

11. It is important that the Bill recognises that the primary asset within communities is people.

12. The success of Community Empowerment will hinge on the provision of high level advice and support for communities which is both financed and sustainable.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/engage/cer>

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