Health and Sport Committee
Support for Community Sport Inquiry
In 2009 our predecessor Health and Sport Committee undertook an inquiry into Pathways into Sport and Physical Activity, its emphasis being on physical education in schools.

Our inquiry was motivated by a wish to ascertain the health of the sporting nation between London 2012 and Glasgow 2014. We recognise that the staging of several of the world’s most prestigious sporting celebrations is an excellent opportunity to boost the profile of sport in Scotland.

The Committee wishes to encourage policies directed at greater participation but recognises that attaining such an outcome depends on the contribution of volunteers, vitality of local clubs, quality of facilities, and related matters.

Background

Introduction

“This is for everyone” and
“Inspire a generation”

were slogans from London 2012 – an ethos we want Glasgow 2014 to emulate. A real and lasting sporting legacy would be more people – of all abilities, ages and backgrounds – participating and volunteering in community sport and physical activity.

If our report has an overriding message, it is that there are many fantastic examples from which we can learn – initiatives, pilot projects and clubs, often inspired and led by the efforts of individuals; those dubbed by Judy Murray the “pied pipers” of sport for inspiring children to take part.

The Committee believes that the Glasgow 2014 organisers are delivering a powerful message when they say:

“Don’t just watch the Games. Don’t just experience the games. Be the Games”
Approach

The inquiry sought to address:

- The contribution of people – focusing on the role of volunteers – and looking at how to ensure they have the opportunities and support necessary to best contribute to sport at a local level.
- The contribution of local sports clubs to the preventative health agenda and to communities.
- The importance of places for sport, in terms of availability, accessibility, affordability, and quality of facilities.

A call for written evidence was issued on 2 July 2012 and 62 submissions were received.

Four evidence sessions were held with 8 panels and 48 witnesses. There were also visits to Community Sports Hubs in Glasgow (Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome), Cumbernauld (St Maurice’s High School), and Aberdeen (Aberdeen Sports Village). A debate on the inquiry’s emerging themes took place on 20 October 2012.

Key Quotes

“It is one thing to get people excited on the back of the Olympics and with the Commonwealth Games coming, but retaining them in sport comes down to people – the pied pipers who get children and adults into clubs, schools or parks and enjoying what they are doing.”
(Judy Murray)

“We must celebrate, push and support the people who are involved in sport... Without the volunteers, sport will die.”
(Scottish Rugby)

“We must not lose sight of the fundamental fact that sport is fun. Whether people are participating or volunteering, fun is at the heart of it all.”
(Judy Murray)

“A big problem with a lot of sports is the assumption that someone who is good at it, for example kicking a ball, should run that sport. That is a big mistake.”
(Atlantis Leisure)

“We need a new model for this new era; at the moment, it is almost as if we are using my first Walkman in the iPhone era.”
(Winning Scotland Foundation)

“The culture of sport is often seen as being a very macho, male dominated one where there is a need for a clear hierarchy and certainty in relation to gender.”
(Equality Network)

“...hubs are not about buildings... They are about people…..”
(Argyll and Bute Council)
Summary of Recommendations

1. The Committee was surprised at the lack of detailed information on the scale and skillset of the volunteer “workforce”. Given the emphasis placed on the legacy of Glasgow 2014 and its potential for bolstering participation, a stronger sense of “where we are” might be expected. The Committee therefore recommends that sportscotland, in conjunction with the relevant sporting associations, co-ordinate an examination of capacity as a matter of urgency.

2. The Committee was concerned that very few governing bodies have developed volunteer strategies. Strategies are not a panacea, but given a recurring plea for volunteers to be better supported, the Committee recommends renewed encouragement from the national sporting agencies for development of robust strategies by all governing bodies – to fully address and provide a lead on crucial matters such as recruitment and retention.

3. The Committee encourages the Scottish Government and all those in the sporting sector and beyond to show leadership by
supporting volunteers in sport more actively and by promoting a culture of volunteerism.

4 To this end, the Committee requests that the Minister for Sport and Commonwealth Games provide an update, with input from sportscotland and other key players, on all aspects of volunteering in sport before the Parliament moves into summer recess in 2013. The Committee is particularly interested in qualified coaches and the state of readiness for the increase in demand for club sport that it is hoped will materialise on the back of Glasgow 2014.

5 The Committee asks to be kept informed of sportscotland’s initiative with local authorities to develop a national framework to assist with the monitoring and evaluation of local sports clubs.

6 The Committee issues a plea on behalf of those clubs outwith the Community Sports Hub system that they are not forgotten or lose out on funding or other support.

7 The Committee reiterates a recommendation in its predecessor’s 2009 Pathways into Sport and Physical Activity report that local authorities produce local sports strategies, including implementation plans, and that...
those with existing strategies ensure that theirs are up to date and implemented.

8 The Committee took evidence on the Cashback for Communities programme but wished to learn more about the correlation between where money is recovered from and where resources are deployed. The Committee therefore awaits the report of Inspiring Scotland’s evaluation of the programme with interest.

9 Evidence the Committee heard highlighted a range of barriers to greater use of school-based facilities – from contractual difficulties to cost issues. The Committee will await the findings of sportscotland’s audit of current access, expected next spring, and consider then what bearing this may have on plans for opening up the school estate.

10 The Committee notes that local authorities play a crucial role in the provision and running of facilities. It is hoped that, as part of their sporting strategy, they maintain an awareness of what assets are at their disposal and that this would cover the standard and condition of facilities.

11 The Committee commends the practice of “sweating assets” and encourages local authorities and others to make it
a cornerstone of their approach to sporting facilities.

12 It would also be of benefit to the public, and help to encourage participation, if local authorities could provide clear and consistent information on charging and opening hours for all facilities in their area. Sportscotland might wish to consider this further in light of its audit of the school estate.

13 Further to the Equality Network and Scottish Transgender Alliance in the Out for Sport report, the Committee seeks further information from the Scottish Government and sport’s national agencies and its governing bodies on what steps are being taken to challenge and eradicate homophobia and transphobia in sport.

14 The Committee also seeks further information from the Scottish Government regarding how Community Sports Hubs are sharing best practice in the area of equal opportunities.

15 Swimming is a key component of “physical literacy” but the Committee was concerned to learn that 25% of children leave primary school unable to swim. The figure is likely to be even higher in deprived areas. The Committee welcomes the views of Save the
Children Scotland and Scottish Swimming (who relayed the statistic), the Active Schools Network and the Scottish Government on what can be done to remedy the situation.

What happens next?

The Scottish Government will respond in writing to the Committee’s report. The Committee will consider that response and decide whether there is a need for further work.

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