

# Cross-Party Group on Sport

2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024, 1pm-2pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Liz Smith MSP

Jeremy Balfour MSP

Brian Whittle MSP

Non-MSP Group Members

Andrew Raitt, Tennis Scotland

Brian Whittle MSP

Colin Harley, Scottish Futsal

Craig Robertson, Paradaarts Scotland

David McGonigle, Councillor, Renfeshire and Inverclyde

Fearghas Thomson, Chest, Stroke & Stroke Scotland

Forbes Dunlop, sportscotland

Fraser Calderwood, Leisure and Culture Dundee

Gavin McWhinnie, Office of Liz Smith MSP

Gregor Muir, SSA

Heidi Vistisen, LEAP Sports Scotland

Jane Harvey, Scottish Powerchair Football/Scottish Hockey

Jeremy Balfour MSP

Judith McCleary, Judo Scotland

Kash Taank, Cricket Scotland

Kim Atkinson, SSA

Kirsty Cumming, Community Leisure UK

Liz Corbett, parkrun

Liz Smith MSP

Liza Linton, RYA Scotland

Lucy Barclay-Carr, horsescotland

Lucy Preston, Cricket Scotland

Malcolm Dingwall-Smith, sportscotland

Margarita Sweeney-Baird, Inclusive Skating

Mark Gaffney, Scottish Disability Sport

Megan Richardson, CIMSPA

Michael Leavitt, Edinburgh Napier University

Paddy Sherrard, Scottish ClubSport

Penny Hendrick, DR Inclusive Fitness and Wellbeing

Rick Kenney, Scottish ClubSport  
Stew Fowlie, Scottish Student Sport  
Stuart Brown, Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland  
Susan Robertson, EHSCP

## Apologies

Maureen McGonigle, Scottish Women in Sport  
Duncan Sinclair, Aberdeen Sports Village  
Marc Hope, Scottish Squash  
Jane Campbell Morrison  
David Black, Mountaineering Scotland  
David Laing, Borders Disability Sport  
Steve Walsh, HighLife Highland  
Laura Baxter, Special Olympics Great Britain  
Walter Macadam, GMB Scotland Football Managers and Coaches  
Joan O'Sullivan, Swimtime  
Trudy Lindblade, Cricket Scotland  
Dr Fiona Reid, Bayforth Research

## Agenda item 1

### **Matters arising**

Approval of minutes of 14th December 2023 meeting

- Proposer, Margarita Sweeney-Baird, Inclusive Skating
- Seconder, Stew Fowlie, Scottish Student Sport

Minutes approved

Since our last meeting, the New Year UK Honours list was announced, with recipients from Scottish sport including:

Liz Smith MSP, awarded a CBE for Services to Sport  
Christine Windmill, awarded an OBE for services to Tennis  
David Watt, awarded an OBE for services to the Economy, to Sport and to Education  
Rob Wainwright, awarded an OBE for voluntary and charitable services to the My Name's Doddie Foundation  
Morag Deyes MBE, awarded an OBE for services to Dance  
Stuart Hogg, awarded an MBE for services to Rugby Union Football  
Bob Christie, awarded an MBE for services to Lawn Bowls  
Elinor Middlemiss, awarded an MBE for services to Sport  
Roy Claxton, awarded a BEM for services to People with Parkinson's Disease  
Robert Neillies, awarded a BEM for services to Cricket and to the community in Fife  
Shendl Russell, awarded a BEM for services to Dance.

Congratulations were given to all of the individuals recognised in this round.

## Agenda item 2

### **Topic for this meeting: Update from national agency for sport, sportscotland**

LS introduced sportscotland chief executive Forbes Dunlop - Forbes was appointed as CEO in January 2023, following a period as interim Chief Executive in late 2022 and having worked as Chief Operating Officer with the national agency since April 2019. He joined the meeting today to talk about recent developments, as well as current priorities, at sportscotland.

FD reflected on the privilege it has been to take on the role and acknowledged the responsibility that comes with the position. He has spent much of the first 18 months in the role speaking with and listening to partners.

FD set out some of the strategic context within which the national agency is operating, along with some observations on key issues and the overarching direction of travel.

The policy framework provides strategic drivers for sportscotland's work, across both the National Performance Framework (NPF) with its 11 action areas, specifically 'healthy and active', and the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework which outlines how sport contributes across the NPF and across policy areas.

sportscotland has been delivering specific work to embed a systems-based approach, as informed and led by Public Health Scotland. Sport and physical activity is one part of making an impact in population health, so it is key to engage other parts of the system such as schools and transport, and sportscotland has been working with Local Authorities on how to implement the approach in local areas.

Looking at the operating landscape, data from the Scottish Health Survey and Scottish Household Survey show that levels of activity and inactivity in Scotland have remained relatively static for a number of years, consistent with international statistics. However, this level has been maintained despite significant real terms cuts to public sector sport expenditure.

While overall levels have largely held steady, health inequalities have grown and there is a significant gap between the most and least affluent demographics in terms of life expectancy and healthy life expectancy.

There are significant pressures affecting partners across the sport and physical activity sector, at both national and local levels. This includes growing expectations on relatively small organisations when working with increasingly complex issues and challenges - many in the sector are being asked to do more and more with less and less.

For Local Authorities and Trusts, there are significant fiscal pressures in terms of running costs for facilities, with some already seeing closures or reduced opening hours, at a time when maintenance costs are also rising. There are definite issues in terms of losing staff, notably at a development officer level, and we must not lose sight of the importance of our people infrastructure. That includes recognising the welfare of staff and volunteers across the sector and requires a move to seeing sport as an investment in health and in community.

sportscotland is conducting an ongoing review of the sport and leisure estate, across private, public and school estate settings, which will provide updated data from the last time such work was undertaken in 2006. This review will help to provide efficiencies in how to better use existing facilities and help organisations to be more creative in how we deliver our ambitions and services.

For participants, there remain cost barriers to participation, which are especially impactful for those least likely to take part in sport. As such, we must all consider different models and ways of working that reduce these barriers as best we can.

The national agency's strategy, Sport for Life, has been re-energised, including the renewed focus on a systems-based approach for sport.

Considering investment, the commitment remains from the Scottish Government to double the sport budget, although this is yet to be implemented. There is a new lottery license holder, Allwyn, which has also committed to doubling investment. Regardless of this investment position, the majority of funding for sport goes through LAs.

The interrelated areas of clubs and communities, schools and education and performance sport all require investment and support.

In education, every school in Scotland has a link to an Active Schools co-ordinator, which is an important network. It has also recently been announced that additional investment is being delivered into the college network in partnership with Scottish Student Sport. Education is beyond schools and those transition points, such as going to further education, are key to keeping physical activity in the lives of people.

Clubs and communities need more support. There are real pressures on facilities in terms of running costs, and roles are increasingly being taken on by volunteers given the loss of paid roles within the sector. There are lots of great volunteers and community groups but we need to be prepared to offer them the support they need.

With regard to performance sport, considering our population size and relative investment, we see very good results in terms of performance sport, and we can't take that for granted.

Looking broadly, the sector is under significant pressure and facing major challenges. However, we all have a huge part to play in developing a healthy, successful and connected Scotland. We need to stay positive and keep highlighting the great work going on across the sector.

The meeting was opened to comments and questions from attendees.

### **Andrew Taitt, Tennis Scotland**

Reflected on the continued growth of tennis and highlighted the success of the LTA schools programme which has already provided training to 1,800 teachers, to help embed a positive legacy for tennis in Scotland and deliver positive outcomes for students and the curriculum outcomes.

FD offered his congratulations on the performance of the programme, showcasing the success of working directly with education colleagues.

### **Brian Whittle, MSP**

Highlighted the importance of getting kids involved in sport as young as possible. BW is developing a policy paper, asking for significantly increased investment in the sector (an extra £250m).

Considering education, there is a danger that sport in schools is becoming the bastion of private schools and called for an audit of the school estate.

BW reiterated that sport is habitual and delivers excellent results in terms of preventing poor health and that it remains the best investment in population health.

FD noted that there is an estate review ongoing which will provide insight into the condition of facilities, along with their accessibility and usage.

### **Penny Hendrick, DR Inclusive Fitness and Wellbeing**

Highlighted issues around support for individuals with disabilities to engage in sport and physical activity. Support can be more flexible for children and young people but tails off significantly and can be very restrictive in adulthood.

### **Mark Gaffney, Scottish Disability Sport**

Highlighted experience in Perth branch of working with funders to meet ambitions of zero cost activity at point of delivery for participants, which grant funders have been responsive to. Still having to engage in regular attempts to secure grant funding, and there remain some key issues, such as the associated costs of factors such as transport and the increased burden on volunteers, who need support not more responsibility.

FD agreed that volunteering challenges are a significant issue for the sector. Volunteer recruitment has not recovered since Covid in many instances, and while due diligence and checks and balances are needed, the process of volunteering has to be easy enough to come along and help. If the entry point is too significant it stops people getting involved.

### **Margarita Sweeney-Baird, Inclusive Skating**

Shared positive example of using funding from the Volunteer Support Fund to develop SQA approved accreditation, noting that there are pockets of support available for organisations and individuals.

### **Heidi Vistisen, LEAP Sports**

Echoed the importance of recognising and reducing barriers to volunteering, noting it is difficult to run grassroots clubs.

FD highlighted connected opportunities around LAs, education and sport, health and sport, and community empowerment. The school estate is a priority, with its wide reach and largely good quality facilities which are not used well enough. There is a lot of agreement in principle in terms of a desire to improve access to facilities such as outdoor and 3G pitches, and we need to continue to remove barriers.

### **Stew Fowlie, Scottish Student Sport**

Celebrated the recognition in the discussion that education and school are not the same thing and that the tertiary education landscape is a valuable asset with Active Campus co-ordinators operating across these natural anchor organisations and being empowered to use activity to target groups that otherwise don't engage in sport.

FD suggested that if there was one change he would like to see in the wider ecosystem it would be a shift in the dynamic in order to recognise the 'value' of investing in sport rather than the 'cost' of sport.

## Agenda item 3

Date of next meeting was 13th June [subsequently cancelled due to impact of General Election].

Thanks were given to all speakers and attendees.

Meeting closed