

# Cross-Party Group on Sport

24<sup>th</sup> November, 1pm-2.30pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Liz Smith MSP

Jeremy Balfour MSP

Non-MSP Group Members

Brian Chapman, Scottish Canoe Association

Chris Sellar, Oriam

David Ferguson, Observatory for Sport in Scotland

Debbi McCulloch, Spartans CFA

Duncan Sinclair, Aberdeen Sports Village

Fiona Reid, Bayfirth Research/Observatory for Sport in Scotland

Gary Birnie, Scottish Sports Association

Gary Grieve, Scottish ClubSport

Heather Lowden, Scottish Disability Sport

Hilary Lumsden, East Fife Sports Council

Isabelle Michelson, Lawn Tennis Association

Joan O'Sullivan, Swimtime

John Hawryluk, Scottish Touch Association

Jon Doig, Commonwealth Games Scotland

Kevin Lee, Scottish Football Association

Kim Atkinson, Scottish Sports Association

Kirsty Cumming, Community Leisure UK

Laura Baxter, Special Olympics GB

Liza Linton, RYA Scotland

Malcolm Dingwall-Smith, sportscotland

Maggie Still, Scottish Squash

Marc Hope, Scottish Squash

Margarita Sweeney-Baird, Inclusive Skating

Richard Honeyford, Northern Ireland Sports Forum

Rohanna Irvine, Scottish Sports Futures

Rick Kenney, Scottish ClubSport

Stuart Brown, Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland

Apologies

Clare Adamson MSP (Deputy Convenor)

Gavin Newlands MP  
Brian Whittle MSP  
Paul McLennan MSP  
Tess White MSP

## Agenda item 1

Matters arising

On behalf of the Cross Party Group on Sport, the Convener passed on congratulations to all of the individuals from Scottish sport who earned recognition in the Birthday 2022 UK Honours list. The full list was read out at the end of the meeting.

Neil Fachie, OBE, For services to Cycling  
Eve Muirhead, OBE, For services to Curling  
Jennifer Dodds, MBE, For services to Curling  
Hailey Duff, MBE, For services to Curling  
William Duncan, MBE, For services to Curling  
Sam Kinghorn, MBE, For services to Disability Sport  
Chloe Lawson, MBE, For services to Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Young People in West Scotland  
Hannah Miley, MBE, For services to Swimming and to Women in Sport  
David Murdoch, MBE, For services to Curling  
Alan Rough, MBE, For services to Association Football  
Douglas Samuel, MBE, For services to Association Football  
Neil Simpson, MBE, For services to Skiing  
Andrew Simpson, MBE, For services to Skiing  
Mili Smith, MBE, For services to Curling  
Stephen Stewart, MBE, For services to Sport  
Victoria Wright, MBE, For services to Curling  
Julie Young, MBE, For services to Dance  
James Hunter, BEM, For services to Inclusion in Sport  
Norman Rushbrook, BEM, For services to Squash  
Roy Young, BEM, For services to Nordic Skiing

It was noted that Liz Smith held a follow up meeting with Tom Arthur MSP on National Planning Framework 4, to highlight the opportunities and considerations raised by the meeting of the CPG on Sport on 22nd February 2022 in relation to planning policy

## Agenda item 2

### **The impacts of the cost crisis and Scottish sport**

The meeting included three minute slots for attendees to highlight and reflect on the challenges and key priorities for their sport or organisation due to the impact of the ongoing cost crisis, along with opportunities for collaboration or potential solutions to key issues.

Malcolm Dingwall-Smith, sportscotland

The national agency is concerned about cost of living impacts in two strands - participation in sport and physical activity is discretionary spend for individuals and families and quoted data from England has shown that since July cost of living impacts have already had a negative impact for 39% of respondents on their ability to be active, with 53% believing it will have a negative impact on their ability to be active in the future. This is especially concerning when much of the sport and physical activity sector is still in a recovery phase from pandemic and has particular potential impacts on equalities.

There is also a significant impact on organisations within the sector, with energy costs, recruitment challenges and staff pay awards all affecting the operational viability of sports organisations, with a risk of temporary and permanent facility closures, as well as staff leaving the sector. There are particular vulnerabilities for energy-intensive facilities, for example ice rinks and swimming pools.

The Scottish Government Emergency Budget Review announced an overall package of reductions of around £650m, in addition to £560m already made in September. While the health and social care budget remains the same, reallocations are being made within it to manage NHS pay awards. For sportscotland, the national agency had expected an £3.65m increase to budget this year, which now will not be available for 2022/23. The budget increase is still set to occur, but has been re-phased and the Scottish Government is still committed to the doubling of the active living budget by the end of this Parliament. Regardless of future commitment, this has meant some work has not been possible in this year and sportscotland shares partners' frustrations in areas where developing work is having to be paused.

Ongoing priorities are that the current people network in sport is supported by existing investment and that the continued commitment to inclusion underpins all ongoing work.

Margarita Sweeney-Baird, Inclusive Skating

Cited participation levels in the disability sport of inclusive skating, noting the importance of funding availability in keeping people active. Where funding support exists, there has been only a 10% drop in participation levels, but with beginners and new skaters (12-18 months), there has been a 70% drop in participation. Very concerned that opportunities are not there to support newer skaters.

During the pandemic, IS received funding through the Scottish Government National Emergencies Trust which helped keep elite skaters active - could something similar be done now, stretching the net of support to provide a wider opportunity for skaters to be given financial assistance. Noted the particular importance of providing additional support for mothers and other carers in disability sport, who have seen significant impacts on mental health, and the need for familial support to enable activity.

Debbi McCulloch, Spartans Community Football Academy

Main challenges for young people and families Spartans CFA work with are around food poverty, with real issues being able to afford to put nutritious food on the table. Travel costs have also increased, reducing access to provisions and programmes and short term fixes only masking the issue. Working with partners in the community to understand needs and how Spartans can help to direct people to help or provide physical activity opportunities.

The organisation has its own challenges with running the main facility as bills and costs have increased dramatically - trying to reduce electricity costs with LED bulbs across site, for example, but still seeing pressures - and looking to ensure staff are supported and invested in too.

Gary Grieve, Scottish ClubSport

The landscape for sports councils and club sport has been one of budget cuts in recent years, and with the majority of SCS members funded by leisure trusts or via local councils further funding cuts are anticipated given the current issues. This has implications for how sports councils support member clubs - a couple of sports councils have folded due to funding cuts or lack of volunteers returning post-Covid at the same time as more clubs have been affiliating at local level, looking for additional support. Clubs saw a reduction in memberships post-Covid and SCS expects that trend to continue with the cost of living crisis - fewer people coming into clubs also meaning fewer coaches and volunteers and a long term impact on the talent pool.

Facility access is a massive challenge, especially in rural and highland and island communities - costs for travel were already huge and it is even more challenging now. With closures locally, some facilities now require much greater travel to access.

There are opportunities to better connect with local councillors to embed relationships and to connect further with the education sector.

Chris Sellar, Oriam Heriot-Watt University

The University has seen positives in terms of course development and site investment (e.g. tennis facilities) and in terms of cost of living, has not yet seen a drop in participation. There are still reasonably strong membership numbers and across the university sector it is a positive position in terms of participation and engagement.

However, membership offerings are now being pushed on whether they reflect the cost of living crisis - for example, student population pushing for 'basic' option with bolt-ons, and the University has seen more students come to them for support and existing hardship funds are stretched. Already seeing the need for additional support through student unions, free lunches at chaplaincy and a food bank on campus which has never existed before. There are also significant pressures on accommodation, with both Glasgow and Edinburgh experiencing issues with student housing availability.

Hilary Lumsden, East Fife Sports Council

East Fife is a rural area and has already been experiencing challenges of local facilities having cut opening hours and reducing access opportunities. Volunteer numbers have also been dropping - training requirements and other expectations are becoming barriers, especially in rural areas with additional challenges like transport on top of these. Specific challenge raised on swim teacher numbers dropping which will have a knock-on effect on existing waiting lists and will see issues for clubs. The absence of swim teachers is a particular issue for schools in the area as none have pools, along with the increasing costs to hire leisure facilities, which means children are increasingly missing on a key life skill.

Kevin Lee, Scottish Football Association

While sport provides health, social and economic benefits, these remain unequally distributed among the population, including by social economic status. Continuing

since Covid and increased by the recent challenges has been an impact on clubs having to increase participation fees to cover increased costs.

The key challenge for clubs is accessing affordable community football spaces and there is deep concern for many clubs about the cost of facility hire. Clubs don't want to increase their subscription fees, especially at this time of financial worries. One club highlighted that their rental fees go up every April by 6%, but their subscription fees haven't gone up in 9 years - the club is in a very difficult situation because they don't want to charge too much for access.

Stuart Brown, Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland

CHSS' programmes around prevention, focused on behaviour change and inequalities, saw great strides in the first 6 months post-pandemic but accessing facilities has become more and more challenging in recent months. The ambition is to deliver services that are free at the point of delivery, but the behind the scenes costs are getting more significant.

Know the positive impact of programmes, for example the Maryhill project on walking football, which has seen more access to activity and a positive response.

However, have seen the number of peer groups across the country, about half of which offer physical activity to stay fit and active, reduce and some of that is down to venues having closed or issues with getting access. It is particularly challenging for some community rehab which is a key stepping stone into getting back to activity. CHSS is hearing more and more from groups that do not want to raise the cost for individuals but behind the scenes costs are going up for rentals.

Duncan Sinclair, Aberdeen Sports Village

ASV is enjoying strong participation numbers across almost all sports, with membership largely returned to pre-Covid levels, including the 60+ age group.

The problem is not with participation, it's with balancing the books - ASV has received an update from its heating supplier that as of next year (April 2023) its utility bill will go up by about £250,000. That is a cost which can't just be passed on to customers - ASV is in an area of multiple deprivation. While there are partnerships and sponsorships that allow the delivery of some key activities like free learn to swim, staff are still required to deliver on initiatives and balancing the books is an increasing challenge that raises the question of how to remain a sustainable company in the years to come.

Dr Fiona Reid, Observatory for Sport in Scotland

OSS has been looking at the research and evidence on the impact of the cost of living crisis on community sports clubs and sports volunteers. Community sport is really important for participation - 40% of all sporting activity happened in club the network according to most recent evidence. Sports clubs are resilient - a third of the 13,000 in Scotland are more than 50 years old.

The latest research, conducted by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and Volunteer Scotland looking at voluntary sector organisations and the cost of living, included 78 sports and culture organisations in the data. For sport/culture organisations the two biggest concerns for the future were rising costs and shortage of volunteers. Paying for materials was the greatest current concern - targeted support for those organisations could make a difference. Other areas of concerns were uncertainty about the future and managing the return of volunteers post-Covid. If

participation in sport decreases, as has been highlighted as a threat of the cost of living impacts, it is likely that a similar reduction in the number of volunteers will occur.

Mark Woods, Sported

Sported has surveyed its member community sports clubs and groups across the UK on the direct impact of cost of living - 99% cited expected impacts from cost of living, 80% thought young people would be forced out of participation in the next 6 months, and 77% of community sports groups in Scotland have already been forced into changes to offset cost of living increases. For some that might have been reducing fees or removing them for children and young people, but some have been forced to reduce the amount of sessions they put on. This reduces income and the sustainability for community facilities, and reduces the capacity to work with young people and give them opportunities to be active.

There are both short and long term issues. Requests for help have been immediate and there is a need for action now. The impact is not just about physical activity delivery but also the positive benefits provided to mental wellbeing, socialisation, and especially when considering areas of social deprivation there is additional impact on specific work such as anti-crime initiatives and food bank usage. Clubs are trying to look at how they can generate more income and be more sustainable, but funding they get is drying up from local partners. For the community sport sector and young people in the community, it is a very worrying time.

Kirsty Cumming, Community Leisure UK

CLUK has been conducting interviews with its members to inform a report to be published today. Among the headlines are that while there is a lot of uncertainty in the landscape, as things stand, 89% of members in Scotland are at risk, ranging from those in immediate crisis now to those seeing a crisis point coming and looking to mitigate this. Over half of CLUK's members are forecasting a deficit budget in the current financial year and expectation of that continuing and worsening in 2022/23 and beyond. Reserves have been depleted to get through the recent crises, so for some members there is an unprecedented situation of zero reserves for next year. As a result, some members are having to look at closures, reduced opening hours and staffing reductions.

63% of members are currently planning and discussing with Local Authority partners on what closures might look like - that's a significant number of potential closures across Scotland. While hopefully not all will come to pass, it is still a worrying statistic. A lot of those are significant closures of larger scale facilities, driven by escalating operating costs on energy and pay awards including matching LA pay awards, which affects a large proportion of the workforce.

Customer returns and users of facilities have been positive, but it won't offset the problem of balancing the budgets. Also seeing user changes - more people paying in cash and not wanting to commit to monthly payments, particularly those with young families. One of the main challenges now being seen is a fear of stigma - perhaps users facing challenges with cost of living but not wanting to be seen as charity cases or wanting to access concessions or support. It is a real challenge to understand how to support those people.

There are also staff issues across the membership - skills gaps, retention and recruitment of staff, leading to reduced workforces and increased pressure and mental

health concerns for staff. A lot of front line staff are also not particularly highly paid - many are on the national living wage - so cost of living impacts are not just affecting facility users, but also affecting the workforce directly.

Rohanna Irvine, Scottish Sports Futures

SSF has seen significant challenges being faced by families it works with - an increase in food poverty, hygiene poverty, a significant increase in child wellbeing concerns in the past 6 months, and a desperate need for children to get basic season-appropriate clothing.

SSF works in the heart of communities and is seeing the reality of the cost crisis - a lot of families and children SSF see already live in poverty and have been badly hit by the pandemic and now the cost of living crisis.

The organisation has been looking to build partnerships, holding crisis meetings with local organisations to join up activity, and has done dedicated work on speaking with young people and families on how they are managing. SSF has added wellbeing boxes to every session - children are calling them 'take what you need' boxes - with food, clothing and hygiene products. The organisation has also been distributing food vouchers and working with organisations to hold cooking sessions with kids. All of the support is done in a dignified way and this remains very important to the organisation. SSF has also supported its own full and part time staff with a one-off payment to help with cost of living impacts and is in the process of developing a recovery plan, similar to its pandemic response.

Liza Linton, RYA Scotland

Generally seeing membership of clubs doing well, but looking to have a dedicated cost of living conversation with clubs in a couple of weeks' time so helpful to hear ideas raised in discussion.

Impacts already seen are a drop off in volunteer numbers and RYA Scotland is very aware of the cost of energy - most facilities are owned by the sport and clubs themselves, rather than LAs, so while there aren't access issues or reduced hours as seen for some other sports, issues exist around how they can be run sustainably. In times of economic hardship, it often leads to increased incidences of theft, for example of fuel and engines, so RYA Scotland is engaging with clubs on how to support them on this issue.

Internally, conversations are ongoing about how to support staff - for example with one-off payments.

Jon Doig, Commonwealth Games Scotland

Coming off the back of a successful Birmingham Games, CGS' perspective is on planning over the next three year period. Major costs include clothing and travel, which are currently effectively unknowns, and with investment down by 12.5%, there is pressure on delivery and considerations of how far to go into reserves. Funding pressures will determine the size of the team, and the support that can be provided to help with performance and in utilisation.

CGS has conducted recent surveys on the importance of the Commonwealth Games to the people of Scotland, including support for increased investment in sport, both at community and high performance levels. A concern for CGS is that community and high performance are sometimes played off as one against another rather than being a continuum and circular process - you need inspiration on the global stage but that

has little benefit if people cannot access local facilities, and you need people coming through the sporting pathway for future Games, who are being affected by the current situation.

Heather Lowden, Scottish Disability Sport

SDS already works in partnership with many organisations on the call - the focus on partnership will have to increase looking ahead. Strong partnerships are already in place with colleges and universities, with Scottish Student Sport, partnership with health, NHS Tayside and Get Out Get Active, with Team Scotland given the very successful Commonwealth Games for athletes with disabilities, and partnering with OSS for research on people with disabilities. Collaboration and sharing information and skills will continue to be essential.

Among the key challenges for participants with disabilities has been that many were just returning to sport when the cost of living crisis arrived, and very often issues with social care, travel and facilities are impacting on them. That includes a lack of available care to help participate, accessible and affordable travel to access programmes and provision and with provision, where people with disabilities may not have as many participant numbers, higher costs per head for facility hire.

Funding pressures may impact on specific programmes - for example, sponsorship is required to allow for inclusive coach training, to be free at the point of delivery but that may be in jeopardy.

It was also noted that the new Be Active, Be Well campaign would be launched by Scottish Disability Sport, The Daily Mile, scottishathletics, SAMH, Paths for All, GOGA Tayside and sportscotland to coincide with International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3rd.

Brian Chapman, Scottish Canoe Association

SCA has seen similar reductions in volunteer numbers as highlighted by other organisations.

It was noted that reduction in participation in programmes is an immediate effect - recovery from that reduction takes a very long time. Many programmes have been years in the making. When funding is deferred, as is the case with the sportscotland budget increase, the absence of additional support this year will have a knock-on effect. Anything that can be done to prioritise funding to preserve current programmes would be very beneficial to the whole sporting community, as if those are lost, building back to existing levels is a long term project.

Kim Atkinson, Scottish Sports Association

The SSA hosted a recent Leaders' Dinner with Minister Maree Todd MSP with discussions focused on the cost of living, including the challenges being experienced but also looking at ideas and opportunities that can help to alleviate those. SSA's current advocacy focus on behalf of members is on policy - notably proposing solutions to Scottish Government that don't require additional funds but can potentially save money for governing bodies and for their member clubs.

Considering funding impacts, further information on work around economies of scale will be shared shortly, and the SSA has also introduced a Funders Forum to bring



together wider funding bodies with sports organisations and help share knowledge and opportunities in this priority area.

## Agenda item 3

AGM business, with the election of Office Bearers. All positions were individuals re-standing for nomination.

Convener: Liz Smith (LS) MSP (Conservative)

Proposed by Kim Atkinson (KA)

Co-Deputy Conveners: Jeremy Balfour MSP (Conservative), Clare Adamson MSP (SNP)

Proposed by LS

Group Officers: Carol Mochan MSP (Labour), Tess White MSP (Conservative) and Brian Whittle MSP (Conservative)

Proposed by LS

Secretariat: Scottish Sports Association (SSA)

Proposed by LS

All Office Bearers were approved.

Meeting convenorship passed to Deputy Convener Jeremy Balfour MSP

## Agenda item 4

Approval of minutes

Approval of minutes of 22nd February 2022 meeting

Proposer - Liza Linton

Seconder - Margarita Sweeney-Baird

## Agenda item 5

AOB

Reminder that the Scottish Parliament Health, Social Care and Sport Committee inquiry on participation of women and girls is still open for evidence submissions

Thanks were given to all for attending and for contributions.

Next meeting date: TBC