

Cross Party Working Group : The Future of Scottish Football

18 September 2018

The Scottish Parliament

Minutes

Present: Fulton MacGregor (Convenor), George Adam (MSP), Jeremy Balfour (MSP) (in part), Simon Barrow (SFSA), Calum Beattie (SPFL), Danny Bisland (Scottish FA), Edward Corson (MSP Staff), Keith Ferguson (SDSA), Andy Gould (Scottish FA), David Hamilton (Scottish Government), Stuart McCaffrey (Scottish Football Partnership), Sheena McCulloch (MSP Staff), Iain McMenemy (Stenhousemuir FC), Paul McNeill (Scottish FA), Greig Mailer (Scottish FA), Gavin Michie (Scottish Women's Football), Ann Quinn (Scottish FA), Nicky Reid (SPFL Trust), Alan Stubbs (MSP Staff)

Apologies: Michael McEwan, Sandy Riach (SDSA)

1. Welcome and Introduction

Jeremy Balfour opened the meeting and welcomed those present. Mr Balfour congratulated the Women's National Team on their achievement of qualification to the World Cup in 2019. He also congratulated the Scottish FA on the news that they will be retaining Hampden Park.

Gavin Michie (SWF) said the achievement was testament to the players, coaches and coaching staff as well as all of the volunteers in the women's game and believed it was a wonderful platform in which to grow and promote the women's game.

Andy Gould (Scottish FA) also reiterated the delight and excitement at the Scottish FA on the qualification which shows great success in the growth of the women's game.

2. Minutes and Update from Previous Meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting were proposed by Jeremy Balfour and seconded by Andy Gould.

FULTON MACGREGOR JOINED THE MEETING

3. Measuring the Value of Scottish Football

Danny Bisland gave a presentation on measuring the value of Scottish Football outlining the work that has been done both with the Governing Body and with our partners. He also emphasised the impact that can be gained from football in a number of key areas of health, diet, social interaction and employability.

Key points from the presentation:

- 1 in 5 people in Scotland are involved in Football
- Football is the leading participant sport in Scotland and whilst other sports are in decline football maintains its appeal year on year
- There is a unique reach to children in the least affluent areas of Scotland
- We need to map our outcomes against appropriate frameworks but which frameworks
- The importance of the results from the Club Survey showing how football can deliver against other government outcomes

Fulton MacGregor thanked Danny for his presentation and agreed that the Committee has seen been delighted to see the good work that football has been doing. Fulton also agreed that the qualification of the Women's Squad to the World Cup was having an impact and he had witnessed that himself at a recent visit to a primary school.

4. Stakeholder Updates

During Danny's presentation there had been two video clips from SPFL Trust and Scottish Football Partnership. Nicky Reid and Stuart McCaffrey talked about those initiatives and the impact that they were having across the country.

Nicky talked about the FFIT Programme that they run and the benefits of that and also how the senior clubs were now embracing things like social isolation, employability etc. Nicky emphasised the need for government to understand that football has an effect on all of their policies. She also emphasised the real benefit if we can link clubs to Local Authorities and Health Boards and have them work together.

Stuart McCaffrey talked about their project Go Fitba where there is 1 hour of football and an hour on health, diet and nutrition; it also feeds those children attending. It targets kids who are not necessarily in mainstream and he believes it is breaking down barriers and tackling food poverty.

Fulton asked if Nicky would present at the next meeting the Cross Party Working Group to which she agreed.

5. General Discussions

George Adams suggested that the way forward was to have a National Plan for Football showing how football can change lives and pooling the resources we have around a National Framework which outlines what we want to achieve, and the outcomes for the country.

David Hamilton agreed that the Scottish FA, SPFL Trust and Scottish Football Partnership could provide some cohesion and focus to a framework and Mr Adams agreed that a national conversation with everyone in football would be a good starting point to show what football can do.

Paul McNeill said that these conversations had been taking place over a number of years and that we need a 5 or 10 year plan covering the football strategy for Scotland as we now have a lot of information/research to base our future plans on.

Ms Reid that the SPFL had increased support to the SPFL Trust over the last 3 years and it was important that clubs felt supported as well and that we need to bring them along with us on this journey.

Mr McMenemy said that fans do ask why are we not concentrating on just the first team; why do we take on other initiatives but the only way to inspire kids to come along and support local teams, rather than the old firm, is to get them involved early. He also said there is so much good work going on but we don't take it far enough. We need to engage other organisations like Local Authorities and Health Boards. Mr McMenemy also believe that whilst it does cost £250 to put someone through FIT; it would cost a lot more on the NHS to treat that person if they were unfit so it is a prevention mechanism.

Andy Gould informed the meeting that some of the presentations on the work that is being done it just the tip of the iceberg and that there has to be a robust conversation on where we take this now and should we be formulating a framework.

Simon Barrow believe we need to map out who is doing what and the contacts for this and where are the gaps. He agrees there are some fans who are concerned just with the club football but the majority of them get the bigger picture. Mr Barrow informed the group that they were undertaking research in the women's game and that he would share that with the group when available. Mr Adams indicated that St Mirren was going to be the home for the Women's game going forward and that this was an important growth area.

Gavin Michie (SWF) raised the issues around the funding for the female game and the fact that the SWF only get one vote at AGM. The group discussed the matter of funding and the infrastructure surrounding the girls and women's game. Mr MacGregor said he would write to the Chief Executive of the Scottish FA on clarification of the above points.

6. Future Actions

Mr MacGregor talked about the initiative at the Parliament called "Day of Action" and asked if that might be useful going forward for football.

Mr McNeill informed the meeting that next week was UEFA Grassroots Week and he would circulate information regarding this onto the Group.

Mr Adams said that the group should use the MSP's more in terms of promoting what is going on and it was agreed that this would be extremely useful. Mr Gould agreed that clubs would welcome the opportunity to promote what they do with the parliament and their MSPs. Ms Reid also said it would be good if this group could encourage "new faces" from government to attend events.

7. Next Meetings

- **Meeting – 27 November**