

HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 18 June 2008

Session 3

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HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE

18th Meeting 2008, Session 3

CONVENER

*Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab)

*Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

*Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP)

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP)

*Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

*Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

*Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP)

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab)

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Ian Edmond

Richard Gordon (Scottish Swimming)

Graeme Randall

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Tracey White

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Douglas Thornton

ASSISTANT CLERK

David Slater

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Health and Sport Committee

Wednesday 18 June 2008

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:00*]

Subordinate Legislation

Feed (Hygiene and Enforcement) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2008 (SSI 2008/201)

Feeding Stuffs (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2008 (SSI 2008/215)

Spreadable Fats, Milk and Milk Products (Scotland) Regulations 2008 (SSI 2008/216)

The Convener (Christine Grahame): Good morning and welcome to the 18th meeting this year of the Health and Sport Committee. I remind all members to ensure that mobile phones and BlackBerrys are switched off. Apologies have been received from Ian McKee, and I welcome to the meeting his substitute, Joe FitzPatrick.

The first item on the agenda is consideration of three Scottish statutory instruments. The first set of regulations excludes certain additives from the requirements of the Feed (Hygiene and Enforcement) (Scotland) Regulations 2005 (SSI 2005/608), introduces a requirement for a second analysis by a government chemist in certain circumstances and makes various consequential amendments and revocations. The Subordinate Legislation Committee has drawn the committee's attention to this instrument on the ground that its compliance with section 84(1) of the Agriculture Act 1970 was not outlined in the preamble. Although that breaches normal drafting practice, it does not affect the instrument's validity or operation. The relevant extract from the Subordinate Legislation Committee's report is annexed to members' papers.

The second set of regulations provides for the implementation of European Commission directive 2008/4/EC with regard to feeding stuffs, which permits, subject to specified labelling requirements, two additional types of dietetic feed to be marketed for the reduction of milk fever in dairy cows. The Subordinate Legislation Committee has made no comments on the instrument.

The third set of regulations provides for the implementation of certain provisions of European

Council regulation (EC) No 1234/2007. In particular, the regulations set minimum and maximum levels of vitamin A and D that must be found in margarine and implement other restrictions on the marketing, sale and labelling of spreadable fats. The Subordinate Legislation Committee had no comments to make on the instrument.

As no comments have been received from members and no motions to annul have been lodged, are we agreed that the committee does not wish to make any recommendations on these instruments?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: As we are still waiting for our witnesses for item 2, I suggest that, in the interests of speed, we simply move to item 3. Are members agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Petition

Ice Rinks (PE1138)

10:02

The Convener: The next item on the agenda is consideration of PE1138. The petition, which was lodged on 4 April 2008 by Erica Woollcombe, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take all necessary steps to ensure the continued provision of local ice rinks and to recognise their benefits in promoting health and wellbeing.

This is the committee's first consideration of the petition. Our papers contain a briefing from the Scottish Parliament information centre and a note by the clerk setting out possible options. Do members have any comments?

Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): I understand the petitioner's concerns, given the length of time that the ice rink in her area will be out of use, but this is a matter for the local authority, which is after all responsible for the rink's refurbishment. I warn of the danger of becoming involved in issues surrounding individual facilities in different local authority areas. As the issue of facilities will arise in our inquiry into pathways into sport, we should note the petition in that regard, but I do not think that we have a duty to intervene directly in a matter that is the responsibility of a democratically elected local authority.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I disagree. The petitioner has highlighted the example of her ice rink in Aberdeen, but the petition itself is worded much more broadly than that. We could well ignore the local issue but, as the substance of the petition fits quite well into our pathways into sport inquiry, we should consider it as part of the evidence in that respect.

Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP): The lack of a planned maintenance programme clearly resulted in Aberdeen City Council having to take the decision that it took. Anything that we can do to encourage local authorities to have planned maintenance programmes would be useful, so that others do not get into similar situations. In this case, the council had no option because of the state of the facility, but the council should never have reached the point of having to close the rink down.

The Convener: We should consider the terms of the petition, which are broad; I do not want to concentrate on the Aberdeen example and on what the council there has or has not done.

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): Rhoda Grant and I have both been members of the Public Petitions Committee, and anyone who has been a member will know that the committee prefers to consider general points without getting into specific details. We should therefore await further responses to the Public Petitions Committee's request for information, as that will allow us to address the general issues in a more coherent way. I presume that the Public Petitions Committee will have asked for further information from central Government, from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and from a variety of other agencies. We should therefore wait until September before considering the petition, by which time we will have received all those responses.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The petition seeks to

"ensure the continued provision of local ice rinks"—

an issue that is obviously outwith our control—

"and to recognise the benefit these play in promoting health and wellbeing."

Those benefits are clear.

I draw the committee's attention to page 2 of the briefing from the Scottish Parliament information centre, in which there is consideration of an issue that we might be able to influence. The second paragraph says that 90 per cent of facilities had experienced an increase in overhead costs. We all know that the major contributor to that will be energy costs. The paragraph continues by mentioning measures that are being taken, such as

"improving building insulation, water recycling plans, installing solar panels, and new and more efficient plants"

using, for example, combined heat and power. However, the paragraph ends by saying that

"such measures in themselves require funding and the survey found that only 40% of respondent rinks confirmed they had secured such funding."

People are trying to reduce their overheads and be more efficient. I am not entirely sure where the funding for ice rinks comes from, but if it comes from Government I wonder whether we could ask the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth whether assistance could be offered.

The Convener: From the briefing, it seems that some ice rinks are owned by local authorities, some are privately owned and some are owned by clubs or members. That may be a difficulty.

At the end of the SPICe briefing, it says:

"The Royal Caledonian Curling Club has advised that, following the survey discussed above, it is developing a facilities strategy."

Should we wait until we hear what the club has to say?

Michael Matheson: To try to get a picture of the difficulties faced by sports facilities, a national audit of all sports facilities was completed by sportscotland in 2006. That followed on from the report on the audit of swimming facilities—"The Ticking Time Bomb" report. We therefore have a detailed picture of the problems faced by a whole range of sports facilities across the country. Support for such facilities is a general issue, and the national audit identified a deficit of around £2 billion in investment in sports facilities.

The petition highlights the specific issue of ice rinks, which was addressed in the national audit. However, the arguments in favour of further investment apply equally to a range of facilities—such as indoor football arenas, running tracks and gymnasiums. The pathways into sport inquiry could consider general issues relating to sports facilities, although we should bear it in mind that a national audit has already been done.

Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): Joe FitzPatrick will know more about this than any of us. Ice rinks are not just a general sporting facility; they are more complex. They consume huge amounts of energy, so there is an issue about heat and power. Few rinks genuinely use the heat generated from the ice facility to promote another facility—for example, a few rinks use that as a heat source for a swimming facility. Given that, the SPICe paper is a bit of a mixer-maxter—this is not a criticism of SPICe—because it talks about ice hockey and ice dance at the same time as talking about, as the convener just said, the Royal Caledonian Curling Club, which has a completely different requirement.

As I understand it, one of the great problems of the economics of ice rinks is to balance the downtime required to produce ice suitable for curling with the downtime required to produce ice that is suitable for simply ice skating or ice hockey. A big economic factor gets woven into that involving the availability of the ice and the amount that people are prepared to pay. I do not disagree with Michael Matheson that we need to consider this issue, but we must be clear that the provision of ice and the standards that are required for different uses hugely complicate the ability to satisfy demand and the economics of running ice rinks.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): This is an important issue, particularly in light of the evidence that has been presented us. I wonder whether we can take an approach that has not been used in the committee since I returned to Parliament, which is to appoint a reporter to have a look at the issue. I am slightly surprised that we have not considered, as part of our general inquiry

into pathways into sport, the process of having a subsidiary report on the petition that considers the issue of ice rinks—although I presume that that could be included under the briefing paper's option 7c): "take an alternative approach."

The Convener: Perhaps we will come to a particular view. The "Background" section of the briefing paper states that the Public Petitions Committee has

"agreed to seek responses on the issues raised from the Scottish Government, Scottish Ice Rinks Association, Aberdeen City Council, Perth and Kinross Council, Moray Council and North Ayrshire Council, and to pass the responses to the Health and Sport Committee."

I suggest that we wait for those responses, and then decide whether we can absorb them into our inquiry into pathways into sport. I comprehend that there are specific issues with regard to ice and expensive maintenance in ice rinks, but we know that there are problems with sports facilities of all kinds. I thank Michael Matheson for advising that Audit Scotland has produced its evidence. If we wait, we can come back to the issue, which would be a satisfactory way forward. Do members agree to that?

Members indicated agreement.

Pathways into Sport Inquiry

10:13

The Convener: I am pleased to see that we have our witnesses for the next agenda item, which is to take further evidence on our pathways into sport inquiry. I ask members to look at paper HS/S3/08/18/5, which includes some background on our witnesses. I am pleased to welcome three athletes to give evidence during this first phase of our inquiry, in which we are taking evidence from successful sportspeople.

I welcome Graeme Randall, Scotland's first and only judo world champion. We had better behave ourselves. Graeme's other achievements include winning a gold medal at the Commonwealth games in 2002. From the world of swimming, I welcome Ian Edmond. In 2001, he broke the Scottish record for the 100m breaststroke, which had stood since 1976. Among his achievements, he includes European and world championship silver medals. Also from swimming, I welcome Richard Gordon, the director of coaching and development for Scottish Swimming. He was previously an international swimmer and coach, and has been involved in sports development for the past 20 years.

I invite you to make an opening statement, if you wish, but it is not compulsory.

Richard Gordon (Scottish Swimming): First, good morning, and thank you for inviting us along. I understand the nature of your investigation into pathways into performance and barriers to performance, and one reason why I am delighted to be here is that Scottish Swimming, with the aid of sportscotland and the Scottish Government, is tackling coaching and coach education, as is happening in a number of other sports. During the past year we have made significant inroads towards implementing the UK coaching certificate. The approach has given us a unique opportunity to take an English programme, run by the Amateur Swimming Association that sets standards throughout Britain, and deliver that programme in the Scottish education context. The Scottish Qualifications Authority is our awarding body and there is a full suite of UK coaching certificate awards on the Scottish credit and qualifications framework. The awards are linked into the national progression awards and are proving popular and successful.

10:15

I mention coaching because coaches have the greatest influence in making change in sport. A coach is often the biggest single influence on an athlete's career, whatever stage the athlete has

reached in their performance and development pathway. A coach spends more time with a young swimmer than their teachers do and in some cases spends more quality time with the young person than their parents do. Coaches have an enormous opportunity to influence, enthuse and motivate young people. They can help to shape young lives and develop attitudes that the young people will retain for the rest of their lives. That is why coaches are so important.

Graeme Randall: One of the barriers that I encountered when I was competing—

The Convener: Before you talk about competing, the committee would like to know how you got into judo and how old you were at the time. We are interested not just in competitive sport, but in how young people get involved in sport and enjoy it for its own sake.

Graeme Randall: Your question is easy to answer, although the answer is embarrassing.

The Convener: You can avoid the question if you want, but I think that the committee would quite like to hear the answer.

Graeme Randall: Before I became involved in judo I played rugby for Musselburgh grammar school—I did not attend the school; that was my local club. One day I watched judo being performed on "Blue Peter" and I was instantly hooked. I went along to my local high school—Lasswade high school—and joined a club there. I instantly stopped playing rugby and swimming competitively. I was 12 then, and by the time I was 15 I was on the British junior squad and I was a first dan black belt.

I quickly recognised that my club could not take me to the level that I wanted to reach, so I moved on to a new club. I was with my second coach for about three years before I moved on to a successful club in Edinburgh, under George Kerr and Billy Cusack, where I spent the rest of my competitive days. At 16 I went to the junior European championships and junior world championships. Throughout my junior career I competed on the world stage.

I was very fortunate in being able to live at home and train and compete locally. I did not have to move away from the Edinburgh district until I was about 19 or 20, when I started to look for stronger training partners outside Britain.

The barriers to competing at international level were to do with having to compete through the British Judo Association. Being part of the Scottish Judo Federation, we were restricted in the level and standard of events abroad in which we could compete. That is still a hindrance for the current crop of athletes that is coming through in Scotland, who do not always get an opportunity to compete

at the right level, because they are not selected through the British Judo Association.

At present, there are no training venues for summer Olympic sports in Scotland. We are trying to rectify that. We are working closely with the British Judo Association to ensure that we have a performance training centre in the Ratho national judo academy that is recognised as a performance centre for British Judo, working in Scotland. It is embarrassing that, although we have such a wealth of talent in Scotland, we cannot secure an Olympic summer sports training centre in Scotland.

The Convener: That is helpful.

Mr Edmond, in a similar vein, you broke a record that had stood for many years, but how did you get into swimming?

Ian Edmond: My story is similar to Graeme Randall's, only I went down the other path. People tend to start swimming at a slightly younger age. I was introduced to a council learn-to-swim programme at only a few months and progressed through that.

The Convener: How old were you?

Ian Edmond: According to my mother, I was about six months when I first got involved, so I do not remember an awful lot about it. Most children of that age get involved in swimming and concentrate on confidence in the water and having fun, rather than the competitive aspect. I progressed with those aims in mind until I was about nine, when I was invited to go along to trials for my local swimming club, Reading Swimming Club—I grew up in Reading during my school years. At nine years old, I joined the club. That was the transition from having fun and doing my badges to a more competition-oriented approach that involved learning skills and doing training and stamina work.

At nine, I started off doing two sessions a week, which rapidly progressed to eight or nine sessions a week by my mid-teens. I was reliant on my parents to get up in the morning and take me to training before I went to school or to training in the evening after school. That caused conflicts with school work, which is an issue for many swimmers. The sport involves a high time commitment at a young age and that conflict often leads to people dropping out at an early age when they perhaps could progress.

Like Graeme Randall, I did judo as a boy but, as I progressed in swimming and started doing it more regularly, I had to give up other sports. The big step forward for me was when I came to Edinburgh in 1996. I was fortunate that, at that time, a centre of excellence was being set up in Edinburgh, based at the Royal Commonwealth

pool. The centre was in its embryonic stages, but the coach, Tim Jones, and one swimmer had just come back from the Atlanta Olympics. For me, moving from an age-group programme with a family-based atmosphere to that elite centre was a huge step up. I developed a more professional attitude and it opened my eyes to the expectations and the commitments that were required to compete at that level.

I had initial problems balancing my university career—I was doing medicine, which was fairly demanding—with the requirements of swimming. I managed that for the first couple of years, but I had to negotiate time off with the university in the build-up to the Sydney Olympic games to allow me to concentrate on swimming full time. Unfortunately, I missed out on qualifying for the 2000 Olympics by 0.26 of a second, which with hindsight was probably a blessing in disguise, because I had to have a long hard think. My original plan was to retire after the Sydney games but, as I did not get there, it seemed a bit of a poor way to end my career. I had a long discussion with my team manager about what I wanted to do—in 10 years' time, I did not want to be thinking about what might have been and what I could have done. I asked the University of Edinburgh to allow me to take four years out from my degree to focus full time on swimming, with the aim of going to the Olympics in Athens. As you can imagine, the university was slightly sceptical about that and a fair bit of negotiation was needed. I was fortunate to have a few people in the faculty who were helpful.

Eventually, the university allowed me to do it on the condition that I repeated my third year when I came back. It was a huge benefit to me to be in a professional swimming programme, surrounded by other elite athletes who were aiming for the same thing. It was focused and became the only thing in my life for those four years. It allowed me to eat, sleep and breathe swimming, which is what I needed to do to achieve what I did.

There is no doubt that, when I was doing nothing but swimming, there was a huge improvement in my times. I made the breakthrough when I broke David Wilkie's record in 2001, which was a highlight for me, as were winning the silver medal at the Manchester Commonwealth games in 2003—which was the Commonwealth record at the time—and the gold medal at the European championships with the second-best time in the world. Those were all huge advances on my expectations of four years previously. A lot of that was down to the opportunity that I had to concentrate full time on swimming, as well as the support that I got from my coach Tim Jones, the Scottish Institute of Sport and the lottery funding, without which I would not have been able to afford to do it.

My career culminated in 2004 at the Olympics. In 2000, if I had just qualified, I would have been going there simply to take part and would have struggled to make a semi-final or final, but I went into 2004 with a realistic expectation of challenging for a medal. Unfortunately for me, I was disqualified in the semi-final, which is the way those things go sometimes. That was a disappointing end, but I have no regrets about the four years that I took out to do the programme. It was a fantastic experience and taught me an awful lot. There were lots of ups and downs, but I really enjoyed it. I have since gone back to university. I graduated last year and am now working in the Borders as a junior doctor.

The Convener: The witnesses were extremely interesting.

Dr Simpson: I will ask a technical question to begin with. Mr Gordon mentioned national progression awards; I ask him to explain a little bit about them.

Richard Gordon: National progression awards are generic awards at levels 1 through to 7 on the Scottish credit and qualifications framework. We have mapped the United Kingdom coaching certificate at levels 1 to 3 to the national progression awards, which has made it far easier for us to offer the United Kingdom coaching certificate in Scotland according to the Scottish context.

The difficulty that Scottish Swimming and a number of other governing bodies had is that the education system for coaches has, by and large, been driven by British or English bodies and it has been difficult to find the opportunity to influence it from Scotland. The mapping has provided us with that opportunity and we are now able to offer the UKCC linked to the national progression awards.

Dr Simpson: Coaching seems to be a theme in much of the evidence that we have taken. Is the number of coaches at all levels satisfactory in swimming? Dr Edmond said rather jokingly that he started swimming with a council-run programme at the age of six months. As an MSP, I hear that the swimming programmes for children are under considerable threat. That is not a current issue—it has been developing over some time—but, generally, people are not being taught to swim to the same degree as previously. How far down does coaching go? At the elite end, it is obviously very good.

Richard Gordon: Coaching goes all the way down. Within coaching, we include the teaching of swimming. We call the people who do that swimming teachers and there is an extensive network of them in Scotland. We are in a fortunate position in that every local authority runs a learn-to-swim programme. Some are excellent and

some could be better, but they all employ swimming teachers.

10:30

One of the biggest challenges for coaching, not just in Scotland but in the UK, is to make it more of a profession and get to a situation in which people are paid to coach. A significant amount of time is invested in coaching and people should be rewarded for their expertise. One of the big advantages that we have in swimming is the fact that we have more paid teachers and coaches than any other sport, principally because swimming tuition is run as a business through the learn-to-swim programmes of the local authorities. There are also some private providers, and tuition is provided voluntarily by some clubs in Scotland. So, we have a mixed economy of swimming teachers and coaches for adults and children—beginning at six months, as Ian Edmond did—right the way through to Olympians. Scottish Swimming has 10 swimmers on the Olympic swimming team.

The Convener: Mr Randall, you were nodding. Do you have any comments to make about coaching in your sport?

Graeme Randall: I appreciate the fact that swimming is a much bigger sport and is probably more of a life skill activity that is required at a younger age. As a physical education teacher, I think that swimming should be taught more in schools. My wife is also a PE teacher, and she faces great barriers regarding access to swimming pools and being able to spend time in the pool with the children.

In judo, there are currently two paid members of our coaching staff. That is probably a bit different from the experience in swimming. Many individual coaches have enterprises in schools, working with local authorities, but that is commercial. It is not really part of our performance arm and does not provide us with the talent that we require at the top end of the scale.

At the 2002 Commonwealth games in Manchester, we delivered 10 medals out of a total haul of 30. Judo can deliver a significant haul from what we consider quite a small investment. We feel that we are severely lacking in paid professional performance coaches and we are working to increase their number. As in all sports, our club development is geared towards the UK coaching certificate, but we are having great difficulty in achieving that because of the disparity between what has gone before and what is expected now. That is a great hurdle for current coaches to overcome. We are having to look for new, talented and enthusiastic coaches who are prepared to make the step change that is required to reach the UKCC.

The Convener: You say that a great big step must be made between your qualifications now and what you are required to have. Can you elaborate on that? Why is that such a huge step?

Graeme Randall: Before the UKCC was introduced, to become a judo coach someone had to achieve a certain grade within the judo structure, which was not very high. They had to attend two weekend coaching courses before they were let loose on young children. Now, there is a much more in-depth programme involving mentoring. They have to go through levels 1 and 2, at which they are not coaching, but observing under strict supervision. It is only when they get to level 3 that they are fully qualified to coach independently.

The step change is to a much more professional approach, but the current generation of coaches are perhaps a bit long in the tooth to change to the new system. So a great deal of our coaching development work is being aimed at younger people and we are trying to find enthusiastic coaches to bring through the next crop of athletes. We are also trying to move away from the commercialisation of judo. Although it brings in great numbers and increases our membership, there are no statistics to prove that it provides any dividends at the performance end. That is a different type of coaching. Performance coaching in any sport is focused and specific, whereas coaching at a commercial level in schools and after-school clubs is more about child minding, for want of a better phrase.

Michael Matheson: I return to the issue that Mr Gordon raised on the transition that Scottish Swimming has made to the UKCC programme. I seek a better understanding of the previous structure and the problems that were encountered in that regard. Also, what was the timeframe in moving from the old to the new regime?

Richard Gordon: Previously, we had the qualifications that the Amateur Swimming Association provided for swimming teachers at levels 1 and 2 and the qualifications that it provided for coaches: club coach, or level 3, and full coach, or level 4. The system was very linear. Essentially, Scottish Swimming had very little relationship with coaches other than through our national programme. We had no responsibility for certificating, providing continuing professional development for or licensing swimming teachers and coaches in Scotland. All of that was done from Loughborough. Our ability to influence change and to bring coaching and teaching qualifications up to date with new practices was very limited. I think that we had one representative on a committee that was responsible for putting the syllabuses in place.

We have moved to a system under which we will have four levels for swimming teaching—someone can be a level 1, 2, 3 or 4 swimming teacher—and four levels of swimming coaching. We will also have four levels for the coaching of diving, synchronised swimming and water polo. Altogether, 20 awards will be available from level 1 to level 4 in each of those five strands. We also have a significant part to play in setting the syllabus for the strands. If I were asked to quantify it, I would say that it is a one-third part. We sit down with representatives from England and Wales and co-ordinate with British Swimming what each syllabus should look like. We will review all of that on an annual basis.

The UKCC system provides a significant new form of income for Scottish Swimming in delivering quality coaching. Our first emphasis is on quality, but we are using the income to reinvest in paid coaching positions. Those positions, which are based on networks of clubs, provide enhanced training opportunities for talented individuals in the various local authority areas.

Instead of trying to centralise things, we are trying—this is similar to what Graeme Randall described—to provide a swimmer pathway on a local basis that goes from learn to swim to the highest level that we can achieve. Unless they are really dedicated, we know that people will not travel huge distances for coaching. When someone gets to 17, 18 or 19 and perhaps moves on to university, it is more realistic to expect them to do that but, for those who are younger than that, we have to provide a support network around the family and the school. In a sense, we are trying to make smaller the triangle between the pool, school and home—the smaller we can make it, the better for the athlete concerned. We are trying to put coaches into local areas to deliver the enhanced coaching programme.

It took us three years to get to this point.

The Convener: If Michael Matheson would find it helpful, I will ask SPICe to provide a paper to explain the various levels and so forth. It is difficult for us to follow through on all of that in oral evidence. Would that be helpful?

Michael Matheson: Yes. That would be helpful.

I turn to the certificates that individuals in judo and swimming undertake. Obviously, swimming is in a different position and, given the step change that is required, you are trying to find a new generation of coaches. Who are the individuals who are undertaking those coaching qualifications?

Richard Gordon: We have a range of individuals—male, female, young and old. We are trying to encourage more young people aged 16 to 18 to take teaching and coaching qualifications. It

can be good for those who go on to university to have a level 2 teaching qualification because it means that they can teach and coach swimmers solo—they do not have to be under supervision. As I mentioned, there is an infrastructure of learn to swim schools throughout Scottish local authorities. Swim schools pay their swimming teachers between £8 and £15 an hour, which can be a useful source of income. However, in clubs, if there are no professional coaches, it is often parents who do it. I coach because my daughter is part of a swimming club. I do three to four hours of coaching a week, which helps the club to function. It is the same in many sports—there is great reliance on volunteers in clubs.

On the take-up of UKCC, we certificate about 1,000 swimming teachers and coaches a year. The largest take-up is in local authorities, and we are trying to gear up the voluntary sector and the club sector to get more people qualified at level 1 and level 2.

The Convener: Does anyone else want to come in?

Ian Edmond: Can I—

The Convener: Certainly. I will call you Dr Edmond now. Why not? You have worked hard to get it, with all those interruptions.

Ian Edmond: It took a while.

I echo what Richard Gordon said about the importance of education for coaches. My progress through my swimming at different levels was very reliant on parents who had got involved because of their children and were giving up their time to coach. They received very little financial reimbursement. Their experience of swimming may have been purely through their children. I am sure that it is the case in judo and in all other sports, but it is particularly important in swimming that the basic skills are taught properly at an early age. It is easy to get into bad habits and difficult to get out of them. Teaching the fundamental technical skills at an early age is something that is done well in countries such as Australia—they are geared up for that.

I talked to an Australian coach who said that the problem in Britain is that a prestigious role for an Olympic athlete is to go into the press or the media, or to coach at an elite level. Although we need that, in Australia it is seen as equally important for an athlete with that experience to go right back to the beginning and to teach the basics to young children. That is not seen as a lesser role or looked down on in any way. I am sure that it is the same in all sports that if we can educate children at an early stage, it will provide benefits later on. Obviously, not everyone will go on to an advanced level, but having a grounding will provide them with the opportunity to do that.

Graeme Randall: Due to the technical nature of our sport, we try to recruit recently retired athletes into the coaching framework. Such athletes possess the technical knowledge and the expertise. They have smelled, breathed and tasted life in the high-performance arena, and it is fundamental that we try to secure that knowledge. Ian Edmond described excellently the importance of putting them back in at the bottom, at a level where they can grow as coaches, along with the athletes' development. We are looking for mechanisms to make that an attractive proposition, so that they do not have to go down the commercial route of providing an income for themselves. It is not just a case of putting a retired athlete straight into working with our current batch of players. They can do service to the sport by working with a young group of athletes and by coming through with them.

As I have mentioned, in our framework we have two full-time members of staff who coach. Given that we have more than 7,000 members, it does not take much to work out that we provide a very diluted service.

Going back to the discussion about working with the voluntary sector, from discussions with swimming coaches I know that it is common for parents to be involved with coaching swimming, but that is uncommon in judo, and I am sure that those involved in other sports will have different experiences. The best coaches tend to be dedicated athletes who have come through strict preparation regimes throughout their careers and have the required technical knowledge.

10:45

Michael Matheson: The UKCC seems to be the established standard. Is that the case for all sports?

Swimming seems to be fully engaged at the UK level in setting the syllabus, reviewing it and making sure that it is appropriate to the Scottish setting. Is that the case for judo and other sports, or is it still a difficulty?

Graeme Randall: In partnership with the British Judo Association, our governing body has finished and is delivering the UKCC level 1 curriculum and is about to finalise level 2. We do not deliver an independent programme; we collaborate right across the board with Wales, Northern Ireland and the British Judo Association. There is cross-party agreement on what the curriculum should look like and the governing bodies have working parties whose role it is to make sure that the curriculum is standardised.

There are very few level 3 coaches in Scotland, and it tends only to be national coaches who reach that level. There is therefore a difference between

the level at which the national programme is working and the level of delivery in the clubs, which is at levels 1 and 2. That does not provide us with the technically adept athletes that we require. It would make more sense for the national coaches to work in the clubs.

Mary Scanlon: When Shirley Robertson and Rhona Martin were before the committee—they gave excellent evidence—they said that support, coaching, access and facilities were less good now than when they started 20 years ago. Is it now easier for young people to get into sport? Is everything there that we expect to be there? Is the situation better or worse than it was around 20 years ago?

Ian Edmond: It is difficult to know how easy it is to get in at the bottom end now. My impression is that there has been quite a strong drive throughout the UK to improve the provision of 50m pools. A few years ago, there was a lot of talk about how there were more 50m pools in Paris than there were in the UK. That situation has improved, although more so in England than in Scotland. We still need to improve provision because we need those pools to produce top swimmers.

My general impression is that facilities tend to be difficult to access. They are often quite run down. Council pools that were built in the 1960s and 1970s are often falling apart. An example of that is the Commonwealth pool, which is about to be redeveloped. The problem is that pools are so expensive.

The other problem with facilities is access. There is often quite a battle between the competing interests of public access and the clubs. I experienced that all the way through my career. It is why we have to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning to get into the pool before anyone else wants to be there. That is the only way that we can get enough access to pools.

I am not sure that the situation has progressed, although I do not think that it is any worse now than it was, but some might disagree.

Mary Scanlon: You are not sure whether things are significantly better than when you started.

Ian Edmond: I think that pools generally—

Mary Scanlon: I mean coaching, support and access—the whole thing.

Ian Edmond: The coaching has improved a lot and has definitely moved on. As sport has become more professional with support from bodies such as the Institute of Sport, much more focus has been put on coaching. After we underperformed at the Barcelona Olympics, a lot of attention was given to how we might improve things. I think that sport generally has benefited from that, as can be

seen in our performances at Sydney and Athens. The coaching has become more professional.

Graeme Randall: For our sport, there is no question that the level of support and provision has increased significantly. The Scottish Institute of Sport has the knowledge base, with world-class practitioners in a variety of sports working out in the field. I question whether people know how to access that knowledge appropriately and at the right level. Every day, I am fortunate enough to come in contact with some of those practitioners, who are constantly looking for the next Ian Edmond to come along. I just wonder whether the practitioners are positioned at the right level so that club coaches and the general sporting community can access them appropriately.

Richard Gordon: I think that there is far less free play in sport. When I was growing up, it was easy to do sport out in the streets, but a host of other pressures—PlayStations and various other bits and pieces—now compete for young people's time. I think that young people still enjoy sport. In fact, evidence shows that it is the most popular activity on the curriculum. I think that many young people would also like to go into sport.

However, I think that sport is more expensive than it has ever been. We need to look carefully at the cost of sport. I was interested in the discussion about ice rinks. As a previous chief executive of the National Ice Skating Association—

The Convener: We should have called you as a witness—

Richard Gordon: Ice rinks, like swimming pools, are notoriously expensive to maintain because they need to be kept frozen 24 hours a day. Ice rinks have no downtime. That means that we need to look at how we organise such facilities to get maximum use out of them rather than just open them up in the hope that people will use them.

Mary Scanlon: My second question is about co-ordination. After we have dealt with access—obviously, that is the first step—where do you identify the 9 or 12-years-olds who might be the next Ian Edmond? Are we picking up that potential? How does your work gel with that of local authorities to ensure that we identify potential and future athletes?

A good friend of mine is a swimming coach who teaches other coaches. I got slightly annoyed when Richard Gordon kept referring to swimming teachers, although he was perhaps thinking about PE teachers. I know that my friend is paid half of a teacher's salary because he is employed by community education. He is based in a school and is a first-class coach who is dedicated to coaching. However, the amount that he is paid does not signal that he is valued. I heard what was said

about the need to look at different levels, but I think that that point needs to be made.

My main question is about how you work with local authorities. Is there reasonable equity of access for children throughout Scotland? Is there a co-ordinated process in place to ensure that, from elite athletes down, we can identify potential sportspeople who could be supported to become athletes, or is giving people access just about increasing their sense of fitness and wellbeing?

The Convener: Perhaps Mr Gordon can clarify the position of swimming teachers.

Richard Gordon: I wholly support those comments about the salary that a swimming teacher gets. It is nowhere near what a schoolteacher gets.

Mary Scanlon: I think that it is 50 per cent of what a schoolteacher gets.

Richard Gordon: It is nowhere near what a schoolteacher gets.

Mary Scanlon: Is the issue being addressed?

Richard Gordon: As a governing body, we are not in control of the issue. By and large, the employer is the club, a private scheme or the local authority—they are responsible for setting the rates. A swimming teacher may have as much influence as a schoolteacher—in some cases, more influence.

Mary Scanlon: They also have as much responsibility as schoolteachers.

Richard Gordon: That is 100 per cent the case.

The Convener: This is becoming a bit of a love-in.

Mary Scanlon: We are discussing an important point.

The Convener: Yes, but teachers may have different qualifications. The issue may need to be taken up by the professions.

Mary Scanlon: Let us move on to the issue of co-ordination.

Richard Gordon: You asked how we are working with local authorities to identify and develop talent. We encourage all clubs to work with local authorities, primarily because local authorities run the largest learn to swim schools, which are one of the main feeders into clubs. In the past couple of years, Scottish Swimming has provided areas with money if clubs in the area and the local authority are willing to put an equal amount into the pot. That sum can be used to employ a coach to provide enhanced coaching opportunities for children and other swimmers at clubs in the area. That is one way in which we are

drawing out the best swimmers, so that they can receive enhanced coaching opportunities.

Although the money that we put into the pot is important, it is more important that we are engaging with local authorities, as they usually have access to the water time that we need to provide coaches and enhanced coaching opportunities. All the key stakeholders are around the table to discuss common issues such as access and how we can make the swimmer pathway as clear as possible. There have been huge developments in the seven or eight areas where we have put coaches in place. We will go further down that road, because we believe that much of the success that Scottish swimming and swimmers in Scotland have had over the past four to eight years has been down to the fact that we have a team of full-time paid coaches.

The Convener: In which areas have you appointed coaches?

Richard Gordon: We have full-time paid coaches in Aberdeen—at the city of Aberdeen swim team—Aberdeenshire, Highland, West Lothian and Falkirk. We have just put a coach in place in the Borders. There are also coaches in Dumfries and Galloway and South Ayrshire. They are not the only full-time coaches, but they are the next tier that we have put in place.

Rhoda Grant: I would like to clarify a point and to ask two further questions.

The Convener: You are doing a bit of negotiating—that is fine.

Rhoda Grant: You mentioned that a coach has been appointed in Highland. Is that coach Inverness based?

Richard Gordon: Yes.

Rhoda Grant: Do the 2012 Olympic games and the 2014 Commonwealth games provide us with an opportunity to do something about the lack of Olympic sports training centres in Scotland? Is the problem one of facilities, or do we not have enough people involved in any sport to allow us to create a centre?

11:00

Graeme Randall: Judo in Scotland is strong. At the 2000 Olympics, the United Kingdom men's team was made up wholly of Scottish athletes—all three of the men who qualified were from Scotland. Only one athlete from Scotland participated in 2004, but this year three of the seven athletes who have qualified are based in Scotland. Scotland has a strong judo pedigree, and we believe that there is every justification for having an Olympic training centre here.

The national judo academy at Ratho is world class, but that is because of the people in it, not the bricks and mortar. Judo could be taught in a church hall, but what makes a programme world class is having the right standard of people. We are striving in that direction; we are selling that message as much as possible to our British Judo Association colleagues and trying to encourage them to invest in our programme.

Of course, that is not without its difficulties. As I said, the British Judo Association holds the key with regard to selections to the world stage and international events; all that we can do is provide the players. We have to manage that relationship carefully and, as a smaller team, we feel that we are much more professional, organised and able to produce huge results on the world and Olympic stage.

The Convener: Why is there no Scottish judo association in the same way that, for example, swimming has Scottish Swimming?

Graeme Randall: There is a national governing body called JudoScotland, which is based right next door to the national judo academy. However, in the Great Britain context, we are considered an area along with the north-west of England and Yorkshire and Humberside.

The Convener: Despite winning all those medals and having such a big team?

Graeme Randall: Yes.

The Convener: I do not like the sound of that.

Rhoda Grant: Does that situation create barriers for Scottish sportspeople?

Graeme Randall: It certainly creates tension when our governing body, which operates to a very high standard, is largely dictated to by the British Judo Association about what it can and cannot do. If, for example, we want to alter our grading system or coaching curriculum, we have to consult and negotiate with the association—which, for cultural reasons, might not always be the best thing for Scottish athletes and coaches.

Rhoda Grant: Is there any way you could overcome that? Of course, you might not want to put your response on the record.

Graeme Randall: In the current climate, we can overcome it only by having a strong professional relationship with the British Judo Association and UK Sport and ensuring that our funding partners at sportscotland are working closely with UK Sport and Sport England so that we are not constantly sending athletes different messages. Our programme's message is that if you are dedicated and put the work in, you will go to the Olympic games, the world championships or whatever. It will happen through the British Judo Association,

but you will have Scottish support all the way. Over the past 10 or 15 years, we have supported athletes born, based and training in Scotland but who, in the end, have fought for Britain. It is not a question of sending athletes down south; as I said, the most important element—coaching—can be delivered to an appropriate standard in Scotland. We do not have to export our athletes or allow them to be teased or seduced into moving south. We simply need to create the right climate for success.

Rhoda Grant: So the issue is about the way in which the sport is structured, not about facilities, coaches or the number of athletes who are available.

Graeme Randall: Having the right number of available athletes is certainly an issue. I am no swimming expert, but my feeling is that, as far as swimmers are concerned, all you have to do is provide the pool; they know where the opposition is and use the stop-clock as their marker. However, in order to send world-class players to the Olympic games, we need almost world-class sparring partners with whom they can train. As a result, we actively encourage non-Scottish athletes—including, you will not be surprised to learn, English athletes—to train with us. When they recognise the level of coaching that is being offered and the standard of our training programme, many English athletes opt to train in Scotland and, indeed, even become residents.

Dr Simpson: You said that Scotland has no training centres for the summer Olympics. Is that right? I am not talking about just judo; do we not have a single national training centre in Scotland? Did we apply for the judo centre, given our record in that sport? If we did not apply, we are obviously not getting it. Perhaps you do not know.

Graeme Randall: We have actively campaigned to be recognised. We know that we will not be the British Judo Association's main training centre—that designation has gone to our Dartford centre—but we are looking for recognition, almost as a satellite centre or a performance centre that can contribute to the British programme.

Richard Gordon: British Swimming has gone down a similar route with intensive training centres. That has gone out to tender, and Scottish Swimming has co-ordinated a consortium based around the Scottish Institute of Sport, Scottish Swimming and the University of Stirling to put forward Stirling university as one of five possible intensive training centres, which will be funded by British Swimming. We are currently shortlisted. The number is six, coming down to five, and we hope that we will be one of the centres. We have a fantastic centre at Stirling university, which has been run through the Scottish Institute of Sport.

The Convener: I am interested to note that you do not seem to have gone through that process with respect to judo, Mr Randall. The centre was simply allocated. Is that right?

Graeme Randall: We are in the process of negotiating the status of the centre.

The Convener: Yes—as a satellite centre, but the main training centre for the Olympics has been allocated.

Graeme Randall: Absolutely.

The Convener: You did not go through the same process for judo as for swimming.

Graeme Randall: No. The designation was not put out to tender. It is interesting that the swimming centres were put out to tender, given that we were never given the opportunity to bid to be the main judo centre.

The Convener: That is the case even though all those English athletes come up to a centre that you say is world class, because of the people there.

Graeme Randall: Yes.

The Convener: I have one of my grumpy faces on.

Helen Eadie: The committee is keen to consider a variety of aspects, in particular how we can achieve excellence. I will pick up on the point that Ian Edmond made, but you should all feel free to comment on the point about swimming pools in Paris, which I heard about on Radio 4. The committee was privileged to have lunch with Sebastian Coe when he was up here, and we picked up on the point that Paris has more 50m swimming pools than the whole of the United Kingdom. I think it was Ian Edmond who said that it is only in England that there is a plethora of 50m swimming pools, which are obviously essential for competition purposes. Would you like to enlighten us as to where our 50m swimming pools are in Scotland? How many do we have? What do we need to do in that regard? Perhaps Mr Gordon would like to comment, too.

Ian Edmond: I would not quite say that there is a plethora of pools in England, but the situation has certainly improved. That was not achieved overnight, however—it has been an on-going process. In the build-up to 2012, London has had only one 50m pool built, at Crystal Palace. That is for the whole of London, and having to deal with that situation now is ridiculous.

You asked about pools in Scotland. The pool at Stirling university is one of the better ones, certainly from a training perspective. One of the good things about that pool is that it is set up as a training facility; it is not designed for big competitions. There is the Royal Commonwealth

pool here in Edinburgh, which has been around for a long time. It is about to be refurbished, and there are a lot of other issues about it. In Glasgow, a top-notch competitive facility will be renovated and enhanced in time for the 2014 Commonwealth games. I know of only one other 50m pool in Scotland, in East Kilbride. It is another very old pool, which has been used for age-group training; it is not suitable for international competition, although it is perfectly adequate as a training facility. Have I missed any out?

Richard Gordon: That is the current stock of 50m pools in Scotland. Three new pools are being planned. The one in Aberdeen has received quite a lot of public interest. Another 50m pool is planned for Tollcross in Glasgow, in preparation for the Commonwealth games in 2014, and a pool is planned in Dundee, as a replacement for Olympia—£20 million has been raised for that, which is believed to be about £2 million short of what is needed.

There are some difficulties. Number 1 is that 50m pools are expensive—let us not beat about the bush on that. The cheapest 50m training pool in recent years is probably the one in Stirling. It is a quality pool, but it cost £7 million. For public 50m pools, where there is a boom for maximum flexibility, you will not get much change out of £16 million to £20 million. At Aberdeen, the cost is expected to be between £12 million and £16 million. It takes time for such developments to come through. The question is whether they will be ready by 2012 or 2014. It is uncertain whether they will have an impact on the two major events in Britain and in Scotland.

However, as has already been mentioned, we need access to pools. There are 500 pools in Scotland, including school pools, hotel pools and public pools. I think that 500 is probably enough—we need better-quality pools and better access to the existing stock of pools. For example, in some areas, clubs are unable to access school pools, which are just left empty after school time, which is a shame because we could make a difference by having access to those pools.

The Convener: Access to school sporting facilities where appropriate is a matter that the committee will pick up on.

Helen Eadie: We need to consider renewable energy issues, such as solar heating. You have indicated that that is a big issue.

Given that you are all at European standard and have competed on the world stage to some extent, do you have any examples of best practice that we could bring to Scotland? In your travels, have you observed any practice in swimming or judo that has made you think, “It would be good if we could do that in Scotland”?

The Convener: We had the example from Dr Edmond about Australian coaches training people at the grass-roots level rather than just the elite.

Ian Edmond: We have the Scottish Institute of Sport, which was inspired by the successful Australian Institute of Sport. It has been a huge help, certainly to me as a swimmer.

Graeme Randall: An example of best practice in Europe is the French system, with its regional academies, its Institut National du Sport et de l'Education Physique and its national programme. There is a constant feeder system of athletes coming through. In France, more than half a million licence holders participate in judo—it is the second or third biggest sport for participation, and a huge cultural activity there, which is why it is no surprise that France has won multiple Olympic and world titles.

The good practice that we can learn from the French is the professionalisation of the coaches. To become a coach in France, even at club level, is a two-year exercise almost to degree level. It is not a case of just being good at judo and going along to a couple of courses: becoming a coach is a formal process. Whether they are dealing with a five-year-old walking through the door for the first time or an athlete who is about to take part in an Olympic final, all French coaches are indoctrinated into the same philosophy of coaching. The approach is about taking that little five-year-old kid and presenting him or her with an opportunity to reach the highest possible level. Whether they make the Olympic final is irrelevant to the French, because for them it is about participating in the sport for life. Becoming an Olympic champion is a by-product of enjoyment of the sport.

11:15

The Convener: The committee is looking at that issue, which is attached to our health agenda.

Richard Gordon: One element of good practice that I would love to be adopted in Scotland is that all children are taught to swim before they leave primary school. That should apply across the board.

Rhoda Grant: Ian Edmond mentioned that he took a break from his studies to compete. When Liz McColgan gave evidence, she explained how the scholarship that she received in America allowed her to continue with her academic education while spending a lot of time on her sport. Could we benefit from that approach here? Would Ian Edmond have benefited from it?

Ian Edmond: I was just thinking of that example. Universities in this country do not have the money and are not set up to support elite sport—which is a missed opportunity—with the

exception of the University of Stirling, the University of Bath and Loughborough University, which are very sport oriented and provide a lot of support to athletes. However, I do not necessarily think that universities should train athletes.

I came to the University of Edinburgh because it is a prestigious university that has a good reputation and Edinburgh is a fantastic city where we had a tremendous training programme. There are many reasons why people from down south and from abroad might be attracted to come and train here. Edinburgh provides an opportunity to work on acquiring university qualifications—if that is your primary reason for coming—while developing swimming skills on the side or to develop one's swimming while taking advantage of the possibility of gaining university qualifications.

I am aware of a number of athletes in different sports who, having left school at 16 to compete in their sports, went on to compete in several Olympic games but are now coming to the end of their careers and are asking where they can go from here. They might want to go into coaching, but be lacking in educational qualifications. The Scottish Institute of Sport was quite good at encouraging athletes to take up other qualifications while training.

I think that the University of Edinburgh is looking to develop the scholarships—or bursaries, as they are called—that it has provided for several years. For some sports, the university provides some financial support as well as access to a physiotherapist and to facilities. Working more directly with the educational side would be a great benefit, as it should be easier for people like me to get time off. We might need not a whole four years off but just a bit more flexibility in the course.

Michael Matheson: A point was made about the model that is used in France. It strikes me that all coaching programmes, whether for swimming or for judo, must share some common ground in respect of the skills that coaches need when they start on their career and before they become more specialised. Could we achieve more by having people from different sports work together on those core training or coaching values while developing their individual specialisms? Could economies be gained by looking at that? Would that help?

Richard Gordon: I think that that will happen. An original aim of the United Kingdom coaching certificate, which was backed by the UK Government, was that all sports would share some core units, and sport-specific units would be bolted on to those to create level 1, level 2 and level 3. However, that has proved to be far more difficult than was envisaged. In Scotland, a number of sports use Scottish Qualifications Authority qualifications, which can be mapped to the

national progression awards as core units. In essence, we are getting those core elements. What you have described will happen in time, but it is taking a lot longer than was anticipated.

Michael Matheson: Is there anything that we could do to speed up that process?

Richard Gordon: I do not honestly know at this stage, although sports are beginning to work together. Scottish Swimming is an approved delivery centre, and we help an eclectic mix of sports—equestrian, netball and triathlon—with their qualifications. We are used as a conduit, through which those sports are registered with the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

There are four approved delivery centres in Scotland. As I said, sports are starting to work together. For example, there was a meeting in our office this week with representatives of the sports that I have just mentioned and sportscotland to talk about commonalities. That way of working will happen, but not overnight and it will not be forced.

The Convener: Judo is more of a minority sport, whereas swimming has an educational agenda. Does the Scottish Judo Federation give tasters of judo in secondary schools—rather than people seeing it on television, having a road to Damascus moment and dropping everything else, saying “That’s for me”? There are young men and women in secondary schools who could perhaps use their energies more creatively than they sometimes do.

Graeme Randall: I was fortunate enough to be asked to take a couple of lunch time judo sessions when my wife was working at Drummond community high school in Edinburgh. She asked me to take sessions for some fifth year boys, who she felt would benefit from the experience. You can imagine what it must have been like for them to come in, dressed in their track suits, and to experience a close physical contact sport and be allowed to throw their partners and execute some moves on their pals—all under good guidance. The experience that they gained was exceptional.

The coaches who are currently delivering in schools operate by approaching the local authority and making contact with the active schools co-ordinator or whoever it is that works in the authority’s sports division. They might ask for permission to go into a school to deliver taster sessions, then offer a 10-week block of judo and try to establish a club from a cluster of schools in the area. Invariably, such coaches have the biggest impact at primary school level.

The Convener: You go to secondary schools, too. Do you know how many schools—

Graeme Randall: No—it is almost unheard of for coaches to go into secondary schools.

The Convener: Would that be a good idea? You went to Drummond community high and introduced judo to fifth year boys, which seemed to be stimulating.

Graeme Randall: The best way to capture their imaginations is to do so from a younger age.

The Convener: Thank you. I am glad I am not doing it—I do not want to fling anybody about at the moment.

Thank you all very much for your evidence. As usual, it has been extremely interesting to hear from people who have been at the chalk face—or at the starting pistol, gun, or whatever is used nowadays. You have reinforced much of what we have heard previously about coaching and facilities.

Health Boards (Legislation)

11:23

The Convener: Agenda item 4 is forthcoming legislation. Further to the First Minister's statement on 14 May, it is expected that a bill that will make provision for constitution of health boards, for the election of certain members of health boards and for connected purposes will be introduced before the summer recess. It is expected that the Health and Sport Committee will be designated lead committee in respect of that bill.

Paper HS/S3/08/18/8, which we have before us, sets out an initial approach to scrutiny of the bill. I invite members to tell me whether they agree with each part of that approach. First, do members agree that the clerks should issue a call for written evidence following the introduction of the bill, to run during the summer recess?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Do members agree that we should consider possible candidates for oral evidence following consideration of the written evidence? Do we agree to consider a list of potential witnesses in private, as is normal practice? Members may also submit names themselves.

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Do members agree to delegate to me responsibility for arranging for the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body to pay, under rule 12.4.3, any expenses of witnesses in respect of consideration of the bill?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Do members agree to consider in private drafts of the committee's stage 1 report on the bill, as is normal practice?

Members indicated agreement.

Dr Simpson: When we call for written evidence, can we ensure that we have some communication with trusts in England that have elected boards? They may not be willing to submit evidence, but it would be valuable for us to get evidence from them.

The Convener: That is fine. Members may make further suggestions if, after having seen the list of witnesses and written submissions, they think that someone has been missed out, as sometimes happens. Ordinary members of the public may not look at our website with as much attention as others do. I knew that that would provoke a discussion.

Mary Scanlon: I was slightly surprised to see this item on the agenda, because I am aware that

the Government is conducting two pilot studies of elected health boards. I thought that those pilots would run for some time before the bill came before us.

The Convener: I understand that the bill will be introduced before the recess. The item is on the agenda to ensure that there is no slippage and that we are able to issue a call for evidence over the summer. We will not have witnesses before us at our first meeting after the recess, but we will at least have set the process in train.

Mary Scanlon: I understand that, but I thought that we would receive information from the pilot studies and that some sort of audit would be carried out to inform our judgments on the bill. We will consider the bill in parallel with the pilot studies, which will run for two or three years. We will have information from England, which is good, but it would have been good for us to get information from Scotland.

The Convener: I understand that the bill will make provision for the pilots to be set up.

Mary Scanlon: So the bill is to set up the pilots, rather than to introduce elections for health boards. That makes sense.

The Convener: I cannot say, as I am not privy to the bill. I understand that a bill will be introduced. Normally, we are not in charge of timetables, so we will have to consider the bill at stage 1 regardless of what it says. When the bill is introduced, the clerks will issue a call for evidence over the recess. If, once written evidence has been submitted, a member thinks that someone has been missed out—Richard Simpson mentioned that there have been elections to boards in England—we can write to them. Anyone will be able to add to the list once we have seen it. Thereafter we will decide whom to invite to give oral evidence, as we have agreed.

Mary Scanlon: Can you clarify that point? Paper HS/S3/08/18/8 refers to

"Forthcoming legislation on the constitution of health boards and on the election of certain members".

It does not say that the bill is intended to establish pilot studies.

The Convener: The usual caveat—"and for connected purposes"—is attached to the bill. Those connected purposes may be the establishment of pilot studies, but I do not know whether that is the case, as I have not seen the bill. Forgive me for saying so, but I think that you are making a political argument. I do not think that pilots for elections to boards can be established until legislation is in place.

Mary Scanlon: I am not arguing—I am just asking for clarity.

The Convener: I cannot give you clarity until I have seen the bill. Everything will become clear next week, when we see it; Mary Scanlon may then be content. I do not have access to legislation ahead of any other member of the committee. That is the best I can do.

That concludes the committee's formal public business for today.

11:29

Meeting continued in private until 11:40.

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