

HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE

Monday 26 January 2009

Session 3

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HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE

3rd Meeting 2009, Session 3

CONVENER

*Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (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)

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

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

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Peter Bilsborough (University of Stirling)

Rob Hardie (sportcentral)

Stewart Harris (sportscotland)

Alan Lynn (University of Stirling)

Bob McGowan (Stirling Council)

Mike Roberts (sportscotland)

Brian Samson (sportTayside and Fife)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Callum Thomson

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Douglas Thornton

ASSISTANT CLERK

David Slater

LOCATION

Court Room, Cottrell Building, University of Stirling

Scottish Parliament

Health and Sport Committee

Monday 26 January 2009

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 13:41*]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Christine Grahame): Good afternoon and welcome to the third meeting in 2009 of the Scottish Parliament's Health and Sport Committee. This is the first time that a committee of the Parliament has met in the University of Stirling.

I remind everyone present—whether or not you are in the public area—to ensure that mobile phones and BlackBerrys are switched off. Apologies have been received from Mary Scanlon and Helen Eadie.

Agenda item 1 is to decide whether to take in private agenda item 3, under which the committee will discuss the fact-finding visits that it has recently undertaken in connection with its pathways into sport inquiry. Do members agree to take item 3 in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Pathways into Sport Inquiry

13:42

The Convener: Under agenda item 2, which is our main business today, the committee will take oral evidence for our pathways into sport inquiry. The committee undertook two visits this morning. Half of its members met professional and volunteer coaches to discuss the challenges that they face; the other members, including myself, went to Forthbank to see the hub facility that Stirling Council is developing. All of our external visits have been extremely useful.

There are two panels of witnesses. The first consists of Rob Hardie, who is a partnership manager at sportcentral; Brian Samson, who is a partnership manager at sportTayside and Fife; Bob McGowan, who is schools services manager at Stirling Council; Peter Bilsborough, who is director of sport development at the University of Stirling; and Alan Lynn, who is a senior teaching fellow in sports coaching at the University of Stirling. I thank the witnesses for coming to the meeting and apologise for the short delay in starting it.

As is our usual practice, we move straight to members' questions. If a question is directed at a particular witness, they will wish to answer it, obviously, but if anyone wants to self-nominate to speak at any time, they should indicate to me. I will then take witnesses in order.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I have a declaration to make. I have had a connection with the University of Stirling for longer than I care to remember—for 30-something years—and I still have an honorary chair at it. I worked with one of Professor Bilsborough's predecessors in developing what I believe are now known as "supers"—we worked on a programme for getting elderly people into activities, as opposed to what we are dealing with today. I thought that I should put my local connections on the record.

I want to start right at the beginning. We have taken quite a lot of evidence on various sporting activities, which has been interesting. However, the underlying skills of all children have been a matter of considerable concern. The two-hour-a-week physical education programme has not been fully implemented and many children do not appear to be attaining the necessary physical literacy even to be able to participate in sport tasters. Where are the barriers at the very early stages—at nursery school up to primaries 4 and 5, when physical literacy skills should be developed—to creating the necessary level of physical literacy?

13:45

Brian Samson (sportTayside and Fife): The principal barrier is to do with professional infrastructure. In the committee's inquiry, much depends on the speed at which you want things to change. If we rely on clubs and volunteers to support the good work that goes on in schools, it will become increasingly difficult to up the pace and make a step change. If we are serious about doing something before 2014, we will need to consider the infrastructure and school-led programmes. Many of the programmes are organised by active schools co-ordinators or managers, who bring in the clubs, but what is missing is a strong lead from the schools, which leads us back to how we can provide the infrastructure within the teaching profession.

One need only cast one's eyes over the private school sector to see the energy and, in many respects, the demand that the private school system is creating. In simple terms, teachers are paid to do a little more work and to do extracurricular work. They are resourced and they get time in lieu. We must apply those principles to break down the single biggest barrier, which is to do with personnel and infrastructure.

Bob McGowan (Stirling Council): We need to consider the infrastructure. The issue is where we place it. Underpinning everything, local authorities have a big responsibility for integrating some of the initiatives at Government and local authority level, which includes some of the issues related to schools. Over several years, Stirling Council has tried to adopt what we call an integrated approach at cluster level. That is fundamental if some of the programmes that are being put in place are to be activated in the best way possible. The cluster model identifies staff at local level, such as the active schools co-ordinator, physical education staff, sports development staff and others who might have a voluntary contribution to make. If they work together collectively with a common philosophy and focus, there is an opportunity to make progress.

Engagement with parents is also required. Some opportunities are not always accessible to young people, partly because of their social circumstances. We can change that only at local level, not Government or local authority level. We must get down to the level at which people are active, which is the cluster level in schools. I take the point about nursery and primary school engagement, which is fundamental. The joint approach must be made locally, rather than at local authority or national level. All local authorities throughout the country need to have that framework in place, rather than be dependent on individuals or an individual circumstance. We need

to provide that framework and celebrate it where it is successful.

In the past three years, we have worked in partnership with the University of Stirling. We have a study that is almost ready to be published that indicates to us that the work that we have been undertaking through that integrated model has a positive effect, in that it allows young people to progress into participation beyond school, in the club and community settings. That is one outcome that we hoped to achieve. The next stage is to take that further by engaging people in lifelong participation and addressing some of the issues to do with drop-out that tend to appear a bit later at secondary school. Fundamentally, if we do not provide basic movement skills and the necessary attitude and commitment through that integrated approach, many other initiatives might fail, depending on the circumstances. We need to be a bit more certain about what we want to achieve.

The Convener: All our proceedings are on the public record. I would like people who are reading the *Official Report* to understand everything that has been said. Will you say what the cluster level is, for anyone who does not understand that?

Bob McGowan: Basically, we adopt a cluster model, which involves a secondary school and its associated primary schools in a local geographic area. It is a team working together in a geographic area.

Peter Bilsborough (University of Stirling): We should acknowledge that a lot of good work is going on in physical education in primary schools. I worked out on the back of an envelope that about 1.5 million hours of physical education were delivered in Scottish primary schools last year, which is a lot of activity. However, that prompts the question, is it being supported as best it can be? The answer is that there are some problems. As you know, there are problems with facilities in primary schools, which are limited in number, range and access. The initial teacher training for physical education for primary school teachers is a bit of a joke. Some establishments offer ITT of only 10 hours over four years, which is 2.5 hours a year.

There is too little continuous professional development for primary school teachers in physical education. I am thinking in particular of the urgent CPD that needs to be done to encourage girls in particular to engage more in physical activity and, by implication, physical education in primary schools. It has been shown in other countries that taking a very targeted approach to encouraging girls to become involved in physical activity is quite effective, but we do not seem to be thinking about that.

There is also an issue about the availability of physical education specialists in primary schools. In some cases, they are non-existent; in other cases, they are too few. However, there are also instances of good practice and good resourcing.

In all that, teachers need to be told that they are doing a good job. They also need to be looked after; people need to put their arms around them at some point. In the 70s and 80s, we used to do that through an advisory system. One of the worst things that we ever did was to get rid of it. On paper, it appeared quite expensive, so it was got rid of, but the chickens are now coming home to roost, because those savings have cost us a lot. There is nothing better than somebody going in to support primary school teachers and help them with the curricular teaching of physical education.

I am sorry if all that sounds rather negative, but it comes down to decision making. If we want young people to be what we want them to be physically and cognitively, and if we want to achieve that in an effective and social way through physical education, we have to make choices and put some money into it.

The Convener: We quite like the negative. We like to know where the story is not good. That is what we are about. You said that in some primary schools the initial teacher training is non-existent, but in others there is good practice. Will you give us some examples of that?

Peter Bilsborough: I do not think that it is appropriate to name schools, but I am led to believe that headteachers in certain authorities can decide, according to resource, which specialist teachers they can afford to invite into school. Depending on the resource and the role of the school, some schools have specialist teachers in X, Y and Z, but other schools have specialist teachers in only X or Y. They have to make a decision about whether to have a sewing teacher, a music teacher or a physical educationalist, for example.

The Convener: Perhaps we will find out where those schools are. I appreciate your discretion.

Rob Hardie (sportcentral): I want to add a point in response to Dr Simpson's original question about the fundamental basic movement skills. I would like to see integration and commonality in the various programmes that cover those skills. I would like the various programmes to be co-ordinated a bit more effectively. We have the TOP programmes, early years programmes and specific fundamental programmes in, for example, gymnastics. A national overview of a fundamental skills-building programme in primary schools would be a positive.

Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): I want to follow up Richard Simpson's question. I address

my question to Mr Samson from sportTayside and Fife, because of what is written in paragraphs 1 and 2 of his written submission. However, my question is, in a sense, directed to all the witnesses. In answer to the first question, Mr McGowan and Mr Hardie both said that there should be integration of existing programmes. What do you mean by that?

In your written submission, Mr Samson, you make the clear distinction—which the committee accepts—between the teaching of sport and the physical education that might give rise to improved physical literacy. You go on to talk about the need for primary school teachers or others to have more skill in the teaching of sport.

We have just heard that much is being done. We are not knocking anybody—that is not the purpose of the committee. However, our starting point being the fact that much is being done, the Auditor General tells us that only 5 per cent of primary schools are even close to providing two hours of physical education, so although we admire what is being done, we have concerns.

Given the fact that you have a different perspective—you are not primary school teachers—what would you do? What programmes exist? What would you integrate to make a genuine difference to young people's physical literacy? What would you do to make the connection between acquired physical literacy and entry into sport, which is the focal point of the committee's inquiry?

Brian Samson: I make it clear in my written submission that the very business that the sports partnerships are engaged in is the linking of national sport-focused programmes through regional bodies to local authorities and down into local schools. We are involved in that right now.

To pick up Pete Bilsborough's point, much has to be done through teachers' in-service training. He also made well the point about the difficult budgetary choices that headteachers must make. They do not necessarily have enough specialist physical education time, which means that the teaching of physical education is thrown back on the classroom teacher, who generally—this is a sweeping generalisation—is not all that confident in leading physical education for children in the school. We supplement that and bring in basketball, gymnastics, rugby and a range of sports—all of which will be well known to the committee—from local clubs. It is about building the pathway from the primary school to the club by bringing the club coaches in.

By and large, however, that is still set against the tapestry of the school not providing any tangible lead. The headteacher and staff need to be switched on to it, so that a good grounding in

physical education as well as recreational or competitive after-school sport is available, even if it is only two or three activities. That must be supported by a club that provides coaches and adults who are empathetic and understand the development of children and who can come in and work in the school setting. That makes it fairly easy to begin pulling the youngsters up to the clubs. Mini-rugby is a good example of that, but that activity has often happened in isolation, with the rugby clubs doing it on their own. However, right across local authorities and through active schools, pathways and bridges are being built back into primary schools.

Does that answer your question?

Ross Finnie: Yes, it does. You can only make the observation—you are not experts in primary school teaching; none of us is—that, unless primary school teachers are given additional support, we will simply not meet the two-hours requirement. We are exercised to understand how simply saying that the curriculum for excellence is now part of the curriculum, with two hours as a minimum amount of physical activity, is going to make that happen. We are not clear about that. We are interested in your view—it is not an expert view, but you are heavily engaged in the co-ordination with schools—on how the gap could be bridged.

The Convener: I have just been reminded by the clerk that Stewart Harris, the chief executive of sportscotland, was a primary school PE teacher for many years. Perhaps he can give us a little more insight into that.

Ross Finnie: Ah, but these people have a wide variety of experience.

The Convener: You are not convinced.

Ross Finnie: I do not want to inhibit their contribution.

The Convener: I simply pass on the message; I make no qualitative valuation. Does anyone else want to comment?

14:00

Bob McGowan: We must also consider the fundamental issues of attitudes, beliefs and worth. Nationally, we talk about certain things as having worth but, in practice, that is not exhibited in terms of where we are. I take the example of schools' not meeting the requirement for two hours of physical activity a week. I do not think that anybody would disagree that, in terms of the health of the nation, there should be more activity and more physical education based on basic movement skills, but that is in the context of other competing demands.

We need to get to a stage at which we take a mature 21st century attitude at all levels—at local authority as well as teacher level—about what that is worth in practice. We must recognise its value and say, "Irrespective of all the other demands, I will put the PE target high up the agenda." That is not necessarily the case now. In secondary schools, academic attainment certainly overshadows anything to do with two hours of PE. In primary schools, the demands of curriculum change and the importance that is afforded to maths and language attainment are far ahead of any value that is placed on two hours of PE. A fundamental change is required.

Demanding that people do two hours of PE does not mean that it will be done or that it will be done well. We must get to the stage at which people want to do it because it is the right thing to do and we all commit to it, at national level, at local authority level and at headteacher level. We must be aware that many people who are in positions of power have had a negative experience of PE, physical activity and sport. If they are in a position to make choices and they are not comfortable with that element of the curriculum, they might make a different choice. We have a big role to play.

Furthermore, some of the marketing in our society runs counter to the goals that we are trying to achieve. The media often talk about spectating rather than participating in sport. Another issue is that when it comes to physical activity, media coverage is dominated by one sport: in all our newspapers, 90 per cent of the coverage is of football.

The Convener: I am in favour of that being reduced.

Bob McGowan: We do not have a lot of influence over some of those matters, but we must understand that they have a big influence. I gave someone an example this morning from my holiday in Madrid in October. Madrid has a daily sports paper that is 50 pages thick, about 10 per cent of which are about football. The celebration of a range of sports, the participation in sport and the commitment of communities to celebrating sport are different. There are cultural issues about how we promote and celebrate all sports and activities. Not everyone will be a football player, and people are not always interested in football. We need to be balanced about the range of activities, because we are talking about lifelong participation. I return to the initial point: structures at a local level are fundamental. If they are not in place, irrespective of any other initiatives, we will have nothing to hang things on to.

The other issue is, why do we not ask young people more? Their attitudes can change quite quickly from one year to the next. We are sometimes in a catch-up situation, as our policy

and decision making do not always catch up with how they operate. How often do we get involved in a marketing approach to promote physical activity through digital technology? We should use what is current and important for young people, even though we might not be familiar with it. The term “digital natives” is sometimes used—we are not digital natives.

The Convener: Sorry?

Bob McGowan: The term describes people who were brought up with digital technology and are familiar with it. They can easily solve problems that I find difficult, such as trying to operate my phone—I also had problems dealing with the mike earlier, which shows where I am at. Those are important issues.

Ross Finnie: You made a strong point at the start of your comments about making it clear that the two hours of PE matters. Can Mr Bilsborough help us? Can we present the evidence in a different way? Is there evidence that allows us to say not only that having two hours of PE matters and that we think that it is important, but that attaining a degree of physical literacy is good for pupils’ academic and other achievements?

Peter Bilsborough: I will put a little spin on the question, if I may. I am not sure why we are getting bogged down in and het up about the issue of two hours of PE provision a week. As Bob McGowan has just said, it is not about two hours, it is about what is going on in the time that is allocated for physical education in schools.

If I may say so, the notion of pathways into sport is concerned with systems and structures. We are asking how we can have a better system to feed children into sporting pathways, but that is not what physical education in schools is about. Physical education is about using physical activities to educate young people to become responsible, active, self-forming citizens. That is the stuff of physical education; it is not about starting them off on some sporting pathway.

As I looked at all the documentation for the meeting, I noted words such as systems, structures, organisations, key agencies, targets, concordats and strategies. As far as I can see, nobody has used words such as community involvement, social responsibility, value systems and citizenship. That is the stuff of physical education, but we have not even been invited to talk about that today.

The Convener: You are very free to do so. The inquiry is called pathways into sport because we are looking at the health and wellbeing of a nation. We are not looking for a system that produces elite athletes—we are not interested in that. We are interested in the fact that predictions of obesity in our young people are horrendous, and the fact

that where children are more active and healthier there is less crime. You can take it as read that we all know that if children have had a good time and they are energetic, they will perform better academically, no matter what their abilities are. Please do not feel constrained in what you say. We are interested in hearing about whole-person wellbeing, which I hope encompasses the things that you have touched on, Mr Bilsborough. Is the committee happy with that?

Members indicated agreement.

Peter Bilsborough: I will be a little controversial and say that if you want to deliver all of that, it will have to be done by a trained, experienced, professional physical educationalist or by primary school teachers who are adequately trained. They are the triggers for using physical activity to achieve certain educational ends. Everything else around that—parents and sports development officers coming in, X, Y and Z—is noise to me.

Let us talk about physical education in schools. Physical educationalists are concerned with three things. The first is teaching physical skills and fitness exercises—the physical activity itself. Secondly, they are involved with what can be achieved through physical activity, for example helping pupils to acquire good social skills, to enhance their self-esteem and to be socially responsible. Thirdly, physical education is about teaching about physical activities, for example how the body responds to exercise, the rules of sport and so on. That is the stuff of physical education, and we must be clear about what it is and how it differs from sport.

If we want to involve sport in schools, we need to challenge sports agencies, particularly national governing bodies, to think about their educational contribution. Some of the submissions use the phrase “sport education”. If we do involve those organisations, somebody needs to articulate to us what sport education is.

Ross Finnie: My gauche question elicited more of an answer than I was looking for. I must master such gauche questions.

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): You did very well.

Ross Finnie: I suppose that our difficulty has been that, on the one hand, we are looking at sport, but, on the other hand, a huge amount of evidence has been presented to us about the inability to attract people into sport, no matter how well organised or disorganised the governing bodies are. The dysfunctional aspect is that people’s physical education status makes it difficult for them to engage even with the best organised structures that certain sports put in place.

That also touches on the point that you forcibly made about what we mean when it comes to the provision of education. We have been a little bit loose with our language, and with the shorthand about the two hours. The weekly provision of PE has been set at two hours, but we mean to ask, what the hell is actually happening? You have articulated that point, and it is easier for you to say it than it is for us.

The answer was helpful. People might have a view on the matter, but the challenge about the distinction has been well articulated, for which we thank you.

The Convener: I have written it down that Ross Finnie has admitted to asking a gauche question. To my mind, he has never done so before.

Brian Samson: I wish to make a point in support of what Peter Bilsborough said. You will hear evidence from Perth and Kinross Council, which has invested in up to 26 PE specialists, who will go to primary schools and provide the high-quality physical education that Peter has spoken about. As an add-on, the sports development team in Perth and Kinross has worked closely with my eight sports to ensure that we address Peter Bilsborough's point about having appropriately qualified and empathetic programmes at primary schools, based around what the PE specialists are providing. There are examples of very good practice. A good school with a good head and good staff will produce results no matter the system. Somebody has actually got to do it with the kids. We can have policies and plans coming out of our ears, but—

The Convener: We are a pragmatic committee; we are not all sold on strategies, policies, visions and so on if nothing is actually happening. As you can see, we have all been around the Parliament for quite a long time.

Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): The central role that physical education in schools plays in helping to increase levels of physical activity overall has been coming across clearly in the course of our evidence taking. The remit of the inquiry, however, is not physical education itself, and that should be recognised. There is a danger that we could end up drifting in that direction.

When we raise the issue of more physical education being provided, many teachers, at primary level in particular, will say that they simply do not have the time, and that they do not have the capacity in the curriculum to do more. That does not even take into account all the problems with facilities—in particular, the fact that the gym hall might also be the assembly hall and the dining hall.

I would be interested to hear what our witnesses have to say about this. If we are to establish the

culture change that you believe we need as a nation, with a greater priority given to physical education, what, in practical terms, must be done at a national level? What, practically, must be done locally to ensure a much greater consistency in approach in delivering on programmes, so that we avoid the piecemeal approach that appears to apply at the moment, with a couple of local authorities doing fairly well and others doing appallingly?

Bob McGowan: I do not want to talk on behalf of those who lead on curriculum for excellence, but I think that they would tell you that there is a window of opportunity regarding the balance of the curriculum and how it operates. That curriculum is about a change in culture in education and there is now an opportunity for better provision and a better balance in respect of what we were talking about earlier—people valuing health and wellbeing, including physical education, physical activity and sport. We are in an important transitional phase in which elements are being teased out: how people view the curriculum and what it is about.

There is also a more outcome-focused approach that takes account of what the outcomes are. Education outcomes at the moment show that we are a nation with high attainment in terms of certification, although our productivity is relatively low. Similarly, the outcomes for health and wellbeing show that we have an obese population and low participation in activity.

14:15

It seems to me that we need to review what education can do to change those outcomes. People are grappling with what that means in practice and what teachers should focus on. It will be up to individual teachers to review what they do—that is the challenge. In the past, teachers were directed by Government and others to do certain things and time was allocated to various parts of the curriculum. The squeeze on PE happened because the curriculum was overcrowded. Now that teachers have certain outcomes to achieve, decisions can be made locally about how to achieve them, and teachers are empowered. There is a challenge for teachers because we have moved from a directed approach to a devolved approach. Those who work in education are grappling with that challenge daily and seeking to strike the right balance, but teachers have that window of opportunity.

In our approach, we should put children and young people first. What is their experience, and what would we like it to be? It is important to consider the matter from that perspective. A couple of historical projects are significant in that regard. First, we were asked what evidence exists.

A research project that was done in Renfrewshire in the 1980s clearly identified the link between participation in PE and academic attainment and achievement. That evidence is historical, but it exists. We should use it as we move forward.

Secondly, sportscotland published a report a few years ago called "Developing the Potential of Young People in Sport". Stirling Council was involved in that, and I was personally involved. To me, that is the only research report on the topic that has had a positive impact. The project was based on developing young people's basic movement skills through PE and, in parallel with that, developing attitudes and values through mental skills training. The mental skills training was about self-determination, goal setting and visualisation. The kids were taught that in an academic sense, but they were then allowed to practise it through PE.

The significant point about the project is that the kids, the class teachers and the researchers all thought that it was fantastic. The young people said things like, "The skills that I've learned through PE, like visualisation, will help me when I'm doing mental arithmetic." They used the skills that they had learned in PE in different areas of the curriculum. The project was not developed further, not because it was unsuccessful but because of funding issues. If we have evidence that shows that certain things work, why do we not use them more? If they work, let us use them consistently and develop them.

The Convener: It is the old, old story. Many a good report ends up on a shelf, gathering dust. I think that Peter Bilsborough can help us with the name of the first project that you mentioned.

Peter Bilsborough: The one in Renfrew was the Linwood project. It was led by John Pollatschek, who was then senior lecturer at the erstwhile Jordanhill College, before it became part of the University of Strathclyde. It was concerned with daily physical education in a range of schools in Linwood. The introduction of daily physical education in primary schools led to the improvements that Bob McGowan mentioned in pupils' cognitive performances, but I add that it also led to other benefits. It is difficult to measure such things, but there was a general improvement in the ethos of the school and the pupils' sense of belonging. In that sense, physical activity has been a great power for good. However, the point that Pollatschek did not bring out was that teachers are absolutely instrumental in bringing out a range of other issues around physical activity; it was not simply about providing such activity to pupils.

Brian Samson: The direct answer to Michael Matheson's question is that at a national level we need policy. We can debate the quality or

otherwise of the current policy of two hours of PE a week in schools, but there is no similar policy on the provision of sport that could be cascaded from national to local authority level and, finally, into school plans. As I said in my submission, schools should provide quality physical education and quality sport opportunities. If that stipulation were fed in to the emerging quality framework, we might, for example, see Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education insisting that quality physical education and sport should be outputs in schools.

The Convener: I take it that you have read the *Official Report* of last week's meeting.

Brian Samson: No.

The Convener: Oh well. I can tell you that that nail was hit on the head.

Michael Matheson: Let us just say that we had an interesting time with HMIE—we were far from impressed.

Bob McGowan: There is a difference between what we are trying to achieve with PE in nursery and primary schools, where the focus should be on fundamental movement skills and basic physical literacy, and what happens in secondary schools, where the issues are more about retention and progression towards lifelong activity. The tactics and the activities that are engaged in are quite different.

Michael Matheson: So far you have focused on the need to increase the number of PE teachers and develop their skills. The committee has heard, however, that PE teachers should not necessarily always be delivering activity; instead, they could act as facilitators, bringing in coaches from other community sports organisations to deliver programmes, and developing links between schools and clubs. How effective have we been in that respect? Is the infrastructure of our community sports clubs—for example, with regard to the quality of coaching—equipped to allow that kind of engagement in some areas? Are we getting that approach right in some areas or is it sadly the case that that relationship is not being developed in most areas?

Alan Lynn (University of Stirling): We should begin by recognising that the coaching workforce in this country is largely dominated by volunteers, which, of course, immediately presents problems to the nice solution that you have just outlined. Volunteers presumably do other jobs and it can become incredibly difficult to mobilise them to do what we want them to do and to meet demand.

That problem could be solved immediately by professionalising a targeted group of coaches but, as we have heard, they would have to be trained in exactly the same way and to exactly the same

level as PE teachers and other such professionals. That simply cannot be done by sending people to one, two, three or even four weekends' worth of coaching courses. A solution could be to have for coach training and development a similar model to that for initial teacher training, by engaging governing bodies with the tertiary education sector to meet some of the demand that exists.

Rob Hardie: One of our fundamental roles in the partnership is to develop clubs and coaches. We have several partners, including local authorities and governing bodies. We are considering providing more part-time and full-time coaches to support the primary and secondary school structure. That is more for after school, at lunch times and before school.

Alan Lynn is right to say that the coaching base is voluntary. We strive to have more full-time and part-time coaches to deploy as support in normal working time. That is a major issue for us. We are developing the idea of coach mentoring and supporting coaches to be better equipped to deliver more quality programmes, whether in their clubs, beyond clubs or before clubs—in a community environment.

Brian Samson: I will give a statistic. We have grown the basketball coaching workforce in Tayside and Fife from an initial base of 18 to 43, which is a 200 per cent increase—a big stat. The gymnastics workforce has grown from 196 to 290. Although that says nothing about quality and management, on which it is critical to work closely with sports development teams and schools, it gives us the beginnings of a workforce.

Like Rob Hardie, I think that we are making inroads into professionalising coaching by having more part-time and full-time coaching staff, but that is an uphill struggle. That takes us back to the point about infrastructure.

The Convener: I want to move on shortly. Ian McKee and Jackie Baillie have waited quite a while to ask questions.

Bob McGowan: I will expand on what has been said. We are examining club development in parallel with cluster development. Scotland does not have many good models of club development. We have clubs, which tend to be groups of teams or participants. We should really examine progressive models of engagement from Europe and further afield, where people start as youngsters and continue as veterans.

The Convener: You looked at me when you said that. You refer to good examples from Europe. Where do they exist in Europe?

Bob McGowan: Most western European countries have such a club-based model, which involves the community as well as participants and

multisport rather than one-sport clubs. With local and national support, we need to develop good models of club development, which schools and others could tap into as progressive models for young people's development.

Alan Lynn: I will highlight two local examples of good practice. Bob McGowan talked about the cluster model. Active Stirling has rearranged its staffing to put in place a multisport coach at the cluster level, rather than have the problems of individual sports that I mentioned.

Coaches cost money, just as other employees do. However, by putting packages together innovatively and creatively, full-time coaching can be provided in clubs. We have a model whereby the head coaches of two local swimming clubs—in Stirling and Alloa—are postgraduate students here at the university, who are undertaking the MSc in sports coaching that I run. Those students also teach for us in the department of sports studies. When that is all added up, that is a reasonable amount of money pro rata for each individual—it includes payment of fees. Rob Hardie is part of that partnership. We do not have to pay very much to make that system happen. That model could work in several sports and not just in swimming, which I admit has a career structure for coaches, anyway.

Dr Simpson: Will you augment that description in writing as an example that could be adopted?

The Convener: I understand that the model integrates the approach so that students study the MSc, earn money and do coaching.

Alan Lynn: The students are paid for coaching—that provides their income.

The Convener: That is right—it is a virtuous circle. That information would be handy.

14:30

Ian McKee: I have a couple of short questions that follow on well from what we have just heard about school-club links. In its submission, sportTayside and Fife states:

"Active School Co-ordinators have made an impact with school-club links particularly in Primary schools."

However, in his submission, Professor Jarvie of the University of Stirling states:

"In general, ASCs have had little influence on pupils joining sports clubs outside school."

At first sight, those seem to be contradictory statements. Would you like to comment on that point? Is there a different set-up in Tayside and Fife that has made active schools co-ordinators more successful there?

Brian Samson: I am not familiar with Professor Jarvie's conclusions. My observations are based on the practice and programmes that we are working on and delivering. Work with primary schools has been much more successful, for some of the reasons that we have rehearsed—a lack of infrastructure and confidence, and difficulty in meeting the target of two hours of PE per week. Active schools managers have welcomed efforts to bring in sports-specific people to deliver good programmes. Examples include gymnastics in all four authorities, including Fife; basketball in all primary schools in Dundee, where there is a healthy festivals programme; and the fundamentals athletics programme, which operates extremely well across primary schools and results in festivals, both for fun and to implement what the children have learned. Our experience is positive. I worry that many schools would cease to give a lead if the active schools programme were stopped. I am at odds with Professor Jarvie's general conclusion. The programme is strong in primary schools in our area. Secondary schools are a harder nut to crack, for many different reasons.

Rob Hardie: It depends on how active schools co-ordinators are managed in different authorities. In the central area, we are in a fortunate position because, in general, our active schools co-ordinators and sports development staff are intrinsically linked, so there is a direct connection to the club structure that sports development officers may be managing.

I offer the committee a typical example. Fairly recently, our regional cricket manager became involved with a cricket trust in Stirlingshire that was seeking, through financial support, to generate more activity in cricket. The route for us regionally was to contact the local authority's active schools and sports development teams, to enable them both to engage with school provision and to deal directly with cricket clubs. Through the active schools and sports development infrastructure, a club-school link was created immediately. That made it much easier for us to deliver a programme directly in school time, either after school or during curriculum time, with the support of PE staff. The programme also supported the club structure in the area. It is not long since it was launched, but hopefully we will develop stronger clubs by incorporating the support of the active schools programme and sports development staff into one complete package.

The Deputy Convener (Ross Finnie): Before I allow Ian McKee to develop the point, would anyone else like to address his basic question?

Peter Bilsborough: I am just checking that my deputy principal is not here. I can defend

Professor Jarvie's statement, because it was based on work that we undertook for Stirling Council. Over a three-year period, we asked pupils in primaries 6 and 7 and secondary 1 a very direct question—who encouraged you to join a sports club outside school? The resulting data are in front of me. Generally, the answer was "someone in my family", "me" or "one of my friends". Only 3 per cent of pupils in 2006, none in 2007 and 2 per cent in 2008 said that they had been encouraged to join a sports club by active schools co-ordinators. That is the fine detail, based on a question put to a certain number of pupils in one school. Although I have given the committee a bit of bad news, I think that active schools co-ordinators are doing wonderful jobs.

The Deputy Convener: I invite Ian McKee to develop his question.

Ian McKee: That answer was extremely interesting.

I have a second question about the relationship between schools and clubs. A while ago, we took evidence from several people who all said that, since they had won medals in their sport, recruitment to their clubs had diminished—quite markedly in many instances. However, we heard impressive evidence this morning that, in Stirling, with hub management and so on, local clubs are absolutely bulging with people wanting to join them. Does that indicate that we are looking at the wrong target when we consider the possible legacy of the Commonwealth games of 2014? When considering general health, would we be better concentrating on grass-roots activities and letting the elite athletes look after themselves?

The Deputy Convener: That question will get the witnesses going!

Alan Lynn: One of our colleagues at the University of Stirling—Professor Fred Coalter—has done some research on the impact and the legacy of major events such as the Olympic games and the Commonwealth games. The evidence from across the world is the same—that major events do not have a lasting impact on participation in sport. The challenge for us in the next decade or so, vis-à-vis London and Glasgow, will be to buck that trend.

We should not expect that, just because of an event, people will be inspired to take up sport or to carry on with it. Kids might be, but people who are not already in sport probably will not be. It is important that the committee is addressing the issue. We will all have to work together to ensure that we can do something different. If we just expect the event itself to produce the desired effects, it will certainly not happen. One solution may be to do things differently now, rather than

waiting until after the event and considering how poor the results have been.

Ian McKee: Could not the lesson be that the games will not have a legacy? If fine minds throughout the world have tried to ensure legacies but have failed, are we giving ourselves an air of self-importance to think that we can succeed? Should we just say that there is no legacy from such events and then move on to consider how we can improve sport and physical activity in other ways?

Alan Lynn: We need to do both. We would be crazy not to try to capitalise on these wonderful sporting events coming to the British isles over the next four or six years or so. It would be daft just to say, "They won't have an effect." However, we must not make the mistakes that other countries have made. We must find links between the events and the interest and enthusiasm generated—the Wimbledon or the Andy Murray effect that happens every year. When we have big events on these shores, we must find a way of connecting them to sports that people take part in regularly. The old ways clearly have not worked, but that is no reason to say that we should do nothing. We should look for new and better ways.

The Deputy Convener: That was perhaps not your most propitious reference of the day, given Andy's disappointment, but never mind.

Alan Lynn: O ye of little faith.

The Deputy Convener: No, no—I look forward to his next match.

Bob McGowan: I would like to reinforce the idea of club development. If clubs are strong and vibrant, these issues will be resolved in a way. Government perhaps needs to reflect on how to help clubs develop. Financial issues to do with tax arise—not that I know anything about them. However, there might be a way of encouraging clubs to consider what to do about their infrastructure—their facilities, their coaching development and their engagement with young people and others. National governing bodies will also have a part to play in encouraging links between club development and coaching. The bodies should be able to assist with the development of such links, to improve the quality of people's experiences.

We should be progressive. We are not talking about clubs as teams; we are talking about lifelong participation at whatever level, from cradle to grave. That is the model that we should be aiming at, and it is a model that is not always well-established in Scotland. We should also take into account the impetus and the excitement generated by national and international events.

Brian Samson: The straight answer to Ian McKee's question is not an either/or—we have to do both. In the development of sport, we have to invest at every stage of the continuum. If we do not get it right all the way down the line, the sporting system will not be right, and any shop-window effect in the programme that we put together as we move towards 2014 will have nothing to base itself on. The timing of your pathways into sport inquiry is outstanding. Perhaps it is coincidental—although I hope not—that the committee is considering the sporting infrastructure alongside the run-up to the Commonwealth games in 2014.

The sporting world is ultimately—first, second and last—concerned with sport. It is interesting to look at sports strategies throughout the country and the world, which are moving back to sport for sport's sake. We have gone through a period in which sport has had to serve many different masters. The legacy programme has so far been pretty silent on the education side—it is perhaps missing opportunities in relation to schools, at least with regard to the initial draft plan.

Dr Simpson: I do not know whether my question is a supplementary.

The Deputy Convener: I have never had to rule on a supplementary before.

Dr Simpson: Perhaps I should have waited for the convener to take over.

One issue with regard to club development is that a group cannot be funded as a new club until it has been in existence for a year and has a set of accounts, as Ross Finnie and I were told when we visited clubs in Renfrewshire. We also discovered that even if the clubs in a certain area are not well developed, there is an opportunity to develop them. However, in a deprived community that has no clubs, there is no starting point at all. Is that a particular problem or not? I wondered whether any of the witnesses have experienced that situation or found solutions to it.

Brian Samson: In some of the difficult housing schemes on the periphery of Dundee, the city council has established outreach teams to go out and work with the youngsters. That is interesting in the context of the Commonwealth games conference that was held in Edinburgh, at which there was a lot of discussion about going into the third world—parts of Africa and the Caribbean—and growing the leadership from within the community. To give a simplistic explanation, local leaders from the peer group are trained to begin to lead, coach and organise the activities.

That approach works, and it is clear that it is beginning to operate in the same way in Dundee. The outreach teams go into and work with the community, get the leadership from within the

community and leave a legacy. It is not a case of everybody turning up and performing, and then pulling the troops out and leaving nothing behind. There are some good examples in Dundee of how the outreach teams are delivering that kind of activity and building on it with the community safety officers and the communities themselves.

Rob Hardie: In the central area, we have some exciting examples of satellite clubs. Existing structured clubs, such as athletics clubs, will deploy coaches to go to other locations—possibly following on from an after-school club that has been successful—and build up the structure of the satellite club through good-quality coaching. The coaching comes from the main club, but the satellite club will eventually be in a sustainable position.

The feeder perspective benefits the athletics club itself, which fits in with the earlier point about not always benefiting from the medal-winning perspective. One of the challenges that we experienced in relation to youngsters joining an athletics club was that they went from a run, jump, throw club or an after-school club into an athletics environment. They were suddenly told to run for three miles or for an hour and a half, and they were apprehensive about that.

We have put structures in place for transition and induction clubs, which give youngsters an experience that is much more akin to what they have had at an after-school club or a run, jump, throw club. That can happen in a satellite location, but there is coaching expertise from the main club. Club development is not simply about bricks and mortar: it is about coaches, the pathways that we are providing, the connections to schools and the support for the club.

The Deputy Convener: Convener, it is back to you. I had a whole page of introduction for Jackie Baillie, but we will see how you get on.

The Convener: I feel quite inhibited now. There was a star performance in my absence.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Had the whole of Ross Finnie's page been complimentary, it would have been entirely true.

Although we have a submission from the University of Stirling, we do not have some of the detail that Mr Bilsborough was quoting. Could I invite him to share that detail with the committee during our inquiry? That would be useful, given his point about the lack of longitudinal studies.

14:45

Peter Bilsborough: The data are not in the ownership of the university. They are Stirling Council's.

Jackie Baillie: In which case I make the invitation to the council.

Bob McGowan: The information will become available in the next week or so. We are happy to share it with the committee in due course.

Jackie Baillie: That would be helpful.

Mr Bilsborough suggested that the key to all of this is to train the teachers properly. What you did not cover was whether that was in addition to or instead of using the specialists in the system. I am curious to know whether you think that training teachers is the answer to all of this.

Peter Bilsborough: The answer to all of what?

Jackie Baillie: You seemed to suggest that physical education was key, and that it underpinned the subsequent pathway into sport or physical activity. Therefore, if we were looking for one thing that mattered more than anything else, would it be the training of teachers, or are the institutional structures, the agencies, the active schools co-ordinators and all the governing bodies collectively the answer?

Peter Bilsborough: There is no single solution. In primary school, the key is to have specialist physical education that works systematically to provide a progressive, joined-up, balanced programme. That needs to be supported by good training for primary school teachers, to give them the confidence to teach PE regularly to their pupils. The same applies to secondary schools, which need a well-trained and adequate complement of PE teachers.

One of your colleagues hinted at the question why physical educationists do not employ coaches and do other things. Why not? Why do we not have additional physical educationists in schools, and let them have responsibility for the full monty—that is, everything to do with physical activity that goes on in a school. The principal teacher of PE would be responsible not only for PE in secondary school between 9 and 4 but for the hire and use of all those facilities after school, and for all the services that are going on in that school. That would allow us to have local solutions to local challenges. The community would come into the school, which would help to develop sports clubs, and the school would be able to go out into the community. That is quite a radical, exciting set of ideas, which could develop communities and put schools right at the centre of communities.

I do not know about my colleagues, but I do not know of examples of where that works—where a PE department in a school in Scotland has all those responsibilities. We have that in the universities sector. My department is full of physical educationists—most of us are physical

educationists. We are managing facilities, teaching academically and providing a series of services for the local community. If it can work in higher education, why can it not work in secondary schools? That could be the golden key that answers many of the questions.

Jackie Baillie: I see Bob McGowan shaking his head. I would be interested in his view.

Peter Bilsborough: Is that side to side or up and down?

Jackie Baillie: It is side to side—the negative way.

Peter Bilsborough: He would disagree.

Bob McGowan: On how local authorities work, the best circumstance that we want to achieve is a strategic view at local authority level that uses the cluster or framework model to pull together the resources that are in place. We have delineated those resources. The issue is not about secondary schools; it is about the experience of young people, whatever their age. It is also about the progressive model that includes adults, because we want to achieve lifelong participation. We need the framework model at local authority level. Issues to do with the management of facilities in school and the programming of access to them need to be under that framework. For me, irrespective of the desire—Peter Bilsborough might be motivated in that way—the reality is that some facilities are managed through public-private partnerships and are not always in the control of local authorities. Stirling Council is fortunate in that, when new schools were built, there was a buy-in to the model, which meant that access was built into the contractual arrangements. We have a degree of control on access in a way that is perhaps not common throughout the country. There are issues to do with that.

To return to Peter Bilsborough's point about training teachers, I agree that we can always improve the training, but we must also address teachers' attitudes and values. Some of them have had a negative experience and, no matter what, that will be a challenge for them. It is fundamental that PE specialists are accessible in primary schools. We have a lot of history and many structures in place but, if we were starting again, would we deploy the same model that we have now? Probably not, because the focus is needed in nursery and primary. No one at the table would disagree that, if we do not encourage fundamental movement skills, young people are denied access to other activities. If we were starting again, where would we deploy the specialists? It would be in nursery and primary.

Of course we need continuation and progression in sport in secondary schools, but what is the model of physical education, physical activity and

sport in secondary school? Kids have already made their choice and had their attitudes shaped and determined before they reach secondary school. In some cases, we are catching up and trying to change negative attitudes. I am not asking for more resources; I am saying that if we are serious about balancing the resources differently, we should consider deploying specialists in nursery and primary. That will not happen overnight, because of contractual arrangements and so on. However, we should at least consider the model, which would be radical and fundamentally different from the present situation.

On continuation in sport, maybe sports coaches can deliver some of the educational element and quality through the United Kingdom coaching certificate. That is the qualification that is required. We need to professionalise coaching, which is a valuable element. There are high-quality volunteers but, equally, there are a lot of pretty poor ones. That is just because they do not know what to do; it is not because of a lack of desire. However, in the long term, the system cannot be based totally on volunteers if we want high-quality inputs at different levels.

I hope that I have not rambled on too much, but sometimes we need to take a step back from where we are and take a different perspective.

Jackie Baillie: That was interesting and valuable. I know of one or two local authorities that are seriously considering removing all their specialist PE teachers, music teachers and art teachers from primary schools as a consequence of budget squeezes. I am therefore fascinated by the strategic approach that starts with the early years.

You mentioned facilities, which I want to move on to. My experience locally is that there are few sports pitches or running tracks and that, with the ones to which people do have access, they need to wait for somebody to open up, and lessons get cancelled as a consequence. The issue of multi-use of rooms has been covered. Should we be auditing that? Who has responsibility for that? How can we grow that kind of physical infrastructure?

Bob McGowan: If I had that solution, it would be good. However, I will attempt to give you an answer.

We are playing catch-up. Over the past 20 or 30 years, there have been peaks and troughs in investment in sports facilities. Government needs to commit to the ideal of having good sports facilities and it must make sustained investment to deliver that. We are in a difficult situation, given the global context, but we still need to maintain facilities. If we do not, we will be in a deficit

situation again 10 years down the line. The PPP programmes in schools have raised the quality of facilities in some but not all authorities. The issue of facilities is a major concern in primary schools, however, because of the size of many of the buildings—in some cases, we are talking about a school having to use a converted classroom for physical education activities. Sometimes, the physical restrictions on access to the facilities mean that it is impossible to give children two hours of physical activity a week. That is the way life is.

I agree that we could audit the situation to encourage better practice—or, in some cases, challenge people to implement better practice. I think that a softly-softly approach has been taken previously.

As I said earlier, the question of structures is important. If physical education is haphazard and ad hoc, it will not make the necessary difference; it needs to take place within a local authority's development framework, in which various things are included.

I see that Peter Bilsborough is shaking his head. He is just getting me back because I shook my head when he was speaking.

The Convener: It is unfortunate that the recording of this meeting is sound only, as people will not be able to see the delights of the negativity at your side.

Bob McGowan: Once we get the frameworks and models in place, we will have an opportunity to make a difference.

The Convener: Should we have a national audit of outdoor playing space as well as an audit of school playing fields? I know that no audit of school playing fields has been done. Sometimes, it seems that people are talking only about indoor playing space, but I am interested in outdoor playing space.

Mr Bilsborough, as well as answering that, you may retaliate now.

Peter Bilsborough: Earlier, when we talked about 2012 and 2014, I think that what we were getting at without saying so out loud was that anything that we promote has to be culturally significant. The three most popular sports in Scotland are football, football and football. However, the provision of outdoor sports pitches in Scotland is appalling. An audit of the quantity and quality of outdoor sports pitches owned by local authorities is well overdue. The situation is shocking, and something needs to be done about it.

On the use of schools' sports facilities after school hours, I disagree with Bob McGowan because I do not like the idea of a centralist model

that would involve people calling up a local authority to hire a gym in a local school. I think that the school has to be responsible for the hiring and use of its facilities. That would provide an incentive for the school, which would be an exciting and radical 21st century model. Further, we have to ask why we want to encourage the use of those facilities after school hours. Is it just because we want a more efficient use of the facilities, with sports clubs coming in? That is not community development. Community development involves the school being at the centre of the community, with people coming in and pupils going out. However, in order for that to happen, the responsibility must lie with the schools, which must make all the relevant decisions.

Alan Lynn: The committee will be aware that sportscotland recently published a report on the use of PPP schools and sports facilities. I am not sure about the number of that report, but I am sure that my colleagues could give the committee that information. I do not want to disagree with Bob McGowan, but I want to reinforce Peter Bilsborough's point about schools being at the heart of communities. That cannot happen if they are open for business only to educate secondary-aged kids between the hours of 8 and 4. They must be placed at the heart of communities by being available when communities want to use them. Sports clubs do not necessarily want to use them between the hours of 8 and 4.

In my experience as a local coach, rather than as a representative of the university, we cannot get that access, and that is in an area that Bob McGowan thinks is well off. My experience is exactly the opposite. We are still waiting for access to the lovely new schools that the committee might have seen this morning, and for the local community club, which has produced a double Commonwealth games gold medallist in Gregor Tait, to be able to use their facilities. It is not as if we have not produced results and we do not do a good job in the community, but we cannot get access to local school pools.

The Convener: We have had quite a long session, so I suggest that if the witnesses have anything else to say to the committee, they should write with additional evidence.

It has been a very interesting and interactive session. If the committee is content, we will have a five-minute break now and hear from sportscotland when we come back.

15:01

Meeting suspended.

15:09

On resuming—

The Convener: We resume our evidence taking.

Our second panel consists of Stewart Harris, who is chief executive of sportscotland, and Mike Roberts, who is director of sports development at sportscotland. Both heard the interesting and disparate evidence in the previous session.

As usual, we move straight to members' questions. Jackie Baillie may ask the first question if she wants.

Jackie Baillie: I am happy to let other members ask questions first.

The Convener: You like to see how the wind is blowing.

Ross Finnie: In the previous session, there was a suggestion that Stewart Harris would be questioned about his previous job rather than his current job, but he will be pleased to know that I am not going to go there.

Sportscotland has clear directives and outcomes for sport. What would be your reaction if you were seeking to engage with a school in which physical literacy—which is a different but related issue—was clearly and demonstrably at a level at which putting a school sports co-ordinator into the school would be, in your professional opinion, unlikely or less likely to be successful? Given that you have national responsibilities, what would sportscotland's reaction be to such a circumstance? Do such circumstances exist?

Stewart Harris (sportscotland): There are a couple of answers to that. From a national perspective, much more engagement is needed with education services at a policy level. Education and sport are not two separate strands—a connection exists between them.

A number of standing themes were brought out in the previous evidence session. Strategically, the active schools programme has been successful in the secondary and primary sectors where it has been clearly integrated in policy and the strategic framework as well as in operational delivery. If that has not happened and the programme has been a bolt-on, it has been largely ineffective.

There is a mixed picture across the country. We will not solve all the problems in one session, but the direction of travel has been positive. We are beginning to see the integration of strategic thinking at a local level with multiple partners, such as local authorities, trusts and universities. There has been greater integration, and that is the only way in which things can be done. Sport is littered with many three-year, two-year and one-year projects that were bolted on to whatever existed.

Infrastructure is needed. You know better than I do that facilities and people make up the infrastructure in almost every sector of public life, and sport is no different. Part of that infrastructure will be in education and part of it will be in health. If we get that, my job and locking innovation and change into the system will be made much easier.

Mike Roberts (sportscotland): At the local and national levels, we have active schools managers operating with after-school, before-school and lunch-time programmes. They work with schools daily and influence agendas. Best practice is being shared as a result of the national remit of the active schools managers to come together, and it has cascaded down. Those managers lobby locally, and that approach also works with our partnership managers in the local authority structure, who lobby education and leisure services departments and so on for a co-ordinated approach.

Ross Finnie: Okay. We have not heard evidence from anybody in our long inquiry that people are not well motivated to improve integration, co-operation and collaboration, which is understandable. However, if you find that something needs to be addressed in the interface between education and the promotion of sport, does a mechanism exist for you to do that without creating some god-awful structure? If something at your end of the equation or an educational provision is not functioning and needs to be addressed, do you have an opportunity or mechanism to explore the problem?

15:15

Stewart Harris: It has probably not been apparent in the past. However, as well as engaging with the Government about national policy and how the opportunities of frameworks such as the curriculum for excellence can be exploited, we will have the opportunity to articulate a lot more in planning terms with the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland and other bodies when we look at policy. In suggesting changes to active schools provision and how that is integrated—perhaps we can come back to active schools, because interesting things were said about that earlier—we can engage with policy makers as well as with headteachers and the people on the ground who are responsible for delivery. Those mechanisms might not have been in place previously. We have to learn lessons from that and ensure that they are in place in future, so that we can make the most of the opportunities.

The power of the headteacher is absolute, and there is a job to be done around how we influence that important group of people. The curriculum for excellence gives us an opportunity to look at the wider aspects of education—an issue the previous

panel dealt with eloquently. From my experience as a teacher, the physical side of education can enhance young people's whole education as they go through the system, so it is not a question of working in silos with the physical bit in one place and the cognitive stuff in another. We have to put in place the structures to ensure that we make the best of opportunities for innovation and change.

The Convener: We heard from what used to be the Headteachers Association of Scotland but has now been rebranded as School Leaders Scotland. What connections do you have and what kind of work do you do with that organisation, given that we have heard that the headteacher really sets the agenda?

Stewart Harris: We have not had a great deal of interaction—just an ad-hoc approach with the odd presentation here and there. We have had to work hard at that, and our suggestion to the Government and our colleagues in the sports division in the civil service is that we must ensure that there are many more programmed opportunities. We will do that with ADES and the leadership side of education—regardless of where it is—as the theme from the previous evidence session was that that leadership is the key.

Jackie Baillie: I have a supplementary question. It is clear that there has not been the level of engagement that you would want, and yet when you referred to convincing the leaders, you fell back on talking about ADES. Surely, given what we have heard, the leaders are the teachers and headteachers locally. How precisely will you take that work forward?

Stewart Harris: That is one area where we have done quite a lot: we have done more locally than we have done nationally. We have a bit to do to redress that, but we can build on what we have done.

With active schools, there is a network and infrastructure that allows us to influence things. We now have personnel in every school cluster across Scotland—all 380-odd of them—who allow us to have engagement at a managerial level with active schools managers and, potentially, every single headteacher in Scotland. If we want to have a greater influence over the next period, we can do that by looking at action and experience that work and taking those messages out.

The bigger problem area has always been policy—the framework for the local authority and local partners and, to an extent, how that is given direction nationally. We still have some way to go to push the potential of the infrastructure that we have. Let us not forget that active schools are not in isolation. Neither physical education nor sports development should be in isolation; they should all be in an integrated model that gives us a chance

to make the best use of resources for the children and young people we are talking about. The work is for them, not the adults who are running the system.

Michael Matheson: You said that the active schools co-ordinator programme appears to have operated more effectively where there has been an integrated approach within a local authority area, as opposed to a bolt-on approach. How widespread is the bolt-on approach in local authorities across Scotland compared with the integrated approach? How many authorities are using active schools co-ordinators in the most effective way? Can you give us a feel for that?

Stewart Harris: I can show that some progress has been made. These figures are not precise but I believe that, when the policy was first introduced, 10 local authorities integrated it very quickly and the remainder did not. Three or four years down the track, the picture is very different, and I would say that the policy has been integrated much better in 20-plus authorities, with a smaller group lagging behind. Our job is to focus on that smaller group and ensure that it catches up. However, we are not complacent: leaders, circumstances and environments all change, and we must maintain and indeed consider developing even the positive areas.

Michael Matheson: The committee has heard that a major focus is on the provision of physical education in nursery, primary and secondary schools. Concerns have been expressed about how to create space for that in the school curriculum but, like our earlier witnesses, you have said that the curriculum for excellence might present some opportunities. Given the need for some national policy direction, are your discussions progressing with civil service colleagues who deal with the curriculum for excellence and education policy to ensure that we can grab this opportunity to make physical education a much higher priority in our schools?

Stewart Harris: Our colleagues in the Government's sports division do a pretty good job of keeping us abreast of all that activity. Indeed, they are better placed to develop much of it internally in Government. We have also had discussions with HMIE—although I should add that they were offline with regard to the process itself—and with some of the groups that are working on the physical education element of health and wellbeing. We feel that we are connected into the process and believe that, for example, the two hours of PE recommended in the PE review has given things a boost.

Although the perception is that progress has been quite slow, I must say that I am very positive about that policy as it has given us an opportunity to aim at something and to make some progress.

In fact, I think that it has helped PE to achieve its place in the curriculum for excellence. If that had not happened, the subject might well have disappeared and we might well have faced yet another battle in taking it forward. That said, although the curriculum for excellence is very much about educating young people in a modern, rounded way that provides an element of flexibility that is good and should be available in schools throughout Scotland, local circumstances can still prevail.

The situation is good. The curriculum for excellence is not a priority for us; the issue is how to make best use of it, so that it works alongside physical education to develop pathways into sport for young people.

Michael Matheson: From your discussions and engagement so far with stakeholders, are we likely to see any material difference in the delivery of physical education under the new curriculum for excellence?

Stewart Harris: I hope that there will be much more use of the physical dimension in schools, which, after all, is one of the curriculum's ambitions and aspirations. As a result, I have been concerned less about the policy than about the ability of the local authority framework or school managers and leaders to influence the delivery of the education curriculum. I am confident that we will begin to see a move towards more physical education in curriculum time. The policy is clear in that respect—it is one of the few areas that receive such specific attention.

The Convener: Is the phrase "move towards" strong enough? It sounds pretty elastic to me. It has taken five years to reach the target of two hours of physical activity a week in schools, which suggests that any movement has been very slow.

Stewart Harris: If it were up to me and I had the power to do it, I would move things forward much more quickly. There is no doubt that we would like that to happen, and we must use our good offices as much as possible to bring about change.

The Convener: Three ministers, representing education and schools, sport and health, are due to appear before us. What would you like us to say to them? We will fire the bullets if you give them to us.

Stewart Harris: Our submission and a host of others that the committee has received are consistent on the need for physical literacy and physical education. They must be given value and a place in schools; it would be wrong for them just to be dismissed. Physical education has received its rightful place in policy, and we should push for that to be reflected in implementation.

I know that the committee had an animated discussion with HMIE. I am strongly of the view that HMIE should take the physical dimension into account, instead of leaving it at the side of the page and presuming that it happens if it is not raised as a problem. I read with interest the evidence that the committee took from HMIE, and those are the strongest words that I can give you. Physical education in schools is a huge element of policy. If we do not check what is happening, we will again be in the lap of the gods.

The Convener: On enforceability, I was told in a briefing that there is no statutory obligation, under education legislation, to provide physical education, if I may use that term. Is that the case? If so, should there be such an obligation?

Stewart Harris: I understood that the target of two hours of physical education per week was still in place, although I may be wrong about that.

The Convener: I am talking about statutory obligations, not policy. Is there anything in law that requires physical education, like religious education, to be provided in primary schools?

Stewart Harris: I do not think that there is a statutory obligation, although we will have to check that. The issue creates difficulties for us with regard to infrastructure across the board, not just in education. The status of sport and recreation in local government has weak statutory support.

The Convener: I will not develop the point further, but I know that certain subjects, such as RE, cannot be dropped from the curriculum. I will investigate the issue further with ministers. Speaking as a member of the committee, rather than as convener, I am concerned that there is a substantial discretionary element to the policy, both in delivery and from the perspective of the inspectorate. In my view, if we really want to be serious about PE, we must make it mandatory rather than discretionary.

Ian McKee: In paragraph 25 of sportscotland's main submission, you state:

"feedback from HMIE inspections suggest progress is being made across the country regarding the provision of PE."

Will you tell us, perhaps later in writing, what evidence HMIE provided to you, because it did not provide us with much hard evidence?

Stewart Harris: The evidence tends to be anecdotal, but HMIE tells us about some examples of good practice. That is probably the tip of the iceberg, and I would prefer HMIE to carry out much more assessment and evaluation of practice in every school that it inspects, instead of just picking out good examples. The anecdotal evidence that it provides is not enough for us.

Ian McKee: In other words, there is no proper evidence.

Stewart Harris: No, there is no real evidence. As the committee has discovered, HMIE does not have to report on physical education. I would like that to change.

Dr Simpson: That point leads on well to my question. In the past, we have tried ring fencing to deliver things that the Government wants, but the current Government has opted for single outcome agreements. I assume that you have analysed those agreements in respect of physical activity and sport, and I will not ask you to comment on whether ring fencing or SOAs are the way to go. Short of introducing a legal requirement—or even with a legal requirement—how do we ensure that every local authority meets its responsibilities to deliver adequate physical education, physical literacy and access to sport?

Stewart Harris: Now, that is a question. If we had the answer, the inquiry would have its solution.

There is no doubt that the word “adequate”, which you used, is a bit of a problem. Statutes dealing with local government provision for sport—not education, which is much more clearly regulated—refer to adequate provision, but there is no clear definition of what that is, so agencies such as sportscotland have had to influence and advocate case by case and local authority by local authority what such provision should be. There have sometimes been small incentives in the form of budgets for people or facilities to try to bring about change, and we have tried to use our influence to make such provision. If we were given a bit more power on facilities, access to facilities and the design of schools, we might be able to have a bit more influence on all those matters.

15:30

Dr Simpson: Let us take that specific issue. How many times has your organisation been consulted about the development of sports facilities for new schools?

Stewart Harris: We are consulted frequently, if not in every case, but the outcome is always decided by cost, irrespective of our comments and evidence about good practice and what we would like to see in place. If savings must be made, they usually come from the sports facilities. We have no power to change that. We must influence and advocate, along with the local people. It is not only about us; it is about staff in schools and others in the community trying to prevent savings from being made in that way, because that approach does not represent good use of a once-in-a-generation change to a school's structure.

The Convener: Are you a mandatory consultee on the provision of new school facilities or, for example, on construction on school playing fields? Are you a mandatory consultee in the planning process?

Stewart Harris: We are in relation to playing fields, but not on the built structure.

The Convener: So you are not a mandatory consultee.

Stewart Harris: No, although we are when it comes to playing fields. It is worth exploring whether that should be the case.

The Convener: Whether what should be the case?

Stewart Harris: Whether sportscotland should be a mandatory consultee—

The Convener: On the construction and planning of new builds or developments.

Stewart Harris: Yes.

Michael Matheson: Would sportscotland welcome being a mandatory consultee at the planning stage, when schools are being designed?

Stewart Harris: Absolutely. I have explained how we have to try to influence what happens case by case, local authority by local authority and school by school to get the changes made that we think would suit the purposes of both education and access for the community. Access is very important, and how we achieve it is crucial. There are times when relying on a more informal approach is not that effective.

The Convener: We take note of that point, which you made clearly and well.

Dr Simpson: The parallel is with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency on flood prevention. SEPA can tell a planning authority that it should not build somewhere because there are flooding issues, but the authority can go ahead anyway.

If sportscotland were to report, it would be up to MSPs, the local media and local communities to say, “This school will not be fit for purpose”, and put pressure on the local authority. We do not currently have such openness in the system, so a very useful point has been made.

Ian McKee: I have a simple question. I read your submission, which is good, and your mission statement. What criteria do you use to judge the success or otherwise of your mission? We have heard a lot about process—the number of people who are employed and the number of things that are happening—but when we came to previous evidence about active schools co-ordinators and questioned the people who might have benefited

from them, the result was entirely different from what all the experts had told us. At the end of another five years, will you find out whether people in Scotland are healthier and more active? Or will you judge your success by the number of people whom you have in post and the number of activities that are going on?

Stewart Harris: I would not want to be judged on those things. We can certainly contribute to whether the nation is healthy or not, but that is not our primary purpose. Our work is not about process or the number of people in post. The active schools co-ordinators were put in place to do one thing: build capacity in every community in Scotland. That capacity is about teachers, parents, leaders and young people themselves giving back the time to provide sport, recreation, physical activity or whatever. The co-ordinators were not put in place to consider links between schools and clubs, although that will become a focal point for them in future. It is important to remember what they do.

The evidence is there—and we can provide it—to show that the active schools programme is beginning to make a difference. I will not claim that it is making a difference in isolation, but where it is well integrated rather than being regarded as a bolt-on, we are seeing signs of a shift in participation, particularly, but not solely, in girls and in primary schools. After three or four years, we are beginning to see that difference. We are also noting a difference in the infrastructure and the number of people who are prepared to give their time to be leaders, either professionally or voluntarily, and to help to grow the number of participants.

I would want to be judged, by the time the Commonwealth games come around, on how well we have done that job. I do not want to be judged on the number of people whom we have employed. I am confident that, given the right circumstances, we can build a legacy from the Commonwealth games by doing something that no one else has done—that is, starting to build an infrastructure and a focus now. Let us not bother with fluffy little programmes around the edges. Let us deal with our schools and community clubs and how we access—I return to that word again—opportunities for young people, and anyone else who wants to be involved, in every community in Scotland. Those are the things that I want to be judged on, and I think that they are the things that most people in our sector would want to be judged on.

We moan and groan about the lack of statutory and policy support, but we will continue to try to shape that, as well as making the best shift that we can around the resources that we have to deal with it progressively. I hope that my answer has

come over strongly enough. We certainly do not want to be judged on process or numbers.

Ian McKee: Perhaps I should not have mentioned the active schools co-ordinators. I was just giving an example of how, sometimes, we hear an entirely different story when we ask the individuals who are affected.

In a nutshell, you are confident that, at the time of the Commonwealth games, the level of physical activity among 11-year-old girls will be greater than it is among 11-year-old girls now, and that in a further four years' time, the level of activity among 15-year-old girls will be greater than it is among 15-year-old girls now. Is that what you are saying?

Stewart Harris: I would only say that I am confident. You will have to accept the caveat that I am not going to take sole responsibility for that. I am confident that we will achieve that if we get a key element right, and that is the construction of common plans in local communities that make it clear who does what and which eradicate duplication and people working in silos.

I think that Bob McGowan talked about an overall framework. I will be diplomatic. I subscribe to his view that we need a clear framework and action by clusters that include more than just physical education teachers. An integrated approach to staffing is absolutely the way forward. I am confident that we will succeed if we get that bit right. If we do not get it right and we are unable to establish frameworks and a common purpose throughout Scotland, I am afraid that we will do well to hang on to what we have got. A shift is required, but that is the job of Government and the job that we have in taking things forward.

Jackie Baillie: I have a question on a detail about the active schools programme. I think you implied that that was the mechanism by which headteachers got involved, and that there was a bottom-up approach. Will you give us some more detail about the engagement of headteachers? Although I am clear that active schools managers, active schools co-ordinators and all the other people who are directly involved in the provision of PE and physical activity would be involved in the network, I am less convinced that a headteacher would be involved. I am keen to hear about your experience and about how many of the 680 staff are headteachers.

Stewart Harris: One of the basic functions of each of those active schools co-ordinators is the strategic element at the beginning of the job description—it is their job to engage with every headteacher in their cluster. You cannot get any better than operating on a one-to-one basis. I recognise that not every active schools co-ordinator has the strategic ability to engage in that

way, but they should be supported by their managers and other leaders in their authority to begin to take things forward. I believe that that is beginning to have an impact.

We see much more considered opinion and action from headteachers who value what they see and who value the resource, which is important, because we are not asking them to do something without resourcing it. That engagement has been positive to date, but it has to get better. We have to try to do more to ensure that such engagement is continued and maintained and that we make inroads into other areas such as defining the headteacher's role in developing a club programme in schools with the facilities and capacities that they have.

Jackie Baillie: It would be helpful if you would provide us with evidence on that impact.

It has been suggested to us that the active schools community website can be accessed only by active schools co-ordinators. Is that right? What is the reason for that?

Stewart Harris: Yes. I am not always technically competent, but I think that that is about allowing the network to share good practice and to keep the website focused on what the co-ordinators do. The site is not meant to be a communication vehicle across the board; we use a different mechanism for that. However, that network community website allows people to put things on the website and share practice—it helps each of them with their job. We are reviewing the site at the moment. It was probably more relevant in the beginning and we will review it again to decide whether to keep it going as it is or to widen it.

The Convener: We will write down whether you are a digital native, whatever that means.

Stewart Harris: Whatever that means, indeed.

Jackie Baillie: You might not be a digital native, but can I ask you about numbers? I understand that funding to local authorities, handled via sportscotland, has been flatlined since 2004. Given that obvious constraint, and that some local authorities do not have the kind of sports development programme that people want, do you regard that as a challenge for the future and how would you change it?

Stewart Harris: There is no doubt that funding has been flatlined, but that is not to say that there has been no change. We see such programmes as a key part of the infrastructure and we are looking at how that infrastructure works. Initially, the full-time post was in primary schools, but we are now stretching that full-time post to look at upper primary and lower secondary to work with both the PE staff in the secondary school and

active schools co-ordinators as well as the sports development team.

Obviously, we would like such programmes to be expanded and the Government is also keen to do that. We have made a lot of progress in primary, which is the area in which we designed the programme to progress, given the importance of all that. We would like some additional resource to maintain that situation and take it on to secondary, where the dangers of drop-out are all too great and young people can choose what to do in life and society.

We will continue to be as creative as we can with our local partners to make sure that we are tackling areas of need and not just stopping things because we seem to have a lack of resource in some areas.

Jackie Baillie: My final question is perhaps more high level. There was a suggestion earlier that found favour with some and it was that the focus should be on nursery and primary interventions because they will sustain the gains in the long term. I am curious to know what sportscotland's current focus is in percentage terms—in terms of time and money; you might want to write to the committee about that—relative to other programmes, including fluffy ones.

Stewart Harris: I hope that we do not do too many fluffy things around the edges. I reiterate that the majority of the funding from sportscotland goes into what I term infrastructure, whether that is people or facilities.

We are not ignoring our elite sport remit—it is even more important that we are successful with that in the next few years, and we will take steps to ensure that—but huge amounts of our resources, including facilities, coaching, our people resource and active schools, are to do with local development. We could provide the absolute detail of that in writing, if you want.

15:45

Jackie Baillie: That would be helpful, given the radical suggestion of shifting the focus down to nursery as well as primary education. It would be useful, as we tease through this inquiry, to get that sort of detail.

Stewart Harris: You will have to be careful about what funding you are talking about. As far as education is concerned, Bob McGowan put a radical model on the table, and I subscribe to the idea that, if we were given our time again, I would include physical education, in its truest sense, at nursery and primary levels. I would expand facilities—I would not build primary schools in the way in which the existing ones have been built.

I would also have a different way of doing things at secondary schools that would be much more focused on sport and on the relevance of PE and young people's skills to leadership and citizenship, and to what young people are going to do as they move into the community. There is a lot to play with around all that.

The Convener: I will bring in several members with supplementary questions, but I would like to ask something first. I am glad that you introduced the nursery element into the discussion. In evidence, the chief medical officer said that if we wanted to make a healthier Scotland, we should start with the child in the womb. I am not, of course, expecting sportscotland to start there, but if a child is already obese by the time they get to P1, and if they are not physically literate, then you will end up trying to undo the wrongs.

It would be useful if you, and any other witnesses, could let us know what is being done at nursery level, particularly regarding training. I am not asking you to provide us with details on that at this stage in the day, but it would be useful for us to have something in writing about what is happening at that level, with a view to having early intervention as soon as is practicable, before children hit primary school.

Michael Matheson: You have placed a lot of emphasis on the issue of infrastructure and infrastructural development. We have heard quite a lot of evidence about that already. In your view, where are we at in Scotland in relation to the standard of our infrastructure? I am referring to both facilities and coaching. There are issues around the national governing bodies and the standard of coaching, and we have heard evidence about the Winning Scotland Foundation's programme.

I would be interested to hear your view on where Scotland is at when it comes to getting the right infrastructure in place. I am mindful of your written evidence: you state at paragraph 56 that only 12 local authorities have facilities strategies either completed or in process. Given that 80 per cent of sports funding goes through local authorities, how do we plan for the future when so few councils appear to be undertaking that process to get the right infrastructure?

Stewart Harris: I will split responsibility for this answer into two bits. Mike Roberts can pick up on the coaching element and I can give you a flavour of things as far as facilities are concerned. We continue to be very strong on the point that local authorities should have a facilities strategy, if possible with a view to growth, and with capital budgets to allow for that. We have also considered the question of how to deal with the resources that are already there.

From our perspective, we would wish every local authority to have a facilities strategy. There are two aspects to that. First, the strategy should be about the design and care and maintenance of facilities. Secondly, and going back to the point about access, the strategy must be connected to the outcome and purpose—to what the facilities are there for. We must develop a greater understanding of how better to use the resource that is in place. I also highlight the issue of integration, not just around sport and recreation facilities, but around all schools, too. That way, we can get a better feel for things.

Michael Matheson is aware of the bleak picture presented by the audit that we carried out on facilities, although I will not go into it now. My work is about making progress, and that is what sportscotland should be about. Over the next few years, given the right support, the right policies and the right influence in local government, we can incrementally free up some of the school estate. Most of it is in better shape than it was, but some facilities are closed, and they could perhaps be opened progressively. I am not saying that we should open every school tomorrow. We make the case, create the demand, and then begin to use some of the facilities that we already have alongside a growth model that allows us to increase capacity. The strategic element that is often forgotten is that our schools have finite capacity. So if we are looking to increase participation in schools, we should look at some of the primary schools.

When I was teaching, the primary school had a very small indoor hall, a playground and a bit of grass across the back. Those were the three teaching spaces. In our climate, it is difficult to increase participation or give people a quality experience. Improvements have been made but we have to maximise the use of those spaces to the best of our ability. Capacity is finite. We cannot just continue to build things. To that end, we have to be careful that we move facilities and access to them along in parallel with the people development so that we can match one with the other. There is no point in qualifying coaches if they have no access to a facility at which to coach.

The Convener: Mr Roberts can have the final word. With the leave of the committee, I intend to conclude the meeting just before 4.

Mike Roberts: The sports governing bodies deliver coaching through sports clubs and, more and more, within the school framework by supporting primary school teachers through in-service training. There is evidence of that happening, but the situation has been desperate. Some governing bodies are very strong and others are weak.

As part of that, during the past two years, we have invested in workforce development plans in 14 sports. The programme assesses coaching needs around the country, where the gaps are, and how the sport can best fill those gaps by focusing delivery not by running any education or training course in any place, but by knowing exactly where the courses are needed. We have five more sports coming online with workforce development plans at the moment, which will make a total of 19.

We are working on other areas and our aim is to give the governing bodies an infrastructure that they can use to move their sport forward positively. The introduction of the UKCC is about quality. We could go on about the number of coaches, which is often discussed, but if a coach is not good at what they are doing, they are not delivering the right quality of programme and it turns children off. If we are inquiring into pathways into sport and want to keep people involved in sport, the experience of good quality coaches will keep children involved. That also involves education. If a PE teacher fails to give a good quality session, it can turn people off the sport.

UKCC is about delivering a quality programme. In many sports, it has had an impact by increasing costs because the number of days taken to go through the course has increased. It might take three days to do a level 1 course instead of one day, and that costs more. That is one of the issues that we are dealing with separately. The UKCC is being introduced to improve the quality of coaching. We have 21 sports on the programme at the moment, 13 of which are currently delivering UKCC, so it covers a wide range of sports. The next step is CPD. Previously, coaches might have done just one course—they might have got their governing body's qualification 40 years ago—but things move on. The next phase is CPD logs to keep people's qualifications up to date. We are bringing the system more into line with what is happening in the education system. It is a quality framework to ensure that standards are raised.

The other big piece of work that we are involved in to improve the coaching structure is the coaching network. We fund 21 posts across sports governing bodies specifically to organise and run education teams to work with the workforce development plans that they have come up with. We also fund nine local-authority-specific posts—for instance, sportTayside and Fife has one coaching network officer who covers three local authorities. Those nine posts do not cover only nine authorities; they represent nine people who work across authorities.

We are doing several things to influence the structure. We acknowledge that, historically, coaching has been an issue. The system is still in

the early days—the UKCC has been on the table only for the past three years. We are working through that and some sports are still coming on stream. Just over 2,100 people have done the level 1 course and we expect that figure to hit 3,000 by the end of March, as the governing bodies for athletics and gymnastics are coming on stream and will train big numbers.

The Convener: The last question is a supplementary from Richard Simpson.

Dr Simpson: I have two factual questions. We have been told that not many active schools co-ordinators have permanent or long contracts; they have one-year contracts. Will you confirm that? Is that appropriate to achieve the sustainability that we want?

If a club has operated for at least a year, it can apply for funding, but if it has operated for less than a year, a problem exists. In deprived areas that do not have clubs, that doubles the jeopardy of starting a club.

I am afraid that I made two points, but they were brief.

The Convener: The points were good, so we will allow them.

Stewart Harris: You are correct—most active schools co-ordinators have three-year contracts. The position depends on how employment law is interpreted. Most of those people have been in post for three, four or five years. Our ambition is to make such infrastructure critical. With support from the board, I as the chief executive of sportscotland think that active schools should be sustained and developed. However, I acknowledge your point that contractual terms sometimes work against keeping good people. We are aware of the issue. To that end, we try to give local authorities and partners as much warning as we can. We have made it clear that we would like in our budgets a commitment from the national Government and the national agency for such infrastructure to go forward to 2020—that was the original physical activity target date.

I am less confident about the response to Dr Simpson's second point, which sounds as if it is about a local club and perhaps a small amount of funding from a local sports council.

Dr Simpson: So it is not national funding.

Stewart Harris: It is certainly not national.

The Convener: Rather than put Stewart Harris on the spot—

Dr Simpson: Do not try to answer—

Stewart Harris: We do not fund clubs—

Dr Simpson: At all?

Stewart Harris: Not in that sense. We fund local authorities or governing bodies to work with clubs, so such funding would not come from us. I will write to you about the issue. I will check whether programmes such as sportsmatch and awards for all have such a condition for providing funding. However, the issue sounds local rather than national to me.

Dr Simpson: I think that awards for all might be involved.

The Convener: Perhaps you can pursue the matter elsewhere.

Stewart Harris: I will look at the awards for all arrangements.

The Convener: That was well done—we are on the button at nearly 4 o'clock. I thank all the witnesses for their contributions.

On the committee's behalf, I thank the University of Stirling for facilitating the meeting—I particularly thank Professor Grant Jarvie and Gillian Geddes. I also thank Andrew Bain for organising this morning's visit by some of us to the new hub facility and Chris Robison for co-ordinating the meeting with coaches that the other committee members attended. We find such outings—that is a frivolous word; I mean sessions outside the Parliament—extremely useful. I thank you all very much for your valuable time.

Meeting closed at 15:58.

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