

HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 25 February 2009

Session 3

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HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE

6th 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:

Kim Atkinson (Scottish Squash)
Graham Cormack (Camanachd Association)
Graham Coull (Stirling Triathlon Club)
Jackie Davidson (Scottish Cycling)
Brent Deans (Scottish Hockey)
Thomas Dowens (Scottish Volleyball Association)
Raymond Farrelly (Rangers Football Club)
Jim Fleeting (Scottish Football Association)
Colin Grahamslaw (Royal Caledonian Curling Club)
Hamish Grey (Scottish Golf Union)
Ashley Howard (Scottish Swimming)
Jamie McDonald (Scottish Athletics)
Graeme Morrison (Mountaineering Council of Scotland)
Steve Paige (Cricket Scotland)
Kevin Pringle (basketballscotland)
Colin Rennie (Fields in Trust)
Lorna Sinclair (Save Meadowbank Campaign)
Miriam Tadjali
Parisa Tadjali
Colin Thomson (Scottish Rugby)
Alison Turnbull (Ramblers Scotland)
Erica Woollcombe

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Callum Thomson

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Douglas Thornton

ASSISTANT CLERK

David Slater

LOCATION

Committee Room 3

Scottish Parliament

Health and Sport Committee

Wednesday 25 February 2009

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 09:45*]

Subordinate Legislation

National Health Service (Superannuation Scheme, Pension Scheme and Injury Benefits) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2009 (SSI 2009/19)

The Convener (Christine Grahame): Welcome to the sixth meeting this year of the Health and Sport Committee. We have received apologies from Jackie Baillie and Richard Simpson.

Under item 1, the committee is invited to consider SSI 2009/19. The Subordinate Legislation Committee drew the regulations to our attention on the grounds of two instances of defective drafting, which the Scottish Government has undertaken to correct, and a drafting error that is not considered to affect the regulations' validity. No comments have been received from members, and no motion to annul has been lodged. Are we agreed that we do not wish to make any recommendations on the regulations?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Pathways into Sport Inquiry

09:46

The Convener: Our main item of business is oral evidence on our pathways into sport inquiry. A large number of sporting bodies and individual sports clubs responded to our call for evidence, and we wanted to hear from as many of them as possible. In order to do that, we are doing something a little different today. Instead of having the usual panels of witnesses, today's evidence-taking session will be in the style of a public meeting. I welcome everyone who has come along to give evidence today. As we have 23 witnesses before us, I do not intend to read out everyone's name first, or the day will be half over before we can begin. I note, however, that we have received apologies from Stuart Smith, Jacqueline Archibald, Andrew Murray and Dave Spence.

Evidence will be taken in three parts, each lasting around 40 minutes, I hope. The first part will focus on the teaching of physical education at nursery, primary and secondary levels. The second part will deal with relationships between schools and sports clubs, including how to focus those relationships when they are poor or do not exist. The third part will consider ways of maximising the use of local sports facilities by sports clubs and the wider community.

I will set out a few house rules to ensure that we all know what we are doing—I include myself in that, as I will probably get muddled up, and although you might know what you are doing, I might not know what I am doing.

You should raise your hand or otherwise indicate that you wish to speak and wait until the microphone is passed to you before speaking, to ensure that your words are recorded for the purposes of the *Official Report* of the meeting. You should also state your name and the name of the organisation or petition that you are associated with before making your contribution. Unless the official report staff advise me otherwise, you need not repeat your name after the first time that you have identified yourself.

You will be able to read the *Official Report* of the meeting when it is published, which will probably be in around four or five days' time.

As I said, the first part of the meeting will focus on the teaching of PE in nursery, primary and secondary schools. We have received evidence that the situation varies greatly between schools and that, particularly in primary schools, the level of provision depends very much on the attitude of individual headteachers and the culture in their schools. We are interested in the situation in nursery schools because we want to ensure that

children become physically literate as early as possible.

Mary Scanlon will break the ice by asking the first question.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am sure that everyone is familiar with the recent report of the team chaired by Johnny Beattie that was given the task of conducting the five-year review of the let's make Scotland more active strategy. The review considered whether we are on track to meet the target of 50 per cent of adults and 80 per cent of children achieving minimum recommended levels of physical activity by 2022—that is quite far off; I had not realised that.

We realise that many schools have not yet reached the target. Is it the right target? Should we have a target? Should more be done? Is a five-year review sufficient? We have discovered that inspectors from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education do not record their findings on PE in schools, if they even inspect it. Should they do so? We all back the target of ensuring that children get at least two hours of physical activity a week. However, should they get even more? Should that be made compulsory or should it be left to the school's discretion? Basically, what can we do to ensure that children are more active? Discuss.

The Convener: Come on. I know that we have people with us who are ready to answer that.

Jim Fleeting (Scottish Football Association): Obviously, I am the shiest person here.

Mary Scanlon asked about targets. First, we need to know where we are starting from when we set targets. That has not happened in the past. We are discussing all sports, but in football people set targets for us without knowing what is already happening. We need an audit—it must be the right audit and we must all believe in it.

I think that everyone here would agree 100 per cent that it is time that we started to challenge what is happening in schools. As always, there is good practice, average practice and very poor practice—that is life. We need to get a handle on that. Young people are the most important thing for us. It is important that we all invest in them, whether in nurseries, primary schools or secondary schools. We need one hymn sheet that we can all buy into and deliver on.

I agree that we need targets, but please tell us where we are going and where we are starting from, and we will do our best to reach those targets.

Mary Scanlon: Sorry, but I am going to be difficult—

The Convener: Does anyone else want to come in first? Does anyone want to reflect on the unevenness that exists?

Kim Atkinson (Scottish Squash): I agree absolutely with what Jim Fleeting said, and with what Mary Scanlon said about the quantity of PE. We see the two hours as a minimum. It is about trying to get children to be physically active, but it is also about the quality of PE, what children are taught in school time and what they are taught outwith that.

Physical literacy is critical. We have to ensure that young people are physically literate so that they can involve themselves in sport and in healthy activities and lifestyles as they get older. We have to ensure that young people have the confidence, ability and skills to take up activities. It is critical that they enjoy lifelong activity. It is about both the quality and the quantity of PE.

The Convener: We accept that. Does everyone agree that provision is patchy throughout Scotland in all sectors?

Witnesse: Yes.

The Convener: Right. We have all agreed that it is patchy. Can we now find out how we make it not patchy?

Colin Rennie (Fields in Trust): Fields in Trust was formerly the National Playing Fields Association. We are primarily concerned with the protection and improvement of outdoor spaces for sport, recreation and play.

One of the difficulties for schools is that the school premises regulations, which dictate outdoor space for activity in schools, are set by the Scottish Government, but no one in the Scottish Government monitors that area. New schools are built that do not meet the current regulations. What is worse, space is disappearing in schools that, when they were built, met the regulations. For example, hard-standing spaces can often become teachers' car parks.

The Scottish Government could have someone monitor the regulations and ensure that schools are built to the requirements. There is possibly a need to review the regulations, which I think date back to the late 1960s. Many schools build playgrounds that are not sufficiently challenging and do not provide enough inspiration for kids to get involved. It is not sufficient simply to have an open space. The Scottish Government could look into that.

Ashley Howard (Scottish Swimming): I have two points to make. One is on targets. We are in a targets-based and evidence-based society, so targets are important. However, at one extreme, you can probably tell whether people are healthy by looking outside, walking down the street and

looking at school playgrounds. We do not want to get too caught up in an intense measuring system that takes away from the time that is required to get out, lead sport and make people more active. A careful, simple balance is needed, and people need to be able to buy into the data.

Secondly, on consistency across schools, particularly at the primary level, we think that the generalist approach, with a teacher who does all sports, is not the right way forward. Perhaps we could have clusters around secondary schools where the teaching is more specialist and bring on board an extra teacher to bring specialist knowledge to neighbouring schools. We think that that would be the right way forward.

The Convener: I see Mary Scanlon indicating that she wants to speak; I will come back to you, Mary, but I want to let everyone else come in first so that you can pick up on the points that they raise.

Thomas Dowens (Scottish Volleyball Association): I slightly disagree with Ashley Howard, because the primary sector is crucial to physical education development. The briefing papers for the meeting suggested that the theory behind what we need to deliver is quite clear and robust, but actual delivery in schools is often done by a classroom teacher who has no PE experience. The lack of specialists in primary schools in particular dictates the quality of what is delivered and whether the kids are engaged early on in the process.

Graham Cormack (Camanachd Association): The Camanachd Association is shinty's governing body. I back up what Thomas Dowens said. We must all have targets, but we must be careful that we do not concentrate on numbers. We need to dig deeper than that to discover what regular activity and quality provision are. Two hours is great, but are they two good hours, or are they mediocre? We must be careful.

If we set specific numbers as targets, it will be like teaching for exams: if we get the right numbers, we can tick the right box. I am all for targets, but we have to be clear about what they mean.

Alison Turnbull (Ramblers Scotland): I support all the comments that have been made about quality provision of PE within schools. I just want to make a point about travel to and from school. There is a considerable body of evidence that shows that children who walk and cycle to school are much more active in other areas of their lives. Targets for active travel to school are also very important.

Colin Thomson (Scottish Rugby): I agree with a lot of the comments, but there is a certain amount of people saying that we need to reinvent

the wheel, and I do not think that we need to do that. There is plenty of evidence from pilots and experiments in the dim and distant past in Scotland. In my former life as a PE teacher, I was involved in the Linwood daily PE scheme, which brought PE, and PE teachers, from a range of sports into primary schools every day. It was not targets based; it was about getting kids to be more active. John Pollatschek and Tom Renfrew from Jordanhill College of Education ran the scheme.

All the research is there, but I believe that the decision makers do not have the will to make things happen. We do not need to talk about what should happen because we already have examples of past good practice, but we have put them on a shelf and forgotten about them. Daily PE with PE specialists from the secondary schools going to the feeder primary schools makes a huge impact on young people's lives.

The bulk of the witnesses here today are from sport, which has to get away from—and is doing so—the notion that sport is only about the elite. It is not; sport is about mass participation. The pathway should be about mass participation just as much as it is about elite sport. We have to focus on that.

I urge the committee to delve into the very good examples from the dim and distant past, such as the Linwood daily PE project, which was a great project. There is a great body of evidence on the huge impact that that project had. We do not need to reinvent the wheel; we just need decisions to be made and implemented.

10:00

The Convener: To be frank, the committee has parked the elite sport aspects—we are not going down that route. We are considering how we can achieve an active nation of people who participate in sport for pleasure.

Brent Deans (Scottish Hockey): I support what the other speakers have said. To change the present paradigm, we must consider the opportunities to take a flexible approach to delivering physical education. In the nursery and primary sectors, we need physical literacy development and the basic moves programme. In secondary schools, we need to move to more sport-specific participation in which the sport bodies can be involved. In considering how to deliver that, we must think about the timeframe within which we deliver activities, as that is a limiting factor in achieving the target of two hours a week. We need a more flexible approach to delivery, so that activities can be delivered from 8 o'clock in the morning to 6 or 7 o'clock at night. That would allow adult physical education programmes to be delivered in schools. Some PE

specialists could come in early—they would still work the same number of hours, but there would be flexibility in when they come in. However, we would have to increase the workforce in the sector. That flexibility to deliver over a longer period would meet several needs, including the need to increase the opening hours of school premises.

In secondary school, when students move to higher PE, there is an enormous drop-off of about 70 per cent. I am not an educationist, but I believe that we should consider another way in which to rank secondary school students in physical education. They could get something like a competency mark, so PE would not be an academic subject as it is now. That would increase the capacity to deliver physical education. When students get to choose, there is a 70 per cent drop-off, which is not healthy for anyone.

To change the paradigm for physical education in Scotland, we need a flexible approach to delivery throughout the sector, starting at an early stage. As Colin Thomson said, we have fantastic programmes in Scotland, such as the basic moves and TOP programmes, and good physical literacy programmes. In secondary schools and colleges, delivery happens later in the afternoon, and adult learning occurs after that. That encapsulates all the sectors in the industry. School facilities could be open longer if some teaching staff came in at 12 o'clock and worked their hours, and other staff came in at 8 o'clock and worked until 2 o'clock.

Kim Atkinson: The question about ensuring the quality of PE requires us to consider exactly what we mean by physical literacy. As colleagues have said, a lot of good work has been done on that. For example, sportscotland has pulled together a fundamentals resource. It asked a wide variety of coaches what the fundamental physical literacy skills are and how those can be taught. We need to start to define what we mean by physical literacy and then consider how it is taught.

Many people have said that PE in primary schools is the one point at which we actually catch every child. We need to work out how physical literacy can be taught. That requires engagement with the people who teach PE, whether they are PE specialists or general teachers. A vast majority of the sports have written down their player development pathways. For each stage that a child goes through, we have tried to map the skills that they should learn if they are to be good at the sport or to reach their optimum level. However, the basis of that is a generic set of fundamental skills that someone would have if they were as physically literate as possible.

Sports have done a lot of work on physical literacy and pathways for individuals. They have also worked on the coaching agenda—many

governing bodies have rewritten coaching programmes to try to get better quality coaches. We must consider the work that has been done to teach coaches how to teach children the basic skills. We need to map that work with the work that is happening in the education sector and pull all the agencies together. The education sector knows about kids and teaching and we know about sport and coaching, so we must consider how we can work together to ensure that quality PE is delivered.

The Convener: You made an important point. Not all coaches are good teachers, and not all teachers are good coaches. Different skills are needed.

Graham Coull (Stirling Triathlon Club): I think that we all agree that kids need sport. A point that we have missed is that no value is put on physical education in schools by parents—or even by teachers. We put a lot of value on subjects such as English and maths, because they can help young people to find employment when they leave school. If PE and the enjoyment that it can bring were valued more, kids would take more interest, and teachers would take more interest in children's physical abilities. Sport might then develop in a way that is healthier and more fun. That approach might be better than imposing targets, as is being suggested.

PE at nursery and primary school level should be about participation and enjoyment, not about meeting targets and winning things. When we talk about secondary schools we might discuss the need to integrate local clubs and schools. At nursery and primary level, there should be a much stronger focus on the value of PE and its impact on people in later life. By the time someone is 18, 19 or 20, it is too late to start teaching them about getting fit and running, swimming, walking or whatever. We have to start much earlier, and PE should be part of the fabric of primary and nursery education.

Jamie McDonald (Scottish Athletics): I am the youth development manager at Scottish Athletics. I support what people have said about consistency and about the importance of teaching fundamental movement skills at an early stage. Consistency is also important in the context of training for teachers. There must be continuous professional development opportunities and training must be constantly modernised.

Hamish Grey (Scottish Golf Union): We know about the issues. The convener asked what we can do to take things forward. The current target of two hours a week is minimalist and we are singularly failing to meet it, on the basis of the evidence that we have. From a national perspective, getting 32 local authorities to consider how education is delivered leads to fragmentation.

There needs to be a mechanism to require national standards on quantity and quality if we are to take the issue seriously throughout Scotland.

Some of the good practice and standards that people have talked about already exist in Scotland and elsewhere. As is indicated in the committee papers, we can learn from work in New Zealand and other countries that goes back as far as 1988—I am sure that stuff was going on before then. We do not need to reinvent the wheel.

Mary Scanlon: I will be contrary, as is my nature, and say to Graham Coull that I think that parents are putting a greater value on PE. Parents do not just want their children to be accountants and lawyers; they want them to be physically and mentally fit. I am not talking about all parents.

Can I ask—because I might not get another chance—

The Convener: Mary, I will not be maligned in that fashion. I will give everyone a bite of the cherry.

Mary Scanlon: Anyone who watched the programme on television last night about diabetes knows how important physical exercise is.

Jim Fleeting made a good point, but I was not quite sure what he meant when he said that we need to challenge what is happening. That is what the committee wants to do. We are looking for a lead from the witnesses on how things can and should be done better.

Jim Fleeting: You have heard from a number of witnesses, and we have all said exactly the same things. However, we do not all do the same things. That is our biggest problem. We are a small country, but we all do our own things. We stay within our own four walls and do not often meet, share what we do or discuss things; we just get on with our own jobs. It would be sacrilege not to do something about that, and it is time that we did.

Mary Scanlon: How can that change?

Colin Thomson: I agree with Jim Fleeting that there is not enough joined-up thinking. The reason for that is the absence of a clear programme, especially in primary schools. The bigger governing bodies—for football, rugby and golf—are rushing in with easy-to-use sessions. Parents are buying into that approach, but it is not what children need in a long-term physical development framework. Instead, it is a route of convenience that enables headteachers to meet targets for physical activity time. Scottish Rugby would be glad to support a co-ordinated programme of physical development in primary schools, supported by the national governing bodies. In the absence of a clear national direction, the

governing bodies are fighting—not literally—with one another.

Graham Coull: I do not disagree with what Mary Scanlon said. However, if parents are starting to place more value on physical education, I suggest that they are being let down by the education system, which puts no value on physical education. I cannot believe that in today's society and education system we cannot make provision for something as basic as two hours of physical education per week. Almost everyone here will have their own views on how they can get involved in local schools, but we can debate that point later. The issue that we are discussing now is how we can get nursery and primary school level children involved in physical activity. It is not just about parents getting kids involved. They might do so by approaching clubs run by the different sports that are represented here—football, rugby, walking, rambling and so on—but everything falls apart in schools. If schools can provide English and maths, why can they not provide two hours of PE per week?

Colin Grahamslaw (Royal Caledonian Curling Club): I want to pick up a number of issues, starting with the target of two hours of PE per week. The chief operating officers of the Scottish governing bodies meet regularly. We are all clear about the fact that the target of two hours per week of quality PE is a minimum. In addition, we need to address the issue of how PE in schools and extracurricular activity can be joined together; we will come to that point later.

In primary schools, physical literacy, rather than sport-specific activity, is the key. The question is, can children run, jump, balance, throw, catch, and fall and get up quickly by the time that they come to us in the governing bodies? If they cannot, the athletics, curling and swimming clubs that they attend will have to teach them basic co-ordination moves. That means that we are starting from scratch—we are far further down the ladder than we should be.

The governing bodies can agree on the need to get the right things taught at a young age, as that would help every sport to deliver lifelong opportunities for participation and involvement, not just at the elite level. It would give us the ability to enhance basic skills by turning them into sport-specific skills, so that people can enjoy whatever sport they play.

Steve Paige (Cricket Scotland): Mrs Scanlon referred to the attitude of parents, but the attitude of teachers is key. We have run PE sessions in schools while teachers have sat marking. To use a coaching expression, you have to be what you want to see. If a teacher wants their class to be active, to take part and to have fun, they must get

involved. If they do not take part, that rubs off on the kids.

10:15

Lorna Sinclair (Save Meadowbank Campaign): If we have a vision for an active Scotland that we want to maintain after 2011, we need to look at how we work as multi-agency teams. We must look at why we are losing green spaces in the east of Edinburgh, for example, and think clearly about how to send out a message to everyone, from young people to adults, to continue participating in physical education not only from nursery to school age but into adulthood.

In the east of Edinburgh alone, we have lost green space including the Hawkhill and Royal high school playing fields and various bowling greens. Meadowbank stadium is at risk, yet the active schools co-ordinators use it to support schools that do not have the facilities to provide the two hours a week of physical exercise that they are required to provide. We need to ensure that young people are receiving the message that we are sending out on the vision for Scotland.

The Convener: Thank you. I open up the meeting to members who will want to pick up on what has been said.

Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): I want to pick up on two interesting and contrasting things that were said. I will focus on two contributions, although many other witnesses made the same point. I was interested to hear Mr Coull talk of his amazement that PE does not happen in primary schools. I understand why he said that. I was equally interested to hear Colin Thomson say that all the evidence shows that PE “had just been parked”. Is that because primary school teachers are not taught how to deliver PE programmes? After all, we have to be realistic: our expectation that they will do so may be wholly unrealistic. PE may not be so much parked as undelivered. We have discussed what we want, but have not delivered the resources that will ensure that it is put in place. I, too, am amazed by the situation. The committee is surprised at some of the evidence that we have received on the lack of physical education. The question has to be put: given that no deliberate malevolence is involved, is something missing in how PE is delivered?

Colin Thomson: I gave the example of the daily PE scheme that was run in Linwood in the early to mid-1980s and which was based on European models. At the time, a lot of work was done over four or five years to assess the impact of the scheme. Why is there no such scheme nowadays? The reality may come down to lack of resources and differing priorities. People talk about teachers not being allowed to take part in

PE in schools, but the biggest problem is the overloaded curriculum: teachers are hamstrung by it and by everyone wanting their piece. If we want to build a healthy society, children have to be taught physical exercise in a fun and enjoyable way. It does not matter whether PE has been parked or the resources are not there to deliver it. What matters is that successful PE schemes were delivered in the past and that is not happening nowadays.

Graham Coull: I agree with Colin Thomson. We need to look at the people who are coming into teaching. If we think back to the situation of 30 or 40 years ago, people who came into teaching did not necessarily take the direct route from school to college or university and back to school. If teachers do not value physical education and wellbeing, they will not teach it—it is as simple as that. If nursery and primary school teachers are to fully understand the benefits of physical education, they will need to go through re-education. Teachers need to truly and genuinely understand the benefits of PE. As Steve Paige from Cricket Scotland said, teachers teach what they best understand. At the moment, nursery and primary school teachers are being asked to be jacks of all trades but are—in many cases—masters of none.

The Convener: I feel that I should defend teachers, with two primary teachers in my family. The point is that the crowded curriculum and expectations on teachers make it difficult for them to be as liberated as we might wish them to be.

Brent Deans: One sector of the education industry is moving forward on the targets: the private school sector is delivering PE at the minimum level. That reflects its flexible approach to delivery. I will come back to that. As Colin Thomson said, there is a lot of pressure on the curriculum and it is time limited. Why do we not think about making the time in which it is delivered more flexible? That would replicate what is happening in the private school sector, which is able to deliver the prescribed quantity of PE.

Jim Fleeting: I have two primary school teachers, a secondary school teacher and an active schools co-ordinator in my household, so life is hell for me. They just keep telling me what to do.

You keep talking about a minimum of two hours' PE, but why should it be a minimum of two hours? It is a disgrace and a joke that we are giving our kids an opportunity to take part in PE only twice a week. That is ridiculous. Why has such a low target been set? We have talked about resources and the John Pollatschek model. Why do we set such low targets? We are a very small nation with great people out there. My daughter and my daughter-in-law are very different people. My daughter would run a sports programme, but my

daughter-in-law would not run a sports programme because she is not into sports in any way at all. We need to put the resources into PE so that everybody gets the same chance.

I will go on a wee bit about primary schools, if you do not mind. My daughter, Gemma, tells me that there is flexibility in the school timetable of half an hour a day. At her school, Moorpark primary school in Kilbirnie, the children do band practice in that time, which is absolutely fantastic. I am only guessing, but I reckon they do band practice because they have a proactive music teacher—that is usually the case. If there is flexibility of half an hour a day, sport could jump in there. We are all right in what we are saying: we are not looking to promote football in that half hour, nor rugby, nor volleyball. We are talking about giving kids basic skills, which Colin Grahamslaw spoke about. They must be taught those basic skills first and foremost, and that teaching must begin in our primary schools.

Please, let us not talk about a minimum of two hours of PE a week—that is a disgrace. Let us talk about five hours a week for the kids. It is what they deserve.

The Convener: Does anyone want to make any further comments?

Thomas Downes: I would just like to back up the point a wee bitty about the credibility of physical education in the school curriculum. The reality is that PE teacher colleagues, like teachers in every other department, are measured according to whether they get kids through the exams that they are asked to sit. Nobody in the school system places real value on just getting the kids moving, but the language of physical education is movement, and if they are moving they are learning and improving. That cannot be measured. However, the introduction into secondary schools of a PE exam and the possibility of measuring whether the kids pass has put pressure on the school teachers so that they teach to the exam, which is understandable, and the basis of learning to move with quality somehow gets lost.

The latest research says that if I teach you to move, I teach you to think. In primary schools, just teaching kids to move enhances their ability to do all the other subjects, which was one of the results of the Pollatschek experiment years ago. However, that is difficult to measure and the pressure on physical education colleagues means that they teach to what they can measure.

Lorna Sinclair: A lot of schools have to work within constraints to achieve the two hours. Although five hours sounds wonderful, some schools are ultimately struggling to achieve the two hours because they do not have the facilities

to provide two hours of sport. For example, a school's main hall might be used for other activities such as an after-school club, and it might not have the facilities to enable football to be played indoors in winter.

Hamish Grey: It is not just some schools that are not hitting the target of two hours a week—it is most schools. We do not have good evidence on the issue, anyway.

I support walking to school as a useful thing to do, but it is counted as part of the school's contribution to the two-hour provision. Frankly, I would not include it in that, although it is important. I agree with Jim Fleeting that, if we are serious about improving children's physical activity, we must have greater targets. There are people here more qualified than I am to say whether the target should be five hours a week or otherwise, but it should certainly be more than two hours a week, if we really want to make a difference.

I will wrap this up by picking up on a point that Colin Thomson made. Each of us goes in and does activities that are specific to our sport. In golf, we do not do that with children until they are nine in order to make a link to clubs, which we will no doubt come on to next. We are introducing two thirds of nine-year-olds in Scotland to golf by that means. However, that is a meaningless or much more difficult task if we do not have a generic fundamentals introductory programme for all sports for children in primary schools below the age of nine. We should aim to do that to make it as easy as possible for teachers who are challenged to deliver.

Ashley Howard: Hamish Grey referred to teaching general movement, but I do not think that he means that that should be taught by a generalist teacher who is required to teach a bunch of other subjects as well. When we talk about specialists, we are not talking about, for example, a professional football coach coming in, but an expert in physical literacy coming in to help. It is unfair to expect someone such as Jim Fleeting's daughter-in-law to be a convert to sport, when she has not chosen that path. We should let teachers do what they are best at, but bring in specialist support when it is needed.

Alison Turnbull: On the two hours of quality provision, the physical activity strategy review found that there was no reason to change the recommended guideline for children that they should have a minimum of 60 minutes a day of physical activity, five days a week, in order to maintain good health—not to improve it or lose weight. Those targets will therefore remain unchanged up to 2022. The two-hour target is a bit out of synch with that. The physical activity strategy points to a target of five hours a week.

The Convener: I ask Ian McKee whether he wants to come in, as I am moving on to the next topic at 10.30.

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): My point relates to something that Alison Turnbull said earlier. I am interested in the children who are not, and never will be, interested in sport, but for whom it is just as important to have physical literacy. We have talked in other meetings about links with sport and we will talk about it later in this meeting. Alison Turnbull said earlier that children who walk or cycle to school are fitter in other ways. Could it be the other way round, in that children who are physically fit have families who value physical fitness and encourage their children to walk and cycle to school? How are we going to encourage children who will never be interested in sport to become physically active, whether by rambling or whatever? How can we encourage the couch potatoes who are the children of couch-potato parents?

Jackie Davidson (Scottish Cycling): I am involved with the cycling action plan for Scotland, and Ian McKee has just touched on one of the key findings from research that was done for that. Over 4,000 people fed into the first phase of the consultation and questions about infrastructure came out of that. For example, is it safe to cycle or walk? Can the children access a safe route? Can they share a route with traffic? The fundamental issue for parents is safety. They will not allow their children to walk or cycle to school unless there is a safe mechanism for doing that. However, several people here have touched on good examples of simple interventions that are already in place in schools across Scotland. For example, schools can have a walk-to-school week or a walk-on-Wednesday initiative. Not only the kids, but the parents engage in those activities and we see people talking to each other as they walk to school together. That does not necessarily fit in with delivery of the target of two hours' activity and with the responsibility on teachers and schools to provide opportunities to develop physical literacy, but it encourages participation in an activity.

10:30

We have touched on champions. They are not necessarily people such as Sir Chris Hoy, who inspire others to participate, but local people. By a champion, I mean not a medallist, but someone to whom people can relate and who can say, "This made a big difference to me," or, "This is what I've done to change my lifestyle." Such initiatives are useful in getting messages across to encourage people to participate in an activity. Much can be done to promote active travel as well as physical activity in the school environment.

Colin Thomson: I will ask the committee a question. I think all the witnesses around the table agree—that is loud and clear. We need to agree. Who are the decision makers? Decisions are disjointed because we have all sorts of decision makers at all levels. Teachers decide to do or not to do something. Headteachers decide to do or not to do something. Local authorities decide to do or not to do something. National governing bodies decide to do or not to do something. If we want to take hold of the situation and make a significant difference, we need to consider who the decision makers are that will make a difference.

The Convener: As we all know, responsibility for national policy, which you are talking about, lies with cabinet secretaries, and responsibility for delivery lies with local authorities. We suggest—I hope you agree—that monitoring is for Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education. We have challenged HMIE on some of the issues that you have raised, such as the value that inspection reports place on physical activity in schools.

The committee has taken evidence—in depth, I hope—in order to produce a report that will substantially influence the views not only of the Government, but of the Parliament. We might bid for a parliamentary debate on our report on activities and pathways into sport in schools; the committee will discuss and decide on that. Such a debate would be interesting.

Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): Colin Thomson makes a good point. The Government has a target of two hours of quality physical activity per week but, below the national decision-making process, a range of individuals can intervene to determine whether the target is met on the ground. That goes back to the earlier point that the lack of national standards leads to the difficulty that too many people can decide whether the target is met, whereas if a national standard is set, it must be implemented. Many people can intervene to alter an objective that is meant to be national.

The Convener: I hope that that was how I put it. Delivery happens further down the chain, but it is up to the Government to set the standards, to say who will deliver them, to make them part of the funding arrangements with local authorities and to describe how they will be monitored. That brings us back to quality as well as quantity. There is no point in ticking a box to say that two hours of activity per week have been managed if those two hours were pretty shabby, even if two hours is too low a target for some people here.

I know that Alison Turnbull would like to speak, but I would like to move on. Perhaps she can thread in her comment later, unless she feels that we have missed something.

Ian McKee: I asked Alison Turnbull a question.

Alison Turnbull: We talked about getting children involved in physical activity and valid points were made about safety. Traffic is part of the safety issue. If more children walked and cycled to school and if parents and teachers were involved in that, traffic would be reduced and safety would improve.

The involvement of teachers and parents in encouraging children to walk and cycle to school is fundamental. Good examples of that do exist; Dalgety Bay primary school has a walking club—more than two-thirds of the school is signed up to it—which rewards children for walking and cycling to school. Traffic levels outside the school have dropped as a consequence, and safety levels have improved as a result of that. The involvement of key individuals is very important.

The Convener: What are the rewards?

Alison Turnbull: They have bronze, silver and gold awards, and class champions are nominated. The child who has walked to school the most is given the title.

The Convener: I did not think the reward would be sweets and lollipops. [*Laughter.*]

Graeme Morrison (Mountaineering Council of Scotland): To reply to the earlier question, with the introduction of our climbing walls, which are in 50 local authority primary schools at the moment, and which have more than 5,000 participants, non-core PE-type activities can be introduced to the non-sporting people. We find that the majority of our participants are people who do not want supervised, organised or coached sport. There must also be a place for freedom and unsupervised play in sport in the school curriculum.

The Convener: Yes. The climbing walls look like fun. The committee might try one.

I will move on to the next section, which is about relationships between schools and sports clubs, including how to foster those relationships when they are poor or do not exist. Obviously we would like to hear from places where such a relationship does exist as some kind of lively model.

Jackie Davidson: We have a recent good example at Bannerman high school on the east side of Glasgow. Glasgow City Council launched a bike loan scheme for pupils who could use them to cycle to school. Out of that, and out of the scheme's links with community police officers, we went in and started delivering some coaching in the school. From that, some of the teachers and the community police officer went on and did the coach education course. A school club was born, and the school delivered a cycling festival around its cluster primary schools, and it recently hosted

the youth cyclocross championships. The school is the first in Europe to have a mountain bike course in its grounds. That is an excellent example of a lot of agencies joining up to deliver activity within schools that offer a pathway into sport, if people want to take it up. As I said, it came about from the initial bike loan scheme and people just engaged with cycling as an activity. None of the teachers involved was a PE teacher: they were maths and German teachers who had an interest in outdoor activity or in sport. We found it quite difficult to engage with PE teachers to support the development of youth clubs in schools.

The Convener: Why?

Jackie Davidson: Sometimes they are very focused on delivery of the curriculum, and a lot of sports are not core to that, so there is no interest in them.

Raymond Farrelly (Rangers Football Club):

We have a programme that has been in existence since 2004, whereby we integrate with community safety services, community regeneration agencies and the local authorities to provide football opportunities, primarily for young people in Glasgow. We do not seem to find engagement with young people a problem, perhaps because of the attraction of the football club and the role models they associate with it. That picks up the point about the education of teachers who feel that they cannot deliver; external agencies can provide support with that.

Every week, 6,000 young people participate in our programme. That is an excellent example of best practice, but it is not just about the football club. It is also about the partners who are involved in the projects. That is the crucial part. Jim Fleeting mentioned the importance of a joined-up approach. It is critical that a joined-up approach is adopted, both by the education authorities and the providers.

The Convener: How did you get the schools involved?

Raymond Farrelly: It is all about the partnership approach. It is necessary to engage with the education authorities and to convince them that sport is a priority. We are quite fortunate, because we—

The Convener: My question is quite basic. Did you go to directors of education or to headteachers?

Raymond Farrelly: We went to directors of education.

The funding providers are crucial to the process. Community regeneration agencies have a huge influence on directors of education. If we can engage all the different agencies, we will have a shot at it.

The Convener: We will hear from Mr Flett, Mr Paige and then Mr Coull.

Jim Fleeting: I am Mr Fleeting.

The Convener: Oh, sorry. For a fleeting moment I called you Mr Flett.

Jim Fleeting: It is okay; I have been called worse things than that.

I would like to speak about a sports club in Kilwinning. I come from Kilwinning, so I am slightly biased towards the club, although none of my kids plays there, so in that respect I am totally unbiased. My point is about how to engage with people. A group of adults came together to produce a fantastic facility from absolutely nothing; the area in question used to be a swan lake. As well as offering golf and netball, the club regularly goes into schools, including learning disability schools, and brings the guys down to do a bit of work there. It is a sort of job-creation exercise. It is the kind of community sports club that we would all like to see.

Sadly, the club does not have a facility; it is called portakabin city. It is as if all the roadside portakabins in Scotland have landed in Kilwinning and are being used as changing rooms. There are many good examples of clubs linking with schools. Guys from the club go into the seven primary schools in Kilwinning and deliver netball, golf, football and hockey; the club's facilities are used, too. If the right people are engaged, they will make it happen. All the people are volunteers.

The Convener: What is the name of the club?

Jim Fleeting: It is called Kilwinning Community Sports Club. I know that it is hard to believe that something good has happened in Kilwinning.

The Convener: You are prejudging me; I have no animosity towards Kilwinning.

Jim Fleeting: It is okay—I have a wife from Kilwinning and I sleep there every night.

The Convener: It is a serious point.

I will ask you the question that I asked Raymond Farrelly: who did the club approach? At what level in the education stratosphere did it make an approach? Was it the headteachers who were approached?

Jim Fleeting: The club got a wee bit of prompting from the Scottish Football Association and sportscotland. Simon Farrelly helped us out. Simon and I went to North Ayrshire Council. It is a question of partnership, as Raymond Farrelly said. We have an excellent community programme because of partnerships, not because of the SFA.

The Convener: I understand that; I just wanted to know at what level the connection was made.

Steve Paige: The model that we use throughout Scotland for cricket involves localised development groups, whereby the clubs in a particular geographic area meet the active schools co-ordinators and our regional development manager. They meet together, plan together and take action together, and then review how the process has gone. The meetings happen on a six-week rotation.

That model is starting to work for us. We have looked at it really only over the past year to 18 months, but it is starting to work and to generate more interest in cricket in schools and clubs. We have that pathway by which young people move from schools to clubs.

10:45

The Convener: I keep having to ask supplementaries. I ask everyone to address the question how, having done all those things, you get into the schools. Once you have a team or partnership together, at what level do you then pitch at the schools? What barriers, if any, exist? Where do you get encouragement so that there is a marriage?

Steve Paige: We go through the active schools co-ordinators. There is a conduit. If the active schools co-ordinator does not have an interest in our sport of cricket, we come up against a blockage, which will have an impact on what we can deliver. However, in general, we use the active schools co-ordinators or managers.

Graham Coull: Perhaps I can answer the question by talking about how Stirling Tri Club has managed to get kids involved in our sport. Five years ago, 80 per cent of the members of our club were single white males; a couple of single females also came along. Over the past five years, we have made a concerted effort to change that profile and to make the club a participation club rather than one that includes only elite sportspeople, whom we had in quantity. We went to local schools and asked primary school headteachers and head PE teachers in secondary schools to invite kids along to taster days, to which we took elite athletes. We showed images and pictures of those athletes winning tournaments, for example, and then invited the kids along to clubs free of charge. We now have 200 members and 25 family memberships, which account for just short of 50 per cent of the total number of participants in the club. We invited kids to come along to events and those kids passed invitations to their parents, so we got not only kids but parents coming along. Utilising role models in our sport to do presentations helped to make the kids come along.

In addition, we run three sports events throughout the year. We have an aquathlon, which involves swimming and running; a triathlon, which involves swimming, cycling and running; and a duathlon, which involves running, cycling and then running again. All those events were initially for adults only, but we have put them on for kids, too. Four years ago, 25 kids took part in them; now, more than 300 do so. That would not have happened if we had not invited kids and their parents to come along and take part in sport.

Parents go along to football and rugby playing fields. Perhaps at some point in the past, they have aspired to be a footballer or played football. Inviting people along to places to take part in sport is a serious driving force.

The Convener: Did you put invitations out through the schools?

Graham Coull: Yes. We put invitations on PE notice-boards, for example, and gave 400 flyers to each primary school.

Alison Turnbull: It is important to have good relationships between schools and organisations that offer non-competitive physical activities as well as good relationships between schools and sports clubs. Graeme Morrison gave the example of climbing walls in schools. Mountaineering Ireland offers a similar programme—the girls outside programme—for teenage girls. There are other examples of such things in Scotland. A few family groups in Ramblers Scotland are now linking up with individual schools. I know of at least one water sports organisation in Fife that has linked up with individual schools to offer children who might not be interested in traditional forms of sport less traditional forms of physical activity. Such links are also important.

The Convener: What do you mean by linking up?

Alison Turnbull: Organisations approached individual schools in the cases that I mentioned. Things have therefore been done on an ad hoc basis. When I talk about linking up, I mean something more consistent than that.

The Convener: I am sorry to keep asking further specific questions, but is that linking up done by contacting a headteacher or an individual primary or secondary teacher? We are trying to find out how you get in and make links. There is a variety of ways, but I want to know how wide that variety is.

Alison Turnbull: I am not sure about the MC of S example, but approaches were made to individual teachers for the other ones that I described.

Colin Thomson: Just to echo what Jim Fleeting and Steve Paige said, it is all about partnerships

and getting down to a local level, seeing what works and making the connections with teachers, headteachers or directors of education. In rugby, we run the club development officer network, which has increased to its current number of 58. The network is based on a partnership approach between local clubs, local authorities and active schools. What makes the difference is local planning and connecting individuals so that, for example, an individual from a local sports club can make it easy for a school club to link with them.

That all takes time and it means that we should support the main workforce in all our sports in Scotland, who are the volunteers in sports clubs. If we are to grow activity, we need to recruit and support volunteers. There are many examples of volunteers doing good work, such as the Kilwinning example that Jim Fleeting described and Graham Coull's Stirling Tri Club. Volunteers do most of the work, but local authorities and national governing bodies sometimes make it difficult for them by surrounding them with bureaucracy. We must focus on supporting volunteers because they are the engine-room for providing sport to thousands of children and adults.

The Convener: We will hear from several more witnesses before Michael Matheson and Mary Scanlon come in. I remind witnesses to focus on how they got into schools and the diverse links and barriers involved.

Graeme Morrison: The MC of S is made up of more than 130 clubs and has 10,500 members. However, given the ageing demographic, the issue is how to get youngsters active and join clubs. We have therefore diversified slightly and set up a youth development working group that allows us to get access to schools and local authorities through active schools co-ordinators and headteachers in order to introduce outdoor activity-based sports to children. The main success since last September has been the start of the Quickdraw Climbing Club, which is run by parent volunteers who are supported by the MC of S wherever possible for coaching in the fundamentals. We hope to have about 450 participants at the eight commercial climbing walls. We work in partnership with private commercial organisations, local authorities and private individuals and volunteers. The Edinburgh branch of the Quickdraw Climbing Club did a sponsored climb and cake-bake at the Edinburgh international climbing arena in Ratho on Sunday and climbed the equivalent of three times the height of the Eiger, using children under the age of 12.

We found it reasonably easy to get access to schools once we offered the active schools co-ordinators coaching and training on the fundamental elements of our sport and helped them to understand it.

Kim Atkinson: The committee's inquiry is well named the pathways into sport inquiry because getting involved in sport is all about pathways. Assuming that we have cracked the nut of physical literacy—she said optimistically—the issue is the pathway to sustained involvement in sport. Clubs are at the heart of that, as Colin Thomson said. There are many examples of good school-club links that come from a club with a strong volunteer base.

Such clubs are well organised, they have bought into a player pathway—again, the kind of thing that the governing bodies have been working on—and they have the right kind of volunteers, who are confident, supported, skilled, trained, interested and willing to do the job. The support for clubs is a core part of that. If you do not have a strong club, you will not get that school-club link. As the forerunner to that, it is about what a club should be, what it should be working towards and how it can get that support.

That is where the partnership approach is vital. It is important that we, as governing bodies, work with the local authorities, the local sports councils, the active schools co-ordinators and others who provide funding for sport. There should be a minimum set of standards to which clubs should aspire. Although there will be specific standards for each sport, there will be a core set of minimum standards. A club should be a member of the governing body so that we know that it has appropriate procedures for such things as child protection and equity; that it has bought into a governing body pathway; that it is appropriately skilled in child protection, disclosure checks and so on; and that it is working with coaches who are appropriately trained and skilled to work at that level so that the people coming into the club get a quality experience that will make them want to come back. If that minimum set of standards is agreed to across the board by agencies working in sport, we will all start to work with the same clubs to ensure that they are getting the level of support that they need to create those effective school-club links.

You asked for examples of where our approach is not working. Sadly, there are many examples of where we are not working together. Some clubs get one kind of support from a governing body and another kind of support from a local authority. Such clubs might not be members of the governing body, yet funding is being provided from a local sports council to one club, from awards for all to a second, and from Sportmatch to a third. If they are not members of the governing body, we cannot guarantee that they have bought into the pathway into sport, that they have child protection and that they have the other key requirements. Those minimum standards are critical to ensuring that we are all working with the same clubs in the

same direction. Such standards would ensure that a person going to a club for the first time has a positive experience and will want to continue with lifelong participation. It would ensure that clubs are well placed to make the school-club link.

The Convener: Thank you. That was a different tack, but it was very interesting.

Hamish Grey: I do not want to underestimate the value of school sport—that is the relatively easy part, because it has a captive audience—but the key to sustained involvement is engagement with the clubs. That is where the lifelong involvement—in other words, involvement not just as youngsters but, hopefully, into adulthood—comes about. However, any analysis of where public funding goes shows that it is well and truly weighted towards the schools. I am not saying that that is wrong, but we do not invest enough in clubs and training.

Golf used to have virtually no presence in primary schools, or links with schools. Participation all took place through parents or others getting into a golf club. In the past five years, however, we have been fortunate to have had a programme called clubgolf up and running, which is off the back of the success of the Ryder cup. We have had sustained funding for a period from the Government, which we appreciate.

What has that achieved? From zero, five years ago, just over two thirds of nine-year-olds in Scotland—34,500 children—were involved last year, and the number is growing year on year. We target primary 5 because nine is the age when children can get into golf clubs and be meaningfully looked after. Equally, below that we believe that there should be the sort of generic programmes that we talked about earlier. More important, through our links between clubs and schools, we have 20 per cent take-up from schools to clubs. We will not go into a school until we have a local club that is ready, that has volunteers trained as coaches and that has a welcoming, appropriate environment for the youngsters.

My background is in sports development—you can tell by my accent that that has not necessarily been locally. Our sports development has been world class, but that has come about because we look at the club first, then go into the schools. We do not create expectation and excitement in youngsters, only for them to find that there is a glass ceiling and that they have nowhere to go after their experience at school. For us, that has worked well.

How have we done that? We have had sustained investment, and we have a network of co-ordinators who work with other resources, such as the active schools co-ordinators, to provide

teachers with training and the resource cards for a four-to-six-week modified golf programme in schools. It is not appropriate at the beginning, in a school environment, to have normal clubs and golf balls. It has to be flexible—it has to be possible to play indoors or outdoors, so it is a tennis ball-type arrangement, with coloured balls and plastic clubs. It is very safe and very appropriate.

11:00

At the end of that four-to-six-week taster, volunteers from the local club come to the school to meet the youngsters and invite them to come to the club for coaching. We are doing that nationwide. Such personal contact is one reason for the 20 per cent take-up. It was also reflected in a number of the examples that we have heard this morning.

Interestingly, like most sports throughout Scotland, there is an under-representation of females in our sport. Traditionally, at junior level, females make up 10 per cent of the total. However, of just under 9,000 youngsters who transferred from school programmes to structured club coaching, 27 per cent were girls. Again, different content and approaches have resulted in an improvement on what were unsatisfactory participation figures for our sport. The new approach is working well.

The key issue for clubs is volunteers. Colin Thomson touched on that. I press for further investment in this area. We have trained 1,500 volunteer coaches, without whom the programme would not work and would simply fall over. Greater investment in gaining, training and retaining volunteers is critical to the future of our sport and, I suggest, every sport that is represented in the room today. This is an area where the school-club link needs to be made.

Graham Cormack: Obviously, I support what previous speakers have said. I also have one or two extra issues to put on the table. I believe that the committee has heard about the setting up of the Drumnadrochit community club, in which shinty is heavily involved. Shinty is very much a community sport. Historically, shinty was the only sport in the village and the volunteers just got on with it, but times have changed.

I will focus on the deliverers—the people who deliver sport on the ground—including teachers and club volunteers. We have to make it easier for them to volunteer and help them to maximise their input. For example, if we want youngsters to make the step up from school to club, we need school-based clubs, teams, squads or whatever. Teachers need to be released from teaching and be given time to go out with sports groups. That is particularly vital in outlying areas where everything

cannot be done at 4 o'clock—a whole day may be needed for pupils to attend a sports event.

Clubs need to look at how they can make it easier for volunteers. Anything that the committee can do to push for change is welcome. One area that needs to be made easier is the disclosure check process. I have 14 disclosures—having to go through the process again and again wastes a lot of money and time. Sports equity also needs to be looked at. We need to do more to help the club volunteers who complete equity forms and returns. In addition, we need to look at the cost of insurance, which has risen. There is also the serious problem of the cost of transporting children from school to club, particularly in the outlying areas. If a youngster does not make the school bus at half past 3, they have very little chance of getting home without it costing them. Transport has to be looked at.

The final issue that I want to put on the table is coach education, which others have touched on. We must educate volunteers properly so that they can deliver quality sessions. We need to look at the cost to the volunteer of doing that and the time that is involved. On one level, the UK coaching certificate is brilliant in formalising coach education, but it costs a fortune and takes a lot of time. We have to look at that, too.

The Convener: Thank you.

Kevin Pringle (basketballscotland): I will keep my comments brief, as some of the points that I wanted to make have been touched on by others.

In basketball, we consider three key areas in looking at school-club links. The first is partnership, for which a proactive club is needed—colleagues have spoken about that—and a proactive school. When we talk about a proactive school, we generally mean a school that has a proactive person in it, who might be the PE teacher, the maths teacher, the headteacher or an active schools co-ordinator. That is what creates such links.

Another issue that arises is getting a qualified, high-quality coach to the school at the right time for the kids, which is where we find that the biggest challenge lies. Graham Cormack mentioned the need to catch the school bus. A coach needs to be provided at the right time.

A further factor that we have found contributes to successful links is having a facility at the school that can be used by the club so that the children will not be taken out of their comfort zone. That way, they are kept in a facility that is familiar to them, and sport in school extends directly into the club.

Erica Woolcombe: I am here to represent ice skating. I would like to speak about the barriers to

the use by clubs of local authority facilities. When it was open, Aberdeen ice rink was used by three active clubs. We felt that our efforts were obstructed by the local authorities. Since the rink shut, the active schools co-ordinator in Aberdeen has told me that, although many children wanted to skate, he could not organise that because the process was made too complicated for him.

Skating clubs suffer from having no funding. We are struggling to keep the sport going in the face of the closure of so many rinks. It would help if we could get children from school into skating lessons at quiet times during the day when the rinks, which use expensive lighting and heating, are empty but have to remain open. It would be much easier if we had some connection with all the various groups that have been mentioned.

The Convener: Have you tried to get schools involved?

Erica Woollcombe: Before the rink shut, we tried to introduce a number of initiatives that would have helped the rink to make a lot more money, apart from anything else, but we found that almost impossible to do. We were blocked by bureaucracy and by a lack of knowledge of skating as a sport on the part of the people with whom we were dealing, which made the process extremely difficult.

The Convener: Was the bureaucracy at the educational level—at school level?

Erica Woollcombe: No. We did not get to the school level. It was dealing with the council that was the problem.

Ashley Howard: We have probably not spent as much time as we should have working on club links, but the main reason for that—I apologise to my governing body colleagues, because they hear me say this a lot—is that our facilities are at capacity, which means that the clubs are at capacity and they cannot take on new members. Some of the clubs could double their membership tomorrow if they had more access to water. We live in a nation in which we are struggling to get people more active, but there are people waiting to get into swimming clubs. The same applies to learning to swim. We often read in the press that in some places there are two-year waiting lists for learn-to-swim programmes. That is true.

As regards club links, it would be possible to get buy-in for specialist teaching at primary level. If a school chose to offer swimming lessons—swimming is not an entitlement in Scotland—it would be a great tie-in to get the club coach, who is often trained at UKCC level, to come in and do those sessions on behalf of the school. If the school had a pool, a trade-off could be offered, whereby the club could have a morning or an after-school session in return for providing that expertise.

The Convener: I am happy for you to make that point, but we will come to the maximisation of facilities in the next session.

Ashley Howard: It ties in with the development of club links.

The Convener: After Graham Coull, we will hear from committee members, so that we can wrap up the session.

Graham Coull: I have an observation to make. It is interesting that many of the people on the panel find it quite easy to get access to schools, whether to primary schools or high schools. Perhaps that shows that headteachers are willing for their kids to be active but proves that they do not have sufficient time available for that. By having greater involvement with clubs or by getting their activity officers to have greater involvement with clubs, schools might be able to shift some of the burden away from teachers and on to local clubs that have the capacity and the willingness to help. That could at least be a stepping stone for introducing more kids to physical activity.

The Convener: My colleagues Michael Matheson, Mary Scanlon and Ian McKee have comments to make and further questions.

Michael Matheson: The comments that have been made on working with schools have largely focused on different sporting bodies making contact and trying to develop a relationship with education services or individual schools. There appears to be no structured approach at a local authority level to bringing together different national governing bodies that have clubs in local authority districts so that there can be co-ordinated work and national governing bodies can utilise their talents to develop local clubs close to schools that could do with some investment and support in developing their capacity.

Is the general picture throughout the country that local clubs and their volunteers or national governing bodies must go to local authorities and say, “Will you buy into a programme that we’re prepared to deliver in your schools”? Do local authorities not come to you and ask you to develop programmes with them?

The Convener: I will let members ask all their questions first; their questions can then be answered together. Michael Matheson has asked whether the initiative comes from you rather than from the local authorities with a structure. Do you have to go to them?

Mary Scanlon: Dr Ian McKee and I took evidence from active schools co-ordinators from throughout Scotland at sportscotland. I did not visit the University of Stirling with the committee, but I know that the university carried out research with Stirling Council that involved asking children in

one school who had encouraged them to join a sports club. The active schools co-ordinators had encouraged nobody to join a sports club in 2007 and 2 per cent to do so in 2008. Forgive me but, although I think that active schools co-ordinators do a wonderful job, I still have difficulties in understanding where they sit with PE teachers. Is it helpful to have two different entities, or does that lead to a lack of co-ordination or people passing the buck?

I have a question for the guy from Rangers Football Club about the 6,000 participants every week in that club's programme. Is such participation replicated, or can it be replicated, in all teams in Scotland? I represent the Highlands and Islands and know what the Camanachd Association is saying about travel. Are such participation opportunities available throughout Scotland or only around Ibrox? How can they be available throughout Scotland?

Ian McKee: Mary Scanlon has stolen my thunder. I was at the meeting that she mentioned, where we heard evidence that active schools co-ordinators are the best thing since sliced bread. We then heard evidence, which was almost casually presented, about children who had gone on to join sports clubs not having been encouraged by active schools co-ordinators to do so. What is the role of active schools co-ordinators? Could the money that is spent on employing them be better spent in other ways?

The Convener: I will repeat the questions that have been asked. Michael Matheson asked about the lack of structure at the local authority level, whether clubs rather than local authorities take the initiative, and whether what happens is appropriate. He will no doubt correct me if I have got that wrong.

What are active schools co-ordinators for? Mary Scanlon asked whether there is a conflict between active schools co-ordinators and PE teachers in schools as opposed to their working in co-ordination.

The other question, on the 6,000 participants in the Rangers programme, was for the Rangers representative. I do not know whether he can speak on behalf of other clubs in Scotland, but he will no doubt let us know whether other teams are promoting football and activities.

I ask people to keep their comments crisp.

11:15

Hamish Grey: I will be brief. On the national programme that we deliver, we have discussions with 32 local authorities, whose responses are highly variable. Some local authorities are brilliant, but we can see from the national figures that, in

other local authority areas, no children have been introduced to golf yet, despite the entreaties and discussions. The situation varies from year to year—priorities can change or there can be personnel changes—which is frustrating and difficult in trying to deliver a national programme, but we have to work with the situation as it is, and that is the way things are.

For those of us in golf, the active schools co-ordinators have been a useful conduit into teacher training, which we need for our introductory programme in schools. That is primarily what we use the active schools co-ordinators for. The link between schools and clubs is looked after by our own network and works well, although it can of course always work better. As I understand it, the active schools co-ordinators have not been involved in that.

On the role of the active schools co-ordinators, I make the more general point that school sport should be seen not as an end in itself but as a means to an end. If we enthuse young people at school and then stop our work, we will not produce the outcomes for the country's physical wellbeing that we seek in the longer term. Sometimes, I wonder whether the active schools co-ordinators are seen as an end in themselves rather than as part of a pathway.

Kim Atkinson: Mr Matheson's point was well made. Local authorities have a lot of structures, and the challenge is partly how they can be co-ordinated and how best we can work with them.

I will give a specific example that involves squash. A number of local authorities have priority sports. In one local authority area we have a strong club with a coach who would be delighted to work with schools. We told the local authority that we have a strong club that is full of volunteers who are trained to the right standards, but we were told, "You're not a priority sport, so we'll be working with somebody else." That is a negative example, and I do not think that that situation is replicated in a lot of places, but there is a need for balance where local authorities have priority sports. It is important to consider the local picture with other sports to ensure that we make the most of all the opportunities that exist.

We have another challenge with club development work. Some local authorities have a lot of squash courts and some do not, and the nature of squash and racquetball, for which we are also the governing body, is such that much of the work is done in designated facilities. Local authorities that have squash courts are interested in how we can work with them to get more people on to their courts and more income for them from that. Unfortunately, local authorities that do not own many squash courts are not particularly interested in developing the volunteer-run squash

clubs that might use the facilities that they do have.

Who is responsible for the participation agenda? Governing bodies are not resourced enough to do that work. Some 90 per cent of funding for sport goes to local authorities, so they pick up the participation agenda, but who picks it up for sports clubs that do not operate within local authority or trust-run facilities? There are some challenges with that. Do not get me wrong—there are places where things work really well—but if local authorities are responsible for participation, are they working in the community as a whole or only in their own facilities?

Much of the active schools work has been positive. We hear feedback that a lot of activity is taking place, and I hope that people are becoming more physically active. Trying to link that work with the clubs will involve a slight change from the way in which the structure works at present, but I imagine that the governing bodies will universally welcome that. It has certainly been welcomed in the groups that Colin Thomson mentioned earlier, which the Scottish Sports Association pulls together. We welcome the additional role that will be taken on, because it is important to get into the clubs if we are to ensure that there are appropriate pathways into sustainable sport.

Raymond Farrelly: To answer Michael Matheson's question about local authorities, the work is invariably driven by the delivery agencies, such as us and the governing bodies that are represented at today's meeting. I guess that that reflects the fact that sport is our priority. Consideration of whether the local authority has sport as one of its key priorities is part of the discussion.

On Mary Scanlon's question about other football clubs, as you might imagine, we have the best programme—[*Laughter.*]

Mary Scanlon: Of course.

The Convener: That is your salary earned for the year.

Raymond Farrelly: We have sizeable resources at our disposal, including 12 full-time staff and 80 part-time coaches. Our diverse programme tackles the themes of health, education, employability and safety, and we use football as a mechanism to tie in closely with community regeneration. That is one reason why we have been accepted and welcomed by the local authority. Our work is not just about football; it is about the broader impact of the football club and how it can influence young people—and older people, for that matter.

Our work is driven by results, too. For example, we have managed to have 6,000 kids participate

in our programme and increase their activity levels and we have improved the health of 40 to 60-year-old males who do not go to their general practitioner. There are statistics to prove that we have a great programme and tremendous, dedicated staff but, as I said earlier, none of it would be possible without the partnerships that we have built with the local authority, community regeneration agencies, community safety groups and so on.

The Convener: We will hear from three more witnesses and then have a short adjournment at 11.30, so that we can have our five minutes of physical exercise before returning to our chairs for the last session.

Graham Cormack: Local authorities have traditionally taken an individual approach, wanting to do their own thing in their own way, which they justify by saying that every authority is different. If we discuss having, for example, part-employed development staff with local authorities, they each want to set their own wage rate, grading and so on, so it is always difficult.

The active schools co-ordinators scheme is relatively young, and it naturally went first for some quick wins in terms of mass activity and getting as many things happening as possible. The school-club link was pushed a wee bit back because it was difficult, but to be fair to the active schools scheme I believe that it is now trying to address that link. For example, in the Highlands and in Argyll and Bute, the active schools managers have been proactive in working with us, other sports and the local authority in pulling together a partnership approach. In the Highlands, we hold what we call the Celtic games, in which golf, shinty and rugby do roadshows together. We do not fight each other for the kids but work with them in rotation, and we focus on the simple skills that we need to build.

There are good examples of that work, but more resource must go into secondary school co-ordinators: primary school co-ordinators have been successful, but secondaries lag behind because of lack of time and resource.

Jim Fleeting: I find the majority of local authorities to be excellent. We chapped their doors 15 years ago, and we now have 45 partnerships. I have tried hard to stay away from football in this meeting, but I will talk now about the Scottish Football Association. We have partnerships with all local authorities and have 45 guys out there: 15 are very good, 15 are average and 15 are such that I could kick their backsides every morning of the week because that is just the way life is—I will say the same thing about active schools co-ordinators. We work well and have great partnerships with the 32 local authorities, which are proactive.

Some active schools co-ordinators should be called unactive schools co-ordinators, and some do good work, but it is not joined up. For example, my son was not allowed to speak to the football development officer and had to go to his boss, who spoke to the local authority, which then spoke to the football development officer's boss. My son actually got into trouble and received a letter to say that he should not talk directly to sports development officers: "Ye cannae do it". I thought, "Help ma boab, what's happened here?" What happened was horrendous.

Again, each local authority's scheme is different and what they deliver is different. Did any of them ever ask the different sports what they want? I have tried to get active schools co-ordinators many times, but I have never been able to. Did anybody come and ask the Scottish Football Association "How could we help you with active schools co-ordinators?", or even "Can we help you?"

We are fortunate in that we get a McDonald's budget and a Bank of Scotland budget for school sports, but I genuinely believe that there should be an active schools co-ordinators budget for delivering what we deliver, which should be a programme not just for football but for other sports. The opportunity was there to do that; I offered it but got knocked back. My son tried, too, and nearly lost his job. The governing bodies try in some cases, but we do not get anywhere with some organisations, which is a difficult situation.

The Rangers programme is a fantastic example of agencies working together. I am involved in football, so it is scary for me to think "What is our responsibility?" We take on responsibility for social issues such as deprivation and diversion—we get everything thrown at us. Sadly, we have to take it most of the time because there is a wee pound or two behind it: we get kids in to play sport and we think that something will happen through that.

I am concerned about that situation because it happens too often. Governing bodies should exist just to deliver their sports. Yes, we should have a conscience for the nation and put some things on because of that, but it is sometimes too much responsibility. I therefore have mixed feelings about the overall situation. Local authorities are fantastic, but, for me, active schools co-ordinators are half and half—that is just how it is.

The Convener: Thank you and—

Mary Scanlon: Sorry, convener, can I—

The Convener: I will ask Mr Grahamslaw to speak, and then I will let you in.

Mary Scanlon: It is just that no one has answered my question. Perhaps I am asking the wrong audience, but I ask it because I truly do not

understand the issue. I want to know from the witnesses how the active schools co-ordinators' role sits with that of PE teachers.

The Convener: Can we return to that? Anybody can pop back in on that later.

Colin Grahamslaw: It has been said that the local authorities take 32 different approaches, and there is no consistency in how sport sits within local authorities: it sits in different departments with different responsibilities. The answer to the question on how we get involved and work with local authorities is: any way we can. That can mean that in one local authority we go into a school because a teacher is a member of a club, whereas in another local authority the active schools co-ordinator system works better and we go into schools in that way.

Scotland's biggest local authority is Glasgow City Council, but there are no facilities in Glasgow for curling and the local authority will not support it. Many schools in Glasgow curl, but they go to facilities outwith the Glasgow city boundary and receive no support from the council for that. It is done off the back of volunteer work and funding raised internally.

The sport of curling has little contact with PE staff because we work in facilities outwith schools. No school in Scotland has its own ice rink, so we curl in ice rinks outwith schools, which are outside PE staff's remit unless a PE teacher happens to be a curler. We probably have more contact with active schools co-ordinators, but even that is patchy. Most of the time it comes down to using a teacher with an interest in curling to drive a school's programme and encourage a school to be involved. At secondary school level, there is no curricular delivery of our sport, which is fully extracurricular. Our sport is delivered at school level through the interest of individual teachers who are linked to a club, with volunteers doing the coaching.

The Convener: In the dying minutes of this session, does anyone want to pick up on Mary Scanlon's question? Are active schools co-ordinators and PE teachers at war, or is everything in the garden rosy? Does the situation vary throughout Scotland?

Brent Deans: My perception is that not all active schools co-ordinators are PE teachers, and vice versa. The situation is very sketchy, and there is no forum for the governing body to interface with active schools co-ordinators.

The Convener: I will stop this session shortly, but the question is whether PE teachers feel that active schools co-ordinators intrude on their patch and are some kind of criticism of them rather than a helpful ancillary and a link to wider things.

Jim Fleeting: I will be quick. My son Barry's link with PE is excellent. He gets on very well with his cluster groups and the PE teachers, but I know that others do not get on so well.

The Convener: Okay. I will suspend proceedings to give us a five-minute break. As you know, the last session is about sports clubs, local sports facilities and the wider community. We have petitioners here, and I hope that they will get in first.

11:29

Meeting suspended.

11:39

On resuming—

The Convener: So far, the meeting has been extremely helpful and interesting. We move on to another nub of the inquiry—the use of local sports facilities by sports clubs and the wider community. In the first instance, we might consider whether or not there are facilities. The evidence that we heard about the waiting list for swimming tells us something about swimming pools.

We will begin with two members of the public who are representing themselves and who have a petition before the Parliament. I ask Miriam and Parisa Tadjali to tell us about their petition, which is to do with ice rinks.

Parisa Tadjali: I have put in a public petition about the closure of Ayrshire's skating facilities—they are being knocked down, but they are not being rebuilt anywhere else. I skate with Ayr Figure Skating Club. The club has a long waiting list, because lots of people already go to it. The rink is busy, so we cannot practise very well. If more people come, there will be no point in going, because it will be really busy.

The Convener: How much time do you have on the skating rink if it is so overcrowded?

Parisa Tadjali: It opens at about 4 o'clock and closes at about 8 o'clock. Because I go to school, I need to do my homework, so I need to go home early. When we go in for competitions, we have to practise hard, but we do not have time for that. If there are young children who are just learning, other people might be scared to do something in case they knock them down. So we do not have much time.

The Convener: Can you, or perhaps your mum, tell us whether the rink is used before 4 o'clock? Is it open at other times?

Parisa Tadjali: I do not think that it is—not to us, anyway.

Miriam Tadjali: The rink that we skate on is a private one that is owned by a curling club in Ayr. They have a big rink and a small one. The skaters tend to use the small rink, because the curlers are always curling. As well as our club, the Kyle Figure Skating Club uses the rink and it is also used for ice hockey. A lot of people use the rink, so we have fixed slots—we have access four times a week. In that time, we have to have the coaching sessions. All the children have coaches, because it is a private club.

Colin Grahamslaw: I will back that up by talking about ice facilities throughout Scotland. At peak times, the curling sheets in Scotland run at about 90 per cent capacity, so not a lot of time is available. We do little development work in Edinburgh simply because we have nowhere to put new people, as the rink is full. The Kinross rink runs at about 98 per cent capacity all day, every day. There is no point in doing development work because we cannot bring in new people.

The majority of rinks throughout Scotland face huge bills in the near future because of changes in European Union legislation that will outlaw, by 2014, the R22 gas that is used as a refrigerant in the majority of rinks throughout Scotland. Rinks face bills of hundreds of thousands of pounds to replace plant machinery in the coming years. There is a serious challenge coming for rinks throughout Scotland. We have lost several rinks in the past few years, including those at Letham Grange, Brora, Forest Hills and Gogar. The Aviemore rink closed and never reopened. The Linx ice arena, at the beach in Aberdeen, is closed at present but, fingers crossed, it will reopen. There are a large number of issues and a large number of rinks are at crisis point. A major issue is coming up for ice sports in Scotland.

Miriam Tadjali: Rinks in Ayrshire have been closed and not reopened. Some have been bulldozed for housing and nothing has been put in their place. We are fighting a lost cause.

The Convener: We will move on to sports amenities more generally.

11:45

Colin Rennie: My point is about facilities and their condition. A starting point for the problems with the lack of facilities is the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982, which is far too woolly, merely advising local authorities that they should have "adequate provision". I know of at least one local authority that meets only 50 per cent of pitch demand. In other words, 50 per cent of people who try to book a pitch do not get it. That is the situation at its worst. Some local authorities meet all their demand, but many are somewhere in between. Reconsideration of the 1982 act would be a starting point.

As a rule, sports facilities in Scotland are in a dreadful condition. An independent audit was commissioned by sportscotland two years ago. It found that two thirds of sports facilities were simply not fit for purpose. We have made a little progress since then, but our sports pitches are generally in a dreadful condition. Moreover, we are losing recreational space. Sportscotland publishes a report each year on pitches and their loss, and the reports show that pitch losses are static; but unfortunately the areas around the pitches are being developed at an alarming rate. That can force teams to train on the pitch, leading to its unplayability. We would get a fairer picture if figures were published on the loss of recreational space in general. The figures should not be confined simply to pitches.

Alison Turnbull: An integral part of sports facilities is the surrounding infrastructure. Again, we are back to how people can travel actively to and from facilities. There should be good routes and paths to allow people to get to sports facilities by walking or cycling. Physical activity should not be something that a person does just once a week; it should be something that is embedded in everyday life. Good infrastructure around sports facilities is crucial to that.

At the physical activity and health alliance conference yesterday, John Beattie said that, when he took over as chair of the physical activity task force, he had been doing sport once a week but was not reaching the minimum guideline targets for physical activity. He said that physical activity had to be more integrated into daily life and should not be just a weekly session at a sports facility. Ensuring that the infrastructure surrounding a facility is also amenable to physical activity will be fundamental to embedding such activity in daily life.

Lorna Sinclair: I am here in support of the petition lodged by Chris Gallacher on behalf of the campaigners trying to save Meadowbank. My background is in health promotion. I also have young children who use the facilities at Meadowbank, so I have a particular interest in it.

As I have already said, the east of Edinburgh has lost a number of facilities, such as those at Hawkhill playing fields and Powderhall. Decisions on the Pitz five-a-side complex in Portobello and on Leith Waterworld are pending. Meadowbank stadium has been home to previous Commonwealth games and is used by hundreds of sporting clubs, by schools, and by individuals of all ages. The stadium has been granted a stay of execution. It has been awarded funding, but the funding is confusing. There appear to be inconsistencies between, on the one hand, rhetoric that promotes active involvement in sport, and, on the other hand, policies that propose a

reduction in sports facilities within the City of Edinburgh Council area.

Decisions on Meadowbank sports stadium appear to be purposefully confusing and not in line with sport 21 values and principles. Previously, the public put up a fight to stop Meadowbank being demolished and relocated to Sighthill; and in May 2008, the City of Edinburgh Council voted to sell part of the land at Meadowbank and build a scaled-down sports centre. The sports centre is used for lots of different activities. If it were scaled down, a curtain would be put up so that other activities could go on at the same time as gymnastics, for example.

Meadowbank has been granted a stay of execution for the next six years; but what will be the cost to the quality of service that it provides in the meantime, and what will happen after six years? Those are questions that the save Meadowbank campaigners are asking.

The funding to keep Meadowbank running has been slashed from £11.9 million—the council's official recommendation for the amount that is needed to keep the facility operational—to an allocation of only £1.25 million. It appears that there is quite a lot of confusion over the figures. The Green councillors' leader, Alison Johnstone, stated:

"Delaying the project makes sense, cancelling the sale of the land would make even more sense. How can leaving £1.25m in the Meadowbank bank account be described as prudent?"

Graham Coull: We are fortunate in Stirling, in that we have a number of new facilities. They are fantastic to look at; it is just a pity that it is quite difficult to gain access to them. Our triathlon club is based at a fantastic new school that has a wonderful set of sports facilities. However, it is managed outwith the council, which—in its wisdom—managed to negotiate a service contract to gain access to the facilities from 9 o'clock in the morning to 10 pm at night from Monday to Friday.

There is no access to the swimming pool prior to 9 o'clock, and we cannot get inside the school on Saturday mornings; we have access to the pitches only. The time when the general public and clubs—the swimming clubs, for example, which operate in similar circumstances to ours—need to gain access to the facilities is, in many cases, before 9 o'clock, and after 6 o'clock when people have finished work and fed the kids.

It is fantastic that those facilities have been constructed; the concept is great. It is a community facility and we want the community to take part and use those facilities. However, the allocation of time must be managed by one central body, which should be the council, rather than private bodies that have different agendas. It is

great that we have those facilities in Stirling, but somebody needs to grab the hat and shake up the booking system and the access arrangements. New facilities will be built in many other areas during the next few years, but people should not think that just because there are new facilities they will have access to them—it is not as simple as that.

Ross Finnie: Are you saying that the contractor imposed the conditions, or that the council signed up to the conditions?

Graham Coull: The council signed up to the conditions.

Ross Finnie: So the council has control over the time?

Graham Coull: No, the council has control of core times.

Ross Finnie: But the council agreed to those times; it made a serious error.

Graham Coull: That is correct. We can get access before 8 o'clock in the morning—to the swimming pool, for example—but at a substantial commercial rate, which is prohibitive.

The Convener: Thank you for that clarification.

Kim Atkinson: If we want people to be as physically active as the recommendations suggest, it is important that we provide a diversity of activity. People might not always want to do the same thing for their five hours a week or whatever the current recommendation is. Diversity of activity is particularly important for young people, so that they try a range of sports and develop a range of skills, but that is true for people's participation in sport throughout their lives.

To embrace diversity of activity, we need to embrace diversity of facilities, which is a challenge with regard to squash. We repeatedly hear about two squash courts being knocked together to make one larger, multipurpose hall. The people who were using the facility next door—and no offence intended to those who do yoga, pilates or whatever—will continue to participate in their chosen activity and will get an extra class a week, but the people who want to play squash will lose the opportunity to do so.

We also need to embrace planning. One of our key requirements for squash is doubles courts. The only doubles squash courts in Scotland are in Shetland. There will be nine medal events for doubles squash in the Commonwealth games in 2010, and we have fantastic doubles players, but they currently have to travel to Shetland or down to England to train.

The Convener: No offence to Shetland.

Kim Atkinson: There are fantastic facilities in Shetland, and we recognise that squash facilities can be multi-use, but we should put in moveable walls, rather than knocking walls down. The courts can then be used for other things, and we can use them for doubles—there is a planning element involved.

Another challenge is how we monitor the use of facilities and report those statistics. The number of people who can fit into a main hall will vary depending on the activity for which it is used. Only two people—or four, if they are playing doubles—can get on to a squash court at any one time. If those two courts are knocked together, you might get 40 people in doing yoga or whatever, but if it is a dedicated facility, the statistics need to monitor people using it for its proper purpose. The fact that you can get more people into the facility for a different activity should not be reflected in the statistics. I am concerned about the way in which statistics can sometimes be presented.

To encourage more clubs to use facilities, we need to work with local authorities and trusts—where they own the facility—to give priority and discounted access to clubs. That will help clubs to afford to use facilities, especially when they are creating partnerships with local authorities and providing additional opportunities for the community. Again, it is about minimum standards. We do not want it to be just any club that gets access to a limited-use facility; we want it to be the clubs that are working hard, fulfilling their role in the pathway and providing quality opportunities for people.

Clubs that are working towards those standards and within the pathway should be supported. It should not be just any club using the facility, but a club that is receiving the support that it needs to provide additional support to its members and the community. The governing bodies, local authorities and sports councils must be working to support those clubs. One of the points made earlier is that there is no forum where everyone can sit down and talk. We, as governing bodies, talk regularly through the great work of the Scottish Sports Association but, as a group of agencies, we do not meet the local authorities or sports councils, nor do we have a way in to active schools. The landscape that Mr Matheson was talking about is quite muddy. How are we supposed to engage and ensure that we are working together and taking a consistent approach to ensure that we achieve “Reaching Higher”?

The Convener: Colin Thomson is next, then Erica Woollcombe.

Colin Thomson: Kim Atkinson said it all.

The Convener: That is what a woman is for.

Colin Thomson: However, I echo the point that, where we have strong clubs and active volunteers in the clubs, it does not matter what the sport is—those clubs should be supported as a priority through the local authority and the facilities that we have. If we are short of facilities, we should give priority to the people who are making a difference in recruiting people into sport and retaining them, and we should not base our priorities on income generation.

Erica Woolcombe: I have two issues to raise. Although I have done a lot of research during the past year, I am still rather bemused about why skating has been overlooked for funding, and why its two sporting bodies are not affiliated to sportscotland. Skating is very popular among girls and the Scottish Government has a key target to get teenage girls into sport. Girls want to go skating, but at the moment they have nowhere to do it. This summer, only one ice rink will be open on the east coast of Scotland, and the children who are already travelling will all have to pile into the same place, which we have to pay to hire.

My other issue is that the facilities that are left are really falling apart, whether they are privately owned, trust funded or however they are set up. Surely something could be done to arrest the decay of the past 20 or 30 years. Skating has always been a traditional sport in Scotland, along with curling, golf and football. More attention should be paid to it. We have European medallists in Edinburgh and we are not following up on that.

Graham Coull: I want to talk about some positive things that have happened in Stirling. People do not get the access that they would ideally like, but we were asked to become a chartered club in the Stirling area, which meant that the club had to meet a set of criteria. We get preferential rates and a lot of help, and we have reduced the admission prices for kids and family groups so that they can come along to different sessions.

I agree with what was said earlier. If you can help clubs to develop and reach a certain standard by developing access to facilities via those clubs, that is very helpful, as we in the Stirling area have found. That has helped us to develop the club. We now have 15 coaches, who have been funded through the different bodies within local authorities, which have helped us to get additional funding for races and sponsorship. We have been very well supported in developing our club, not just for elite-level athletes but for kids, parents and families.

12:00

Jackie Davidson: I want to echo some of the comments that have been made. I appreciate that

some rinks are falling apart, as Erica Woolcombe said, but she is lucky to have a roof over her facilities.

We currently travel down to Manchester and Newport with youngsters to access the track facilities. For our elite athlete programme going forward to Delhi 2010, we are looking at the feasibility of accessing track time in Holland, because of the increased demand for track time in the build-up to London 2012.

On accessing facilities and reviewing where facilities are across Scotland, some places and sports have to be prioritised. We could all build a case for our own sport, but we have to look at ways of sharing facilities and making them multi-use. Facilities are expensive to run. Local authorities build into their budgets not just building costs but on-costs and revenue costs. They might build a facility but then be unable to afford to run it year on year. Sports need to come together to say that we can make facilities work as multi-use facilities. We have immense natural resources for mountain biking and so on, but collectively we need to look at access, use and facility development.

Local authorities seem to think that every time we talk about a facility the first stop is sportscotland, but it is not. We come up against that all the time. People say, "With the backing of a governing body, we'll make a pitch to sportscotland." Sportscotland's budget is not a pot of endless cash. Local authorities have to take on board the fact that they have responsibility to provide facilities.

"Reaching Higher" clearly defines the role of each of the different agencies, from the Scottish Government to local authorities to the national governing bodies. The single outcome agreements have created a huge challenge for local authorities. We can relate very few of the targets in the SOAs to sport and health and activity, but 90 per cent of the budget for sport goes to local authorities. As someone said earlier, we are being asked to contribute to a range of social agendas, but we have absolutely no money to do the volume of work that we are being asked to do. We are all talking about the legacy from 2014. "Reaching Higher" asks us to deliver on a range of social issues as part of the legacy from the games. Please do not come and ask the governing bodies to deliver on all of that.

Graeme Morrison: The Mountaineering Council of Scotland has worked hard, principally with sportscotland, to generate three regional centres for climbing in Aberdeen, Inverness and Ratho, which has the biggest climbing wall in the world. We went to the eight major private climbing facilities in the country and built up a Scottish climbing wall network to increase participation and

access for people who wish to climb. The idea is to take climbers from indoors to the outdoors to increase their health, participation and lifelong learning. We are working hard with private enterprises to get more access. A number of councils, such as in Gairloch, Clydebank and Elgin, are putting facilities into community schools that will help to support participation in climbing. We are finding it productive to work with private enterprises to get access where it is not available elsewhere.

The Convener: You said that they are putting in facilities. What did you mean by that?

Graeme Morrison: If people want lottery funding or other funding for a climbing wall, they come through the MC of S for support. We can help them with funding to put a climbing facility in a school or gymnasium. It all goes back to our climbing walls policy and strategy development in 1990. We can assist schools and private and community facilities to gain funding to improve their facilities. That also guarantees that their facilities will be fit for purpose and will not become white elephants—for example, there are many climbing walls on the sides of high schools that will never be used again. With our involvement, we can ensure that facilities will be suitable and used for a long time to come.

The Convener: Thank you for that clarification.

Jim Fleeting: I back up Jackie Davidson when I say that it is embarrassing for our nation that the world champion cyclist has to go down to Manchester to train. That has been the case for years.

Handball is part of the Commonwealth games, but how many handball courts do we have in Scotland? We cannot play the sport of futsal in any games hall here because none is big enough. We can play it at the academies of Hearts or Rangers, but they do not have futsal floors. Facilities for other sports are also not available.

We are a small nation and we embarrass ourselves time after time. Of all the great things that we could be in the world, we are in the top 10 for drinking, eating and many other things. It is about time that we got ourselves in the top 10 for facilities, sport and young people leading the way in Scotland. We have to invest in that as quickly as possible.

Colin Grahamslaw: Having started with a negative story about an ice rink, I will try to offer a positive one. The curling rink in Aberdeen closed several years ago. The local curlers raised £2.4 million on top of a lottery grant to open a new facility up there. Just to show what a new facility can do, since the doors opened they have increased their membership by 25 per cent and brought new people into the sport because the rink

is a nice environment and a pleasant place to go. It has a nice bar and good changing rooms. You do not sit in a festering pit when changing to play the sport. That is what a quality facility can do—it can encourage people into a sport and to stay in it.

Brent Deans: I come back to the public-private funded facilities that have been constructed over the past several years. It is important that the committee works with local authorities to ensure that there is access to such facilities because, as Graham Coull said, there are great access problems. Some really top-class facilities are sitting empty because of the cost to get into them.

It is important that local authority facilities strategies reflect a mix of stock. Hockey is a high-end user of local authority facilities. There has been lots of pressure on the mix of facilities. Local authorities are only looking at income revenue from facilities and putting in different types of services that are not multisport, but if there was a mix of facilities stock, the needs of a range of sports could be met and there would be extra facilities for people to use.

I will make one request of the committee. At the moment, lots of local authorities are going through the single outcome agreement process—Jackie Davidson raised this a moment ago—but you will struggle to find physical activity reflected in any of the agreements. As a body of people that is looking at pathways into sport, it is critical that the committee looks at single outcome agreements to ensure that they reflect physical activity.

Kim Atkinson: I echo what Brent Deans and Jackie Davidson said about single outcome agreements. It is a concern for us as governing bodies, and I am sure for the committee, that 90 per cent of sports funding goes to local authorities, but they have no outcomes for delivering against “Reaching Higher”. How will we meet the targets in “Reaching Higher” and provide pathways into sport? That will be a real challenge if the governing bodies—which provide less than 10 per cent of the funding—are the only bodies that are assessed.

One of the challenges for squash is that sometimes a club and a facility are the same thing. Some clubs are based in local authority facilities, so they are clubs rather than facilities; however, some of our clubs are clubs in their own right—the pattern is mixed. When the club and the facility are the same thing, it is usually run by a voluntary body. Some clubs are private but, as we have said, they are usually run by a range of well-organised volunteers. In trying to get more people involved in clubs, I am looking for support from local authorities, local sports partnerships and the other agencies that are involved. It is not just about participation in sport and usage of their facilities; it is about their recognising the range of facilities that they have.

The club accreditation model has been mentioned. For me, that is the minimum standard. Some club accreditation programmes are run by local authorities and some are run by sports councils—it is completely different in different areas and there is no set standard. If a club meets a local authority standard, that does not mean that it meets the governing body standard. Standardising the club accreditation model would help a great deal, as it would enable us to support clubs that were reaching the standard regardless of whether they used local authority facilities, trust facilities, voluntary facilities or private facilities.

One of the other challenges in facilities provision involves looking at the facilities that the private sector—the David Lloyd and Next Generation centres—is providing that could provide additional benefits to other areas of the community. That is a challenge, and I do not know who is picking that up or brokering opportunities for us to discuss that.

The Convener: Thanks. Do any committee members want to come in?

Mary Scanlon: I am not surprised to hear about the doubles squash court in Shetland. Shetland probably has the best facilities in the whole of Scotland, because the council was wise enough to establish a Shetland oil fund when Sullom Voe was set up.

The Convener: Are you moving across the chamber to join us, Mary?

Mary Scanlon: Shetland Islands councillors are generally independent councillors. I say that because my Labour colleagues are not here today. When Sullom Voe was set up, the council acted very wisely, and people who live in Shetland have access to facilities that are second to none. In my opinion, they are incomparable.

I want to return to a point that Colin Rennie made. There is a limited amount that politicians can do. We cannot interfere with the running of private clubs—that is not our say. However, Colin made the point that we could reconsider the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982. Falkirk Council has taken the decision that any new school in its area must have a swimming pool, but Glasgow City Council has decided that every new school in its area will not have a swimming pool. You were a politician in Dundee, Colin. Could the 1982 act be amended to ensure that people are not clambering for facilities and money? How can we ensure that councils have a stronger statutory responsibility to provide facilities and access to them rather than always being second best and having people clamber around?

The Convener: I will call Colin Rennie to answer that question about possible amendment of the 1982 act after Michael Matheson has asked his questions.

Michael Matheson: I am often struck by the difficulties that clubs experience not only in accessing school estate facilities but in physically basing themselves within school facilities. Are such difficulties experienced throughout the country or have some of your clubs been able to base themselves within schools, creating direct links between the schools and the clubs and maximising the use of the school estate outwith normal school hours?

Colin Rennie: Amendment of the 1982 act might help. It provides for—if I recall the exact phrase—"adequate sports facilities", which is meaningless. We know from experience throughout the country that some local authorities are very good at providing facilities and some are very poor. Amending the legislation is worth considering. Were the Parliament to amend the 1982 act so that it became prescriptive about what is required, that provision would need to be monitored.

As I said earlier, school premises regulations dictate what sporting and outdoor provision there ought to be, but they are simply being ignored by some local authorities, which are not meeting the terms of the regulations. I have raised the issue with Scottish Government staff, but to no avail, because they pass it back to the local authorities. I also raised the issue with Audit Scotland and asked it to examine whether local authorities are meeting their requirements, but it has not tackled the issue. When we have legislation, we must ensure that it is implemented.

12:15

The Convener: Thank you for drawing our attention to that point.

I think that Michael Matheson's point is about clubs making use of school facilities, rather than schools making use of club facilities. Does Brent Deans want to come in on that point?

Michael Matheson: It is about clubs being based in schools.

The Convener: I beg your pardon.

Brent Deans: I have an example of a good partnership. A hockey club is based at Currie community high school, and it uses both the outdoor and indoor facilities. It has also used the school for meeting rooms and it has a lot of publications in the school.

A poor example is that we used to have a former pupil club based at Graeme high in Falkirk. The school was refurbished—it was public-private funded—and the club had to relocate because of the cost of using the facilities.

Michael Matheson: I will clarify the situation at Graeme high. The school was rebuilt—it was a private finance initiative school. The four new schools that are being built are all not-for-profit schools to avoid that problem.

The Convener: Have any of the clubs tried to use free and available school facilities but been unable to do so for reasons other than cost? For example, have headteachers objected to people coming in after hours?

Graham Coull: On Michael Matheson's point about basing clubs in schools, we have some fantastic facilities in Stirling. Although not all the new schools have swimming facilities, most do. We wanted to base ourselves at a school. We have sessions six days a week, sometimes twice a day, and they are structured sessions delivered by qualified coaching staff and funded through local authorities. However, we have found that we cannot get access after 8 o'clock in the morning, which can sometimes be an issue if we want to pick up kit and store equipment, and we have found it difficult to get access at weekends.

We really want to base ourselves at the school, because we have found in the length of time that we have been based there—we move to the new Peak centre in April, which is another wonderful sporting facility that has been built in the Stirling area—that there is cross-fertilisation as kids show an interest and want to come along and take part in our sports. They do not necessarily have to do triathlon as a sport; we are a multi-sports club. There are swimming, running, cycling, circuit training and turbo spin sessions. We want to base ourselves at the school, but unfortunately we cannot. We are moving certain sessions to the new Peak centre facility, which is great. Unfortunately, we cannot base other parts of our sport there because of the cost, so we will have to use local community halls, for example. Storage is probably the single issue that prevents us from being based at a school. If we strip out costs and so on, it is the storage of equipment that is the problem. If every club wanted to be based at a local school, there would not be the storage space for their equipment.

The Convener: Unless anyone wants to make any other comments, we can bring the evidence session to an end. When I say that, hands usually go up to indicate that people want to speak—you see, it never fails.

Erica Woollcombe: I have a brief comment. I would like to ask what sports clubs can do in the face of local authorities shutting down all their sports facilities for budgetary reasons. You can do very little to promote sport if you have nowhere to do it.

The Convener: You have got that on the record. You will understand that we will not answer that question now, but we will incorporate it in our report. The report will be online and you will be able to see it in due course. We will, of course, have ministers in front of us who will answer many of the questions that you have put to us and address many of the issues that you have raised. Our report will include the minister's evidence and the committee will produce conclusions and recommendations. If the committee wishes, we will bid to debate the matter in Parliament.

This is an extremely interesting issue and the fact that health and sport are now linked has brought sport up the agenda. If I may say so, when sport was part of the culture brief, its requirements were not so obvious—Michael Matheson is smiling at me; I hope that it is a friendly smile.

I thank you all for attending the meeting. Your evidence has been extremely interesting and the interaction between the various organisations has been useful—a lot of common ground has been explored.

We have the extraordinary generosity—I do not mean in the sense of riches galore—of a buffet outside. Once we have closed the meeting, you are welcome to share it and discuss matters informally with committee members.

Meeting closed at 12:21.

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