

ENTERPRISE AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 13 March 2007

Session 2

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ENTERPRISE AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

6th Meeting 2007, Session 2

CONVENER

*Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green)
*Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab)
*Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
*Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
*Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab)
*Mr Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green)
Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD)
Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP)
Margaret Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

David Arnott (Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils)
Professor John Bachtler (University of Strathclyde)
Julia Bracewell (sportsScotland)
Paul Bush (EventScotland)
Professor Fred Coalter (University of Stirling)
Dr Sara Davies (University of Strathclyde)
Dougie Donnelly (Scottish Institute of Sport)
Steven Grimmond (Fife Council)
Gavin Hastings (Platinum One (Scotland))
Gavin Macleod (Scottish Disability Sport)
Pat Morrison (Scottish Executive Education Department)
Ian Reid (Scottish Sports Futures)
Chris Robison (Scottish Sports Association)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Stephen Imrie

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Douglas Thornton

ASSISTANT CLERK

Nick Hawthorne

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

Scottish Parliament

Enterprise and Culture Committee

Tuesday 13 March 2007

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 13:50*]

Sport 21 and Sports Policy

The Convener (Alex Neil): I welcome everybody to the sixth meeting of the Enterprise and Culture Committee in 2007, which is the last full meeting of the committee apart from our meeting next week to deal with some statutory instruments. I ask everybody to switch off their mobile phones—not just to switch them to silent—as they interfere with the broadcasting system. Apologies have been received from Richard Baker, who will be late.

Item 1 is sport 21, the national strategy for sport in Scotland, and sports policy. As I have said to some of our guests, the purpose today is to have a free-ranging and wide discussion about the future of sport in Scotland, with a particular view as to what the future Scottish Executive and the Parliament can do to develop further all our sports. It is not an academic discussion. The discussion will be recorded verbatim and will be a kind of starter for 10 for the future development of sports policy. It will be taken forward after the election. No doubt, there will be some sport during the election, but that may be of a different nature.

I ask everybody round the table to introduce themselves before we kick off. A briefing paper has been provided by the Scottish Parliament information centre. If anyone does not have a copy of that, they should put their hand up and the clerks will ensure that they get a copy. I will start on my right wing, with Christine May.

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): I am the member of the Scottish Parliament for Central Fife.

Pat Morrison (Scottish Executive Education Department): I work in the sports division of the Executive. My responsibilities include the new sports strategy and the participation end of sport. There are two other teams in the sports division, which focus on the sponsorship of sportscotland, the elite end of sport, London 2012 and the Glasgow Commonwealth games bid. I can cover some aspects of those today, but they are not my policy area. I am here not as a substitute for the minister but to cover the Executive's interests.

Professor Fred Coalter (University of Stirling): I am professor of sports policy at the University of Stirling.

Julia Bracewell (sportscotland): I am the chair of sportscotland and of the Scottish steering group for the 2012 Olympics.

Chris Robison (Scottish Sports Association): I am the policy director of the Scottish Sports Association, which is the umbrella body for governing bodies of sport in Scotland.

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): I am an MSP for North East Scotland.

Ian Reid (Scottish Sports Futures): I am the founder of the Scottish Sports Futures charity. In the interest of clarity, I state also that I own part of the Scottish Rocks professional basketball team. Currently, we are running twilight basketball in the 12 areas of Scotland that are worst affected by violent crime and drug dealing.

Gavin Macleod (Scottish Disability Sport): I am the chief executive officer of Scottish Disability Sport.

Paul Bush (EventScotland): I am the deputy chief executive of EventScotland.

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): I am the MSP for Clydesdale.

David Arnott (Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils): I am the administrator of the Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils. Our membership consists of 69 local sports councils and local authorities in Scotland.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am an MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife.

Gavin Hastings (Platinum One (Scotland)): I am the chairman of Platinum One (Scotland), which is a sports and events marketing agency.

Mr Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP): I am an MSP for the West of Scotland.

Steven Grimmond (Fife Council): I am the head of community services at Fife Council, which covers responsibility for sport. I am also a member of the board of sportscotland.

Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): I am the MSP for Edinburgh East and Musselburgh.

Dougie Donnelly (Scottish Institute of Sport): I am the chairman of the Scottish Institute of Sport and of the Commonwealth Games (Scotland) Endowment Fund. In my day job, I am a sports broadcaster.

The Convener: We also have with us reporters from the official report, which is the equivalent of Hansard; Stephen Imrie and his clerking team;

and Stephen Herbert, from SPICe. The recording of the meeting is controlled from the obvious place, at the end of the table.

As everybody knows, the review of the sport 21 strategy, "Reaching Higher: Building on the Success of Sport 21", was published, eventually, on 8 March. Much of our discussion will probably be about how to take that forward and what our priorities are.

I invite Julia Bracewell to kick off the discussion by talking about what she sees as the main priority areas. In particular, I invite her to talk about where the Parliament and a future Executive can be of more assistance in ensuring that we achieve what we are capable of achieving.

Julia Bracewell: "Reaching Higher" is a Scottish Executive document, and I will defer to Pat Morrison on the Executive's priorities. The document clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Executive, sportscotland, local authorities, sporting organisations and others, which were missing from the previous sport 21 strategy, and it introduces accountability and a way of monitoring results. That is exceedingly welcome.

The two priorities of sportscotland as a national agency for sport are clear. They are to increase participation in sport throughout Scotland, including in communities that have been hard to reach in the past, and to improve the performance levels of our top athletes and people further down the performance pathway, to enable them to perform as well as they can.

"Reaching Higher" shows in detail that sport matters for many agendas. We are not talking about sport for sport's sake—sport can help to deliver a healthy nation and cohesive, strong and vibrant communities. I particularly welcome the role that "Reaching Higher" shows that sport can play in helping to deliver other agendas.

The Convener: I should draw everybody's attention to page 12 of the SPICe briefing, which gives the possible main themes for us to tackle. Anybody who wants to speak should put up their hand. I will try to bring in as many people as I can.

Dougie Donnelly sees much of what happens outside Scotland, and he can probably compare what happens in Scotland with what happens in the rest of the United Kingdom and internationally. I invite him to tell us where we are going wrong or where we must do more to do more right.

Dougie Donnelly: I congratulate everyone who was involved in producing "Reaching Higher", which is an impressive and excellent piece of work, and I welcome the Executive's closer involvement with sport. My only possible issue with the document is that high-performance sport

has a fairly low profile in it, although that may not be a problem given what the document aimed to achieve. People will not be surprised to hear me claim that high-performance sport presents a slightly different challenge.

A far-sighted minister for sport and a far-sighted chair of sportscotland set up the Scottish Institute of Sport some years ago. They deliberately set it up not to be simply a department of sportscotland; instead, they wanted it to be different and separate from sportscotland to a degree, with a separate chairman and board of directors and the involvement of high-profile and well-qualified people, such as Ian McGeechan, Frank Dick, Craig Brown and former athletes Alison Ramsay and Sir Bill Gammell. It is important to accept that top sportspeople are different. They are a little obsessive, selfish and self-centred and we must accept that we must treat them a little differently.

I am concerned that, because of the understandable concentration on the challenges ahead in London 2012 and Glasgow 2014—assuming that Glasgow wins the bid—we have almost forgotten that there will be Olympic games in less than 18 months' time in Beijing and winter Olympics and Commonwealth games in 2010, which are certainly a priority for the Scottish Institute of Sport. We must perform well in those games before we even think about justifying ourselves in 2012.

The numbers that are involved can be a little intimidating. Everyone is intent on producing the biggest Scottish team that can be produced in 2014 and the biggest Scottish representation on a Great Britain team in 2012, as well as the most successful team then, but we must find the numbers to achieve those aims. I will give one statistic. If we are looking for a team of 350 Scots for the 2014 event, we must assume that there will be around 100 track and field athletes then. However, we had 28 track and field athletes in Melbourne. Therefore, we must find 72 new track and field athletes. That is not the job of the Scottish Institute of Sport, which deals with elite sport and performance sport. The governing bodies have a big job on their hands, with help from all of us, to produce those numbers of people.

The nightmare scenario is a Scottish Commonwealth games team that is not successful in its own country, a GB Olympic team in 2012 without a proportionate number of Scots and, heaven forbid, a Scottish Ryder cup in 2014 without a Scot on the team. Those issues are all a priority for the institute as it looks at the way ahead for elite sport.

14:00

The Convener: What do we need to do to get the extra athletes we will need?

Dougie Donnelly: The governing bodies need to be given a lot of support because that is principally their responsibility, along with the partner organisations such as sportscotland and the institute. Talent identification and the beginning of the performance pathway are down to the governing bodies, with the support of sportscotland, the local authorities and all the other agencies.

The Convener: Are the governing bodies getting the support that they need?

Julia Bracewell: We have to do much more work on that. To get athletes coming through in the required numbers, we have to start investing much further down the pathway in athletes and, most important, in their coaches. In performance sport in Scotland in the past, athletes have been looked after incredibly well once we have got them to the institute, but they need the same quality of coaching and support earlier in their careers to get them up to that level. If they do not get it, we will have only 28 athletes of the right calibre to compete at Glasgow in 2014, as opposed to having a big pyramid of athletes that will give us the 100 track and field athletes to which Dougie Donnelly referred. There needs to be more investment further down the performance pathway than has been possible in the past.

Chris Robison: I echo that. It is crucial that the governing bodies ensure that there is funding across the spectrum. I am little bit more confident; I think that we will have some elite athletes for 2012 and 2014. However, I think that the great danger is that we will have none after then because all the money will have been spent on the gifted few.

The message that came out of a meeting of chairs of governing bodies this morning was that they are incredibly frustrated. I was trying to point out to them that it is not all that bad, but they are still frustrated over a few issues to do with funding all the way down the chain and facilities—we might discuss access to and quality of facilities later. Also, to broaden the agenda, they are frustrated that, unfortunately, our young children are just not fit for sport. That is a massive issue. If there is one issue that the Executive and Parliament need to address, it is physical activity and sport in schools. We are fully aware that that will not be easy but, unless we grip that challenge, we are doomed.

Professor Coalter: I will follow on from what Chris Robison was saying about school sport. There is a danger in confusing the physical activity agenda and the sport agenda, and school sport

suffers because of that. The issue of school sport and introducing young people to a competitive environment very early on is important. Not so long ago, I did an interview with some coaches who said that young people are not being introduced to the intensely competitive environment early enough, with the result that when they transfer to competitive and international matches, they have to catch up. During the past 10 years, we have been concerned about competition in school sports and how it is not politically correct. That has been compounded with the physical activity agenda. We need to concentrate more systematically on school sport, its relationship with governing bodies and the development pathway. "Reaching Higher" confuses those points.

If I may make a political point, there is a division within Government in that responsibility for school sport lies in one department and that for sport lies in another. I just wonder whether that is part of the problem.

The Convener: Do you think that it is?

Professor Coalter: The gossip that I hear says that it is. One of the problems is that schools now intensely emphasise academic achievement but, if I may be academic for a moment, all the evidence shows that increased physical education and sport do not detract from academic performance. They do not contribute to it, but they certainly do not detract from it. So the old fears that giving extra time to PE and sport would take away from academic achievement are wrong. I have other things to say about evidence, but I will come back to those later.

Christine May: The discussion has dealt with both the issues that I wanted to raise. Julia Bracewell mentioned the clarity of "Reaching Higher" on where the various top-end responsibilities lie. I would be interested to hear whether everyone agrees that that is helpful and whether other parties—not necessarily the senior bodies identified in that document—need to do some streamlining on governance issues.

The second issue goes back to what Fred Coalter has just said, which is about getting children active through the active schools programme and the extent to which that is helping them to get fit. I tend to agree with what has been said about whether it is right to separate sport from physical activity, but if we want to get children active, we cannot force everyone to do sport. Some of the children who become active may well go into sport.

Julia Bracewell: There is a danger of sport being asked to deliver a health agenda. What we need in sport is for the children to be fit; in addition, they must have a range of physical skills,

such as balance and co-ordination. The active schools programme is a crucial first milestone in getting children fit, getting them back into doing things in the playground and getting them to enjoy being active. The issue for sport is how we build on that programme, which in its first few years has been immensely successful at getting children more active and involving them in more activities, and introduce them to sports safely. Good coaching is necessary if they are to come through and enjoy sport.

When we give young people the right sports experience, our aim is not necessarily to help them to come through as sports stars; they might come through as volunteers, coaches or referees. We need a group of people to come through but, unless we engender a love of sport early on during children's education, we will always be playing catch-up later. Fred Coalter is right about that. I also agree with what he said about the competition structure. Some of the world's most successful countries in top-level sport have highly successful competition structures right the way through at school level.

Karen Gillon: I am slightly depressed that we are still talking about many of the same issues that we were talking about four years ago and that not much progress has been made. I will say what Fred Coalter might have been too polite to say: the problem is that the responsibility for school sport lies with the Scottish Executive Education Department, which does not buy into the sport agenda. That has become a barrier, which we need to sort out. We have been banging on about that for the past six years, since the Education, Culture and Sport Committee produced its report on sport in schools.

Julia Bracewell is right that the health and education agenda should be delivering for sport and that it should not be the other way round. We should be delivering fit, active and healthy young people who participate in physical activity from the earliest age and who go on to engage in sport. Thereafter, it is for sports' governing bodies to provide them with opportunities.

I know that some young folk are doing well with my local sports council. How do we move them on and get them into the elite sports? Given all the challenges that they will face as they turn 14, 15 and 16, how can we support them so that they will be ready for 2012 and 2014? Right now, they want to take part in the Olympics and the Commonwealth games and believe that they will be able to; those events represent positive opportunities for them. How do we support them through the many challenges, both academic and personal, that they will face as they grow up?

My other question is for Pat Morrison. How do we stop the constant grind, whereby sport does

not get its proper place in school education and school sport is not taken seriously? Many good activities are going on, but we are not making the links that we should be making. Sport is not being taken seriously in the curriculum. The objective is to provide two hours of PE a week, but that should be the minimum.

I disagree with Fred Coalter—I believe that sport brings more to the educational agenda than we give it credit for. I visited a specialist sports college in Manchester, where I saw young people improving their learning across the curriculum because they were learning about things that they were interested in; they were learning their maths from the back page rather than from the front page. We need to be more effective in selling the educational opportunities that sport offers, as well as everything else that it provides.

Steven Grimmond: I will pick up on some of Karen Gillon's points and comment on what Julia Bracewell and Fred Coalter said. The strategy's identification of roles and responsibilities is a welcome and positive step. The strategy is clear about local government's role in growing participation. The biggest challenge is developing the linking pathways that will be required if we are successful in growing participation, as those are the most fragile parts of the system. Growing participation is a big ask in itself—for local government, the participation agenda is a broad one and is about physical activity rather than sport per se. However, assuming that we are successful in that, we need to consider the pathways for feeding young athletes into the area institutes and ultimately the national institute, as those are still fragile.

A couple of sports partnership pilots are operating—one is in Fife, where I work, and the other is in central Scotland. The pilots are trying to bridge a gap. We have a mushrooming of local opportunities for participation, but we need to consider how we capture young people and feed them into the institutes. At present, concerns exist about the level of athlete that is being delivered, even to the area institutes. The pilots are working on how we ensure that kids can fulfil their potential. Some kids go into institutes but then fall out again and are lost to sport completely. There is work to be done on that. The pilots provide an interesting opportunity to explore the landscape, which we must do because we have not got the issue sorted yet.

David Arnott: We appreciated the opportunity to participate in the review process—we worked closely with Chris Robison on that. I was interested in what Dougie Donnelly said. My concern is that, although the document identifies local sports councils as having an important role—they are one of the first levels at which youngsters

of potential are identified, monitored and developed and can then proceed to the national governing bodies—the councils and their affiliated clubs have a difficulty with finance. The savings—as a local councillor, I use that term advisedly—are having a drastic effect on sport and recreation in local government. The savings are being transmitted down and are affecting the abilities of councils such as Steve Grimmond's to support local sports councils and clubs.

If the Executive and sportscotland are serious about developing sport at grass-roots level, they must consider seriously how to maintain and develop the opportunity that we have. The opportunity is there. I have seen youngsters come into a local sports council, develop through their club and the sports council's select squad development programme and then go into a national governing body. We should not miss that opportunity.

I agree whole-heartedly that alliances must be developed. We recently finished a complete review of the operations of the Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils and local sports councils. One recommendation, which was approved at our recent annual general meeting, was that SALSC should enter into negotiations with a view to developing a strategic alliance with the Scottish Sports Association, the Scottish Schoolsport Federation, Scottish Disability Sport and Scottish Universities Sport. We want to talk to one another to find out how we can achieve what is best for sport in Scotland.

Shiona Baird: I have a question that follows on from Karen Gillon's point. I feel that the whole perception of sport or even just physical activity is being undermined, particularly at local government level, because of the pressures to allow development on sports and playing fields and the downgrading of the importance of green spaces. There is a culture that almost tells people that physical activity and getting out are not as important as they ought to be. Does that situation influence the perception of sport?

The other aspect is that so much of the basic physical infrastructure is local government funded, which I know is creating problems. It becomes a question of whether the sports facilities are there and how much they cost. That appears to be a barrier to involving young people, particularly those who have left school, keeping them fit and active and allowing them to move on if they so desire.

14:15

The Convener: I will give the professionals time to respond to all those points. I am trying to get everybody in to start with.

Murdo Fraser: My point is not dissimilar to the one that Shiona Baird just made. I was interested in the discussion about sport in schools. My wife is a schoolteacher. Although I think that sport in schools is great, it is competing with a congested curriculum in most schools, which means that it is difficult to lever in more time for it. There is scope to develop sport in school, but there is much more scope to develop it out of school.

As Shiona Baird said, the lack of infrastructure is a barrier. I can think of countless places in the area that I represent where there is a lack of good, all-weather facilities. I disagree with Shiona Baird, because I do not think that there is a desperate lack of grass pitches—although there is in some places. The problem, given our increasingly wet climate, is the lack of all-weather surfaces on which youngsters can play late into the evening and at all times of year. I can think of examples of sports clubs, whether football, rugby or hockey, which are competing for congested facilities. Demand is just not being met.

There is also an issue with clubs that are run by adult volunteers. The way in which society has changed over the past five to 10 years means that adults are now reluctant to volunteer to work in such clubs as they once did. The level of bureaucracy in the system of disclosure checking, which is essential and well intentioned, puts barriers in the way of adults who otherwise would have volunteered. The time that it can take to get a response might cause them to lose interest.

I would be interested to hear opinions on what more the Government can do about infrastructure and to smooth the way to encourage adults who are keen to volunteer to do so.

Ian Reid: Thank you for inviting me to attend. "Reaching Higher" is an excellent report, but there are ways in which it could be strengthened.

Our organisation is a charity and we operate largely under the radar. We target at-risk youth and visit challenging neighbourhoods on Friday and Saturday nights. We provide education through sports programmes. In addition to the sport, which engages, we provide an educational message on health, lifestyle or citizenship. An enormous amount of encouraging work is being carried out at street level by organisations that are not represented around the table. There is the potential to use the report as a catalyst for the statutory sports authorities to start working with the third sector.

We cannot provide Dougie Donnelly's 72 elite athletes, but we can broaden the base and involve disfranchised youth in sport. Over the summer, we visited at least a dozen outdoor facilities on Friday nights and on each occasion there were young people drinking underage, but on each occasion

they were prepared to put the drink to one side to get involved in sport. We would like there to be more activity at street level. A raft of young people out there could be engaged through sport. Sport is enormously powerful.

Our strongest links and most of our funding come through partnership drugs initiatives, the Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland and Sport Relief funding to combat territorialism. We can get tongs and skinheads in the same place at the same time without violence, because they like sport. People can cross territorial divides to get to where they want to be.

Our strongest links with the Executive are with the Justice Department—we have been funded through the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002—rather than with those responsible for sport, which is wrong.

Chris Robison: The debate has moved on a bit, but I come back to the partnerships and the points that have been made about the pathway from participation to elite. That is crucial, not only in providing the elite athletes of the future but in giving people the opportunity to be the best that they can be. The sports partnerships are an excellent starting point. They are bringing local authorities and governing bodies together, which has to be a strong point. None of us can do this on our own. Governing bodies very much rely on local authorities and their facilities. The local authorities have an awful lot to offer, as do the universities. Indeed, many of the area institutes are located at university sites. The partnerships are crucial.

The debate about getting volunteers involved in sport is fascinating. We have to be careful about how legislation affects volunteers, but the research suggests that volunteers are still coming forward. However, they need support once they are in the role. It is not fair to ask a volunteer to become a coach and then ask them to pay £200 or £300 to do a coaching course. That is where the financial support for volunteers comes in. There are people who want to volunteer, but they just need a slightly different form of support to enable them to do that.

Susan Deacon: This is an interesting discussion but, to be slightly provocative for a moment, it feels as if we are perhaps not being as challenging, either with ourselves or with one another, as we could or should be. I will throw a few thoughts into the melting pot for others to shoot down as they see fit. I have heard a lot today about what a good document “Reaching Higher” is, but that is what it is—a document.

Like Karen Gillon, I want to hear more about what has changed, what has worked and what has improved, and not just over the past four years. Eight years ago, when I was a campaigns spokesperson for the Labour Party during the first

elections to the Scottish Parliament, I was involved in discussions about sport 21, for example, and our aspirations post-devolution. I am sorry, but the rhetoric has not changed much. That is not necessarily a bad thing—in a sense, it is a good thing that people are united around a set of aspirations, but we have to do more to get behind what stands in the way of our reaching them. That is neither an explicit nor an implied criticism of Government per se; it is just that we need to drill deeper into why we sometimes all sign up to the same direction of travel but nothing happens.

I raise two specific issues in that regard. I hope that no one is offended by what I am about to say, but I want to prompt debate and hold up a mirror to today's discussion. People who are not involved in policy making or in the kind of conversations that we are all used to having could be forgiven for not hearing an awful lot about the human reality faced by them, their communities, schools, families, parents and so on. All of us—I am no better or worse than anyone else in this respect—lapse into discussions about the sports agenda, the health agenda, the physical activity agenda and the education agenda. It strikes me that there is some basic, commonsense stuff here about what constitutes happy, healthy kids and communities—well-being, in the broadest sense. We need to give youngsters in particular a whole host of different opportunities, not just in sport—there is a parallel here with activities such as drama, as well as mainstream academic activities and so on. We may be reinforcing the problems by thinking about the issues in silos or under agendas, rather than thinking about the human dimension.

I wonder whether, rather than reinventing strategies and continually finessing the analysis, we would be better having a hard-edged but practical conversation about what can be done to free up local activity, participation and involvement. Some of that can be driven from the top down, but an awful lot of it is about coming in behind what happens locally. All of us have seen absolutely transformational activities taking place around us, and I worry that we do not often enough ask the people who are leading those activities, “What could or should be done—or not be done—to enable you to do more and better?”

My final point is on the issue of top performance, which Dougie Donnelly mentioned. I like the way in which the Scottish Institute of Sport, unlike many other organisations in Scottish life, uses the word “elite” without choking on it. Perhaps the roots of this issue are to be found in the Scottish psyche, but I feel that we too often pose a false dichotomy between excellence and participation. That happens not just in sport but in other areas of life. I wonder whether we perhaps need to lighten up about that. All of us know, both analytically and

from practical experience, that both things are needed. Youngsters who will struggle to run from one end of the playing field to the other need to be enabled at least to have a go, but it is every bit as important that we ensure that we have the next Liz McColgan or Yvonne Murray coming along. We need to create role models, too. Do others share my sense that we are struggling conceptually with that issue in posing a false dichotomy between excellence and participation?

The Convener: I will ask Dougie Donnelly to respond to that in a minute after we have heard from Stewart Maxwell and Gavin Hastings.

Mr Maxwell: I agree with much of what Susan Deacon said. As was pointed out earlier, one problem that we have had over the past decade or two is the idea that kids should engage only in non-competitive sports. In many areas of the country, the everybody-is-a-winner philosophy has, frankly, led us down the wrong path. The idea was that kids would somehow be damaged psychologically if they lost, so we should not upset them. A basic problem was that that approach meant that we boxed ourselves in. Although we are perhaps now moving on, we have not been helped by the fact that we ended up in the wrong place for a number of years.

The first issue that I want to raise about the "Reaching Higher" strategy document is the value of the targets, which are now described as "aspirations". It is nice to have aspirations, but I am not quite sure how we will achieve them. The fact remains that we got nowhere near achieving the targets that were set some years ago. Unless we pin things down and decide how we will get from where we are to where we want to be, the value of targets is debatable.

The active schools programme has been very valuable, but it has suffered from the problem of shaky co-ordination between the co-ordinators and organisations outside schools, such as clubs and the governing bodies. There has been good co-ordination in some schools and by some co-ordinators but, to put it diplomatically, co-ordination has been shaky elsewhere or has not worked at all. The active schools programme is great, but we need to improve on co-ordination if we are to win from the programme.

I agree with what Murdo Fraser said about the unsuitable out-of-school sports facilities that exist in some areas. I know that such facilities are beginning to be replaced in some parts of the country, but many facilities are not used because they are unsuitable. We also have good facilities to which people cannot get access because they are closed when people would use them and, frankly, some facilities just cost too much for the small clubs that would use them. Volunteers who give up their time to help young kids find that some excellent facilities are too expensive to use.

I have a slight concern about the co-ordination that exists among the multitude of sports organisations. It would probably take several weeks to list all the different bodies that are involved in sport. We seem to have more and more bodies. Every time that I think that I have a handle on the numerous bodies that are involved in sport, up pops another one that I have not heard of. Not only do people sometimes fall between the gaps that exist between the different bodies, but some of the bodies and organisations overlap. How do we deal with that structure of organisations and bodies in Scotland to achieve the best that we can, in the most efficient way, as we move forward with sport in Scotland? It seems to me that we have an awful lot of sports bodies, so I am not sure that we have got the structure quite right.

14:30

That takes me on to the issue of the pathways for elite athletes, which are critically important. If we are going to have athletes in the 2012 and 2014 games and other events beyond that, we have to get the pathways absolutely right when those people are young. We have to identify them in primary schools, stream them in secondary schools and take them through programmes that ensure that, as young adults and older adults, they are the elite athletes of 2012, 2014 and beyond. Much good work has been done in this area, such as the pilots that Steven Grimmond talked about earlier, which assist with co-ordinating efforts on a regional basis. However, a lot more work has to be done in order to identify the kids as early as possible.

On the Olympics, although it is great that they are being held near at hand, and much as they will spur our kids on, I have concerns about their effect in relation to lottery funding being siphoned off from grass-roots organisations to pay for them. If we do not address that concern, we will pay a price in 2012 and 2014. Kids might not get a chance further down the road if money is taken away from them today.

Gavin Hastings: I was glad when Susan Deacon made her challenging remarks because—as those who know me will be aware—I like a challenge and I am happy to address her points.

A number of years ago, I was involved in a project that concerned bringing the Ryder cup to Scotland—as we all know, it is coming in 2014. As part of that project, the club golf programme was launched and it has been incredibly successful. Normal mums and dads who love golf have entered the volunteering programme because it has been easy to access and, once they have done their training, they have taken groups of kids out on the course. The objective of the project is to

ensure that, by 2009, every child will have the opportunity to play and learn about golf by the time that they reach the age of nine.

Obviously, with the Olympics and—I hope—the Commonwealth games taking place in Britain, there is a lot of discussion of the legacies of those events. I disagree with the point that Stewart Maxwell made when he was talking about lottery funding and the possibility that the Olympics would harm Scottish organisations. I feel that the facilities that will be the legacy of the games bid will enable us to attract teams to come for their pre-games training camps. As part of its bid, Glasgow is developing its sports facilities. Those improvements will be in place regardless of whether the bid is successful. I do not wish to dwell on the possibility of the bid not being successful. I think that the city has an excellent chance because of the positive approach that it has adopted.

When I was growing up, I had as my role models people such as Allan Wells; we also have Colin Montgomerie. Sometimes, we gloss over the success that our sportsmen and women have had. I was lucky enough to be in Melbourne for the Commonwealth games a year ago and saw the lift that our team got as a result of the early success of the swimmers. I was in the pub to watch Scotland's marvellous soccer victory over France. The fact is that sport brings people together. It gives us a real high—it gives us adrenaline and a big push.

I feel that we have been talking about a bottom-up approach and have not considered the top-down approach. The top is made up of our successful athletes. If those people had been worried about the sports facilities and opportunities that were available to them, they might never have got off their backsides and done something about the situation. However, somehow, they managed to put all of that aside and achieve, in spite of everything else that was happening. As a sportsperson, I accentuated the positive all the time. If we start talking everything up—as Glasgow has been doing in relation to the Commonwealth games—we have a far better chance of succeeding.

Recently, the press has highlighted the lack of television coverage for some of our sports and the fact that Scotland seems to be football-centric. I echo the points that commentators have made in that regard. If the good people in the Scottish Parliament could do something to encourage more sports to be shown on television or to limit the showing of soccer, I personally do not think that that would be a bad thing. I am happy to have a discussion with anybody about that. Role models are very important. The televising of all sports is vital, and getting our media to talk about anything

other than Celtic and Rangers would be a hell of a good start.

The Convener: I will give Dougie Donnelly time to think about that.

Paul Bush: I echo what Gavin Hastings says. Twelve months ago, everyone in Scotland was glued to the box, morning and evening, watching those fantastic, record-breaking performances in Melbourne.

The question is relatively simple but fundamental: how important is sport to us, as a nation? We have heard about seven or eight different Government departments in various depositions from people—the work is not joined up at all: we work in silos and do not talk to one another. I am not sure that it is a matter of resource; I think that it is a matter of how we use and direct the resource that we have. We are a nation of 5 million people. Compared with other nations, at times we punch above our weight and at times we do not. Sport can have a far-reaching, transformational effect, but we do not take that on. In promoting sport in its widest sense—some would argue that it is physical activity; some would argue that it is not—we must take a holistic approach. If we can be more passionate and pick up on the role models, we have a chance to move forward.

The Convener: I ask Dougie Donnelly to comment on the psyche and too much football.

Dougie Donnelly: Do not get me started on there being too much football. As someone who has done—at the last count—28 different sports, I hope that that is not an accusation that can be levelled at me. Sadly, however, it is down to market forces a lot of the time. Like everyone else around the table, I find that a huge frustration at times.

I am very interested in Susan Deacon's point, and I want to do another commercial for the Scottish Institute of Sport. I am proud of it and I passionately believe that it is a Scottish success story. What she talked about is not quite the Scottish cringe, but we have world-class people working at the institute—Australians, South Africans and Americans—who all comment on the fact that Scottish sportspeople are almost apologetic about their success and about their dedication and utter commitment to success. That is something that we are changing and getting over. Gavin Hastings was a great example of someone who believed that the impossible was possible, and he proved it several times. That is now very much a part of the psychological aspect of high-performance sport.

Success is not easy. As we probably all know, success at the elite level is generally measured in millimetres and in hundredths of seconds. There

are also more countries in the world now, almost all of which have recognised the value of success in sport and are, therefore, spending more money on it. It is getting more and more difficult to be competitive.

I will tell you a story that I think is significant. As we know, Australia is one of the world's leading sporting nations. However, it was not so in the 1970s—Australia had little success in the 1972 and 1976 Olympic games in Munich and Montreal. As a result of those failures, the Australians set up the first real institute of sport in 1981—it celebrated its 25th anniversary last year. As part of the celebrations of the obvious success of those 25 years, they pointed out something that I found interesting. They said that they did not really see the breakthrough until the Barcelona Olympic games in 1992—11 years after they had set up the institute.

The Scottish Institute of Sport was set up in 1999, and we are now in our eighth year. Please do not think for a second that we are being complacent. We are competing in high-performance sport, in which complacency is the enemy, and we are very much our own biggest critics. However, we like to think that we are beginning to see progress. We have produced Olympic and world champions, and we had a role in Scotland's success at the Melbourne Olympic games, at which 22 of the 29 medallists were institute network athletes. The institute is working and we have world-class people there. What I am saying is that it ain't broke, so please don't try to fix it. Let us carry on doing what we are doing, and we will continue to produce Scottish sporting success.

The Convener: It is a long-term game.

Dougie Donnelly: It has to be. I think that we all appreciate that. Success is not achieved overnight.

Julia Bracewell: The discussion is interesting and we have gone over a lot of different points. I want to return to some of those points.

Karen Gillon made an excellent point about education. Research into specialist sports colleges in England proves that sport helps with educational attainment. The research shows that sport helps kids to concentrate for longer and leads to less disruption in schools. There is a fundamental link between sport and engaging children in schools. To make progress, the sooner we can get sport and education working together as well as possible, the better.

It is right to say that we are at a critical point for deciding where sport sits in our culture and how much we are ready to pay for it. Susan Deacon said that the aspirations for sport 21 had not really changed. I agree. Much in "Reaching Higher" was

said in the previous sport 21 document, so how will we deliver on those aspirations? A lot will come down to resources and whether we can get them into the system to help us finally to deliver on the aspirations.

We have not focused on the human element. Over the past few years in Scotland—with the Scottish Institute of Sport, with active schools and with sports partnerships—we have put in place an infrastructure that can start to deliver sport in the way in which we all want it to be delivered. Now that the infrastructure is in place, we can roll programmes out to fulfil whatever agenda. However, we have not necessarily had the resources or the people at the end of the chain—be they volunteers or paid coaches—who can actually make a real difference.

We are now at a point at which we have to be really serious about sport and the role that it can play in tackling obesity, in promoting educational attainment, in making people more socially mobile and in tackling all the criminal aspects that have been mentioned.

The statistics for sport in some areas are incredible. Newham, where the Olympics will be held, has had 35 per cent reductions in crime rates when sport has been introduced; with project reclaim, the reduction is 37 per cent. The number of people who reoffend is drastically lower, and appearances before magistrates are also dropping. If we start to put a value on such things, I hope that in four years' time the aspirations of sport 21 will no longer be aspirations but will have been delivered on.

Professor Coalter: I would like to go back to consider Murdo Fraser's and Karen Gillon's depression and to ask them one question. About eight or nine years ago, sportscotland produced a report called "The Ticking Time Bomb", which said that we required £20 million a year for 20 years to maintain our current supply of swimming pools. What happened to that? I will leave that question hanging, but at what point do you listen and we move on?

The Australian example is interesting. People talk about the Australian emphasis on elite sports participation and they point out that the Australians have had more world-scale events than any other country. However the participation rate in Australia and Scotland is the same, as is the obesity rate, so the relationship between large-scale elite sports events and more general participation is extremely tenuous. The Australians are good at one thing, but they are as bad as us in everything else.

I would like to respond to Susan Deacon's challenge. Churchill once said that the problem with the Irish was that they had problems for all the solutions. I am going to conform to that stereotype.

Christine May: It was just folk from the north.

Professor Coalter: Okay, just folk from the north; I apologise. Ulster people have the problems—although Churchill said “Irish”.

Anyway, back to “Reaching Higher”; I am not sure what the problem is in the document. It is not clear. If we look at northern European countries, we see that the participation rate in Scotland is more or less what everybody else achieves; and if we look at southern European countries, we see that our participation rate is higher. So what is the problem? Why are we trying to do things that everybody else seems to have failed to do?

I think that the problem lies within Scotland. The document is flawed on two issues. One is gender, which is not a systematic theme in the document. If we want to meet any of the targets, gender will be a fundamental issue, yet the document ignores it. I will give committee members two pieces of data. In the Glasgow City Council area, 29 per cent of females participate at least once a week; in the City of Edinburgh Council area, the figure is 52 per cent. In other words, in areas with low participation, about a third of women participate, but in areas with high participation, more than half of women participate.

That is a fundamental problem for any strategy, and it brings me on to the second flaw in the document. There is a huge regional disparity in Scotland in terms of sports participation. Any strategy that seeks to address the issues will have to have a much more targeted regional perspective.

I have a final, simple point to make. We have bandied around a lot of evidence today. I thought that we lived in an era of evidence-based policy making. A huge amount of evidence about what works and does not work exists, but none of that evidence seems to be brought into the more general debate or the policy discussion. I am wearing my academic hat. Rather than people reinventing the wheel, which Karen Gillon implied that we might be doing, academics and policymakers should have an important role to play in engaging in the process. That will probably be the final thing that I say before the committee throws me out.

14:45

The Convener: Is the disparity between the levels of participation in sport by men and by women typical of what happens in comparator countries?

Are the disparities regional or much more local? For example, are we talking about disparities between Ayrshire and Lanarkshire, between Lanarkshire and Aberdeen, or between the poorer

and richer parts of Lanarkshire or the richer and poorer parts of Ayrshire?

Professor Coalter: Those are fair questions. The data that we have considered so far do not allow a distinction that is essentially between urban and rural areas to be made, but it is clear that participation rates in the old industrial areas of Scotland, or the post-industrial areas on the west coast of Scotland, are significantly below the participation rates anywhere else in western Europe. Issues must be addressed in that respect. Glasgow has the lowest participation rates in sport by any criteria that we apply. A lack of investment there is not the issue; Glasgow has a fantastic array of sports facilities.

The problem that I have takes us back to what Susan Deacon said about people. It is not the case that everything else will follow if we adopt the traditional supply-led approaches and provide more facilities, coaches or opportunities. I agree with Susan Deacon: we must start with people and write demand-led rather than supply-driven strategies. There is a lot of information around that would allow that to be done, but “Reaching Higher” is a traditional supply-led document.

The Convener: Nearly everybody wants back in again, which is good. I will let Julia Bracewell in first, as she is obviously bursting to respond to what has just been said.

Julia Bracewell: At some point, I would like to come back on the link between events and participation, because good things are happening in that respect.

On demand-led and supply-led strategies, volunteers are good for many things, but there will be difficulties tackling harder-to-reach communities unless people who really know what they are doing go into communities and promote sport. I would be interested in the experience of Scottish Sports Futures in that respect. We know from inner-city projects that young people want to participate in sports if motivated, paid coaches who can help with several different sports go into communities. The territorialism, drunkenness and other problems associated with those kids will be attacked and will disappear because they will want to participate in sport. There is a role for coaches.

If everybody else's participation rates in sport decrease, that does not mean that there is no problem. I do not agree with Fred Coalter that there is no problem here because participation rates in the rest of western European are also declining. We must buck the trend. If we genuinely believe that sport will help to deliver a fitter nation and more cohesive communities, it has a role, and people must get out and be more active.

The Convener: I saw Chris Robison nodding in agreement with much of what Julia Bracewell said.

Chris Robison: Indeed. Before Fred Coalter raised key gender issues, Julia Bracewell talked about sport achieving a lot in certain areas. I agree with what she said, but request that we do not try to achieve certain things using a sports budget. If we want health, anti-obesity, social inclusion and economic benefits, we need the appropriate funding. At the moment, we cannot afford to do what people want to be done on a sports budget. That is a key message. Funding is crucial. Paul Bush was right. We can use what we have more creatively, but we need real funding if we want to make a real difference.

Ian Reid: We work a lot in the inner city and in areas that the antisocial behaviour task force has identified as hot spots, which experience acute antisocial behaviour and huge problems with youth disorder. When we go into those areas, nine times out of 10 we discover that—guess what—there are no sports facilities.

East Ayrshire Council opened 18 multipurpose open-air sports cages. Glasgow has a similar number and there are outdoor facilities throughout the country. What is sadly lacking is organised activities for young people within those facilities. They become a place where kids hang out, smoke, drink and shoot up. We make a strong plea for more organised activities in open-air facilities on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.

The “Reaching Higher” report mentions quality facilities. We and a lot of the young people in Scotland would say that we should at least consider quantity over quality. We would rather see more sports facilities of a rough and ready nature than a few showpiece facilities.

There are good facilities throughout cities and in rural areas, but we have to consider and combat territorialism, because it is very difficult for some kids to get to the sports facilities.

Gavin Macleod: It is encouraging to see equity mentioned in the report. Fred Coalter talked about gender. The fact that the report mentioned disability and closing the opportunity gap for the most disadvantaged groups is positive, but we have to consider how that will be delivered.

I want to return to the importance of schools. Work on the inclusion agenda continues. Inclusion is the way forward and we are committed to it. An increasing number of our young people are being included in mainstream schools and we are hearing evidence of a lack of quality physical education and access to extra-curricular sports because of issues to do with transport home from school. That, combined with all the other barriers that our young people face, has resulted in fewer than ever young people coming through our structures, which is a real worry.

We recently carried out a mapping exercise for our new strategic plan up to 2012, to see where our talent is coming from. The worrying prospect for us was that we could commit to only a 6 per cent target for 2012 for a sport that has delivered 25 per cent in the past. Behind that is the schools agenda and the quality of PE that is being delivered.

The second issue for us is the strength of partnerships. We are a governing body without a single sport—we are a multisport body—or coaching structure, so we are totally reliant on partnerships between local authorities, our branches and governing bodies. In the past, we have become unstuck because of conflicting agendas with some of our partners. If the review of the strategy can deliver a common agenda, that will help.

We need additional resources. People make the difference and we will need resources to put them in place.

I keep hearing about the legacy of 2012 and 2014. For me, the legacy is what is left behind. We need stronger and more sustainable structures. A huge amount of money is starting to come out of the UK in particular, but precious little of it is coming into Scottish structures.

We keep asking about talent programmes and how the funding will filter down and support home nations structures. That does not apply only to Scotland; my colleagues in the other home countries are asking the same questions. If we are going to bring athletes from our local branches through our talent ID programme into our national structure to make a difference, we really need to do it now, otherwise it will be too late for 2012.

I mentioned the figure of 25 per cent in relation to past Paralympic games. We did not have one athlete with a disability at the last Commonwealth games, which was a disappointment. We need to knuckle down and get the work done.

To bring us back to the reality, let me say that I spent this morning speaking to the parent of a young athlete about how we can get a grant to help her get her daughter to events around Great Britain, to get qualifying times and improve her performances. That is the reality—we are trying to get grants of £250 or £300 to parents to support our athletes.

The Convener: Many witnesses want to come in, but I am going to give Gavin Hastings the opportunity to speak as I know he has to leave in the next 10 minutes to catch a flight.

Gavin Hastings: I am not sure that I have anything specific to answer. As always, there are an awful lot of different views around the table. It strikes me that the most important thing that can

come out of the meeting is to find a way forward, so that we all push in the right direction. We have seen opposing views and arguments many times, and it is not always healthy.

I am a fairly simple kind of guy. I think that if we can find one or two ideas that everyone buys into and makes a commitment to back, we have a real chance. That would be my wish for this group. If we all go off on tangents and in different directions, we may come back in four years' time without having made any progress.

The Convener: I am not making a party-political point, but is there an issue of leadership? I had the impression that, when Tony Banks was the UK sports minister with responsibilities primarily south of the border, there seemed to be vision, leadership and a presence that, frankly, we have not had since 1999 in Scotland.

Gavin Hastings: I am a great believer in role models and the fact that people who have performed at a high level can be the best examples to our children. Let us face it—children are the future. They are the people whom we hope will pick up medals and compete strongly in the Olympics and the Commonwealth games.

We could all start by providing some leadership from meetings such as this, and that is the important legacy that we can leave with today. I would encourage everybody to try to find three or four ideas to which we are all committed and then follow them through.

I talked about sportscotland's clubgolf programme, which has been a real success. If we can do it in that situation, there is no reason why we cannot do it in lots of other areas, but we need everyone's buy-in and commitment.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): I agree with Gavin Hastings that although there are a huge number of issues in the report, which is excellent, and they have been discussed today, it would be helpful if we could find three or four key points on which to focus the discussion after the meeting and into an important political period. That is something the clerks could look at doing as well.

It has been said that we want to promote sport to ensure that it has a cross-cutting agenda in participation and excellence. One way to do that is for the Executive to support work that is being done by sports organisations and clubs. For example, in football—on which I was the reporter for the committee's inquiry—some of the big clubs have huge community involvement programmes, ranging from midnight football leagues to address antisocial behaviour to education programmes. I would like to see more support for that work.

Attached to that is an enthusiasm for the reform of governance in some sports—Stewart Maxwell touched on this, too. There is no doubt that that

process has begun in many of the major organisations, but I would welcome any thoughts on the pace of the reform and how we can tie in the Executive's work to promote sports with the clubs and organisations.

15:00

Karen Gillon: I have a couple of points, one of which picks up from something Gavin Hastings said. I come from the Borders. When I was growing up, everyone wanted to be Roy Laidlaw because he was playing for Scotland. All the guys wanted to be Roy Laidlaw, and all the girls wanted to be Roy Laidlaw's girlfriend. I wanted to be Roy Laidlaw—I am just a generation too old to play rugby for Scotland. He was a role model and somebody people could look up to. He was somebody from my community who had made it as an international.

My question to all the witnesses, as people who are involved in sport, is how we use such people better. How can we offer real role models for achievement? There are some good examples of how that has been done, but how can we do it more?

If I go to a primary school in my constituency and ask the pupils what they want to do, nine out of 10 of the wee primary 7 boys will say that they want to play football for Rangers or Celtic. That is their aspiration. Some of them might manage to play football professionally, if not for Rangers or Celtic. The girls do not have the same availability of role models.

The other issue is facilities, of which there are many in my constituency. They might not all be of the highest standard, but the guys and girls do not necessarily want big, top-class, shiny, all-singing, all-dancing sports centres; they want to be able to use what is there. The letting policy of schools needs to be addressed. We have fabulous school halls that people cannot access after 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Such facilities exist in every community and we should be using them better. Instead of building new sports centres, we should use the facilities that we have more effectively.

I have a point about accessibility, which follows on from what Gavin Macleod said. When I met Tanni Grey-Thompson recently, that was the big issue that she raised. For folk who are disabled, mainstream education is great, but there are significant barriers to access to physical education. Even getting down to the gym hall is virtually impossible. How can we deal with those issues?

My final plea is for all Executive departments to pull in the same direction. They should decide what the agenda is and get on with it. Alex Neil asked whether there has been a lack of

leadership. There has been leadership, but part of the difficulty is that three ministers are involved and changes in ministerial appointments mean that as soon as someone has become familiar with the agenda, they move on to something else. We need a single, clear strategy on what is to be done.

The Convener: The only part of what Karen Gillon said that I disagree with is that, where I come from, nine out of 10 boys want to play for Ayr United.

David Arnott: I thought that Karen Gillon was going to say that every boy wants to play for Lanark United, but perhaps that is an aspiration too far.

I was delighted that Fred Coalter mentioned "The Ticking Time Bomb". When that report came out, I felt that its production had been a gross waste of time and effort. Every director of leisure services in Scotland could have told sportscotland—it might have been the Scottish Sports Council in those days—what the problem was. The issue was what the answer was. It was thought that local authorities held the answer, but we all know that that was not the case because they were—and continue to be—strapped for capital and for revenue. Representatives of Fife Council have met the minister to discuss our problems. I hope that whoever forms the new Administration will examine what the answer is to the ticking time bomb.

I was delighted to hear Gavin Hastings and Karen Gillon talk about role models. One of my first projects as head of sports development in East Kilbride back in 1971-72 was to set up development projects for a new indoor sports centre, which was to be the second in Scotland. A guy came to me and said that he would like to do gymnastics. No one had heard of gymnastics, but after a wee lassie from the Soviet Union went on to the floor at the Munich Olympics, I had a wonderful opportunity to provide space for gymnastics. Every girl wanted to be an Olga Korbut; we had to fight them off. We should encourage the use of role models.

I had a role model in football, although I do not know whether he could be called a role model. Dougie Donnelly is laughing because he knows who I am talking about. Alistair McCoist was a fantastic role model in East Kilbride. We must use our role models. It is good that the sport of gymnastics still uses Stevie Frew—a young lad who has done well—as a role model.

Julia Bracewell talked about the need to get good coaches. If she comes to meet us, we will show her that we have good coaches working in local sports councils the length and breadth of Scotland.

Karen Gillon gave a good example of what is happening in golf. For many years there was an international elite squad who worked with youngsters in Sweden. It works, and we have them all over the country. In the Western Isles, high quality local coaches are working with youngsters of eight, nine and 10 years of age, who will go on to participate in national squads.

I have been concerned about one issue for many years. Sport in schools seems to be considered the panacea for all sport's ills, but it is not. I have yet to see a competitor who has reached an international squad as a result of taking part in school sport. They come up through the national governing body programmes. That is how they get into international teams; it is not through school sport.

At one stage, my daughter was a very good international and Commonwealth games gymnast. She never had the opportunity to participate in a school gymnastics programme. It was all done through the national governing bodies. We must recognise that schools have a role to play, but it is not to produce international competitors. That is the role of the national governing bodies, the Scottish Institute of Sport and the area institutes. That is where the international competitors will come from.

Steven Grimmond: I agree with a number of points that have been made, but the fact remains that 50 per cent of the population does not participate in sport—and that figure has not shifted.

There is a lot to be said for shifting from a supply model to a demand model; that is what we are attempting to do at a local level. The proposition in the previous sport 21 strategy was largely that if we supply more sport, more people will participate. It is quite evident that that has not worked.

I share the view that while the review of the sport 21 strategy places greater emphasis on recognising the correlation between gender participation and socio-demographic issues, we have not quite driven that through to an implementation plan that addresses that correlation. We need to do that. It will be about a localised, demand-led strategy that recognises the different levels of participation in the different communities in a local authority area, and that recognises that there are significant regional variations. The west coast has particularly poor participation levels, for example.

Moving from a supply model to a demand model at a local level involves creating local solutions and working with local communities. One of the consequences of that will be that some of the traditional approaches to sport will not deliver increasing participation. Some uneasy lessons begin to emerge from that approach.

I would like to echo some of the points that have been made about quality facilities. That is a key strand. I share the view that we have to use facilities a lot more innovatively. Fife has an excellent model of community use of schools: the majority of our secondary schools have programmed access in the evenings and at weekends. That is clearly not the case throughout Scotland, and we must tackle it. However, even if we do, we should not underestimate the resource gap in the provision of quality local facilities. We have not addressed that point yet. There is no adequate solution to that issue.

Susan Deacon: A host of things has been said and I am sure that we could all continue to explore them, but I will pick up on just a few of the strands.

I am struck by what I am hearing. David Arnott and Fred Coalter said something like the wheel is still being reinvented. I echo the point that we need more people to take the ball and run with it and make some things happen.

I am not saying that the document is not good, but I have expressed concern about the emphasis that is being placed on it because constant strategising and reviews of strategies are not just benign acts; they consume vast amounts of resource, energy and time in their production, never mind their implementation.

An awful lot of what I have heard reinforces my concern that a disproportionate amount of policy makers' energy post devolution has been spent on finessing strategies rather than on taking practical action. Such an approach adds to a culture in which people think that change must come from the top.

The convener's comments on leadership were based on a narrow view of what leadership is and where it occurs. I am not saying that ministers do not have a key role in that regard—Gavin Hastings has left, but I echo what he said about how everyone here and hundreds, if not thousands, of other people have all sorts of opportunities to show leadership in the area. Top-down strategies can militate against demonstrations of leadership, because people are waiting for the next programme or guidance instead of being encouraged to innovate and initiate.

Julia Bracewell said that we need experts to help to deal with harder-to-reach communities—I wish we did not use such expressions, but we know what we mean. I apologise if I misinterpreted her comment, but I disagree with it. Given the many complex social issues, we need to do much more to empower people and to respect the solutions that emerge from communities. I see that Julia Bracewell wants to respond—she is entitled to do so, but I want to make a final point.

I hope that colleagues will take this comment in the spirit in which it is made. I am disappointed that the witnesses have made an awful lot of comments about the need for more money in their budgets—Chris Robison just said exactly that. I am not saying that people do not need money, but the attitude is disappointing, because there has been a massive increase in overall public spending in this country in recent years. However, we—in the broadest sense—have not cracked how politicians, professionals, practitioners, delivery agencies and so on ensure that the money is put to the best use and that people work together on shared objectives. That brings me back to my point about how everyone wants to divvy things up into separate agendas. I hope that future discussions such as this will demonstrate a shift in that context, so that people who work in the sector say, "This is how my agency will work with people in health, education or whatever to consider how we can pool resources." Much of what I heard pulled in a different direction.

Ministers hear the words, "Give us more money" 40 times before breakfast. The message—and the action—must be much more sophisticated than that and everyone who can do so should take a bit more responsibility to practise what we all preach.

The Convener: I will bring in Julia Bracewell and Chris Robison in a minute, but Christine May has been itching to speak for a while.

15:15

Christine May: I will take a leaf out of the Ulsterman's book and rain on everyone's parade. Unless I missed it, nobody suggested that council tax or income tax should go up, so resources will continue to be limited. In Scotland, the notion that it is for public agencies and the public sector to provide at the lowest possible cost or at least very cheaply is prevalent, but we cannot do that for everybody, so there must be a discussion about where resources should be targeted. The Government has a duty to the dispossessed, the disfranchised and the disconnected—for the sake of their health and well-being and the state of the country.

Taxes have been relatively low for a number of years. A large number of people who are very well off, relatively speaking, demand that it should cost them no more than a fiver for their football team to use floodlighting, pitches and so on. That is not sustainable if we are seriously to target our resources at those who need them most and at developing the elite, who are relatively few in number but will deliver role models for us. We may be able to agree on that point. An awful lot of bodies are talking an awful lot of policy, and an awful lot of bodies at local level are frustrated by the fact that they cannot get past that talking to

develop in their own time the wee football team or whatever it may be. There is no shortage of folk willing to do that, but too many resources are going into talking at the top end and too few are going into delivery at the bottom end.

There are facilities solutions. The inflatable pitch that is being used in Fife is like a bouncy castle without the bounce. All kinds of games can be played on it, it has floodlighting and it can be moved around on a lorry. All that is needed is a flat piece of ground. That is the sort of solution that we should look to deliver for our communities and about which I had hoped to hear from around the table. I am disappointed that I have not heard about such solutions. We all like the sound of our own voice; it is much more comfortable to talk than to say to some elements of the community that it will cost them more to use facilities because we cannot provide facilities to them as cheaply as we need to provide them to others.

The Convener: I am conscious of the time and know that others are keen to comment. After they have spoken, we will try to reach some conclusions. Chris Robison and Julia Bracewell have had their hands up for a while.

Chris Robison: I need to mention the revised national strategy because, as many of you know, I was heavily involved in producing it and it entailed a large amount of work. About two years ago, before doing that work, I was not as grey as I am now.

I am clear about the fact that the strategy is not the solution for Scottish sport and does not come up with the answers. That was not my brief, because if we knew the answers we would have implemented them a long time ago, using current resources. The strategy is a framework. It is for each organisation to examine how it can contribute to the two outcomes and four areas that we have identified. There was fairly extensive consultation, and I like to think that I have brought together the issues.

It is no surprise to me that the revised strategy is not very different from sport 21, because the issues are exactly the same. The challenge is how we implement the strategy. Governing bodies are up for that challenge. If we need to amalgamate governing bodies and to have more efficient government, the SSA is up for that. We have had discussions with the SALSC about whether the SALSC, the SSA and the Scottish Schoolsport Federation are needed, or whether those three organisations can come together.

Gavin Hastings said that we need to get behind something. I request that organisations get behind the revised strategy and take out of it what they need. In Moray, where the participation figure is already 62 per cent, what the council does may

need to be different from what Glasgow City Council does. The same applies to the governing bodies for rugby, athletics and other sports. We cannot write all the answers in a document that is about 40 pages long, with a few pictures. That is the defence that I offer.

I agree absolutely that resources will be scarce, but I have been asked to come to this meeting on behalf of governing bodies to say that resources will make a difference. I agree that we need to be more creative with the resources that we have. Golf is a classic example, but it was funded to the tune of £9 million. Of course that has produced results. We know that we will not get all the money that we want and that we must be creative, but if we want to be a successful sporting nation and to address all the other agendas that we have discussed and that we agree that sport can address, a small chunk of extra funding from other areas may be money worth investing for the long-term future of the nation. That is the argument that I am making.

Julia Bracewell: Over the past year or so, sportscotland has been doing a few things differently. For example, we are working with sports organisations on governance, and we have also shrunk the number of governing bodies by merging them. Earlier, some people wondered how, for example, we can put kids from active schools into clubs and how, in light of the various things that we are doing with local authorities, all the various elements can work together. The investment that we have made in local authorities has led to an integrated approach that addresses the situation from a grassroots to an elite level. If one of those elements is not working, the local authority does not get that part of the pot. The whole structure has to work, and we hope that such an approach will make a big difference.

Our report, "The Ticking Time Bomb", suggested that £540 million will be needed for Scotland's public pools over 20 years, and the facilities audit suggested that £2.1 billion would be required over the same period. Those numbers are huge. I say with the greatest respect to Christine May that if we are really serious about solving the problems with our facilities, having inflatable pitches just ain't gonna do it. We might be able to raise that money through public-private partnerships. We are already discussing the matter with accountants, but some money might have to be found from the public purse.

I might not have communicated my point about experts well enough earlier, but I hope that what I say will tie in with Fred Coalter's comments about what events can do for mass participation. Fred is right to say that no Olympic or Commonwealth games event has ever increased participation, but I must point to two other examples—and I

apologise for the fact that both of them are English. When England won the rugby world cup, the Rugby Football Union put 170 community coaches on pitches across England and, in each of the three years after that win, participation in rugby increased by 30 per cent. The figure has since fallen to about 20-odd per cent a year, but the increase in participation in rugby has been sustained.

Moreover, when the England cricket team won the ashes, there was a 600 per cent increase in demand for cricket equipment. Indeed, in the first year after that victory, the number of youths playing cricket increased by 70 per cent, with a 40 per cent increase the next year. That happened with 150 community coaches on the ground and a number of good sports development policies. We will be able to make such an approach work once the Olympic games—and, indeed, the Commonwealth games in Glasgow—come along.

Finally, research that we have embedded in the world badminton championships, which are taking place this summer, will check how far our reach extends with regard to participation in badminton. After all, Paul Bush and EventScotland are putting a lot of money into such events, and we have to work with them to ensure that they lead to an increase in participation.

I have done a lot of work with London 2012 on the sports legacy of the Olympic games to ensure that London will be the first ever Olympics to increase participation. In the course of that work, we went to the Red Road community in Glasgow—I do not like the term “harder-to-reach community” either, and if someone can suggest a better expression I will use it willingly—which runs a project reclaim initiative. Many organisations had started programmes, which had failed; moreover, because the community had many immigrants and—to use a term used by police—native Glaswegians, there was a lot of territorialism. One night, three policemen who were also coaches turned up and started kicking balls around. In one summer, the crime rate fell by 37 per cent; kids turned away from crime, started getting jobs and all the rest of it. Those coaches are the kind of people I mean when I talk about experts. They understand those communities, whereas a well meaning volunteer might not secure the same result. Because the kids told us that those coaches had made all the difference, we made a DVD of the project, and it is currently changing perceptions about participation in sport at the International Olympic Committee and FIFA level. We should all be damned proud that a Scottish project has had such an international effect.

The Convener: We are beginning to run out of time. However, three speakers still want to get in, and I ask everyone to keep things tight.

Professor Coalter: Christine May accused me of raining on your parade, so I will finish off by giving you my version of sunshine. I feel that the construction that Susan Deacon and Christine May put on sport is based on cost, not on the fact that it can make an economic contribution.

In that respect, I want to make two points, the first of which is that those who are physically active after the age of 35 represent a reduced cost to the national health service.

The second point is to do with the sports economy. Large-scale events involve the purchase of equipment and so on. The Government taxes all those purchases, directly and through VAT. If we balance the return from the sports economy to Government against Government's investment, there is a deficit. Sport gives more in terms of tax and VAT than it gets back in public investment. If we took a bigger view of investment, we might have a more balanced understanding of the situation.

Susan Deacon: Convener, is it possible to correct something or will you not allow that?

The Convener: I will bring in Pat Morrison first, as she has been waiting patiently to speak.

Pat Morrison: I want to thank Chris Robison, who made some of the points that I was going to make. He said that the strategy is a framework. It is evidence based. There is coverage of where we are in relation to girls and young women. We considered the evidence carefully. I am not saying that we have reached an end, as the process is on-going and we must keep it under review.

We are giving clear guidance—I would not say direction—about things like facilities. Local authorities must have an overview in relation to what is needed. They must take into account the whole estate—not only leisure, sports and community facilities but schools facilities and private sector facilities—in order to find ways in which the various elements can work together to meet the need.

We are suggesting new approaches to attracting more people into sport. Although we will not be delivering those initiatives, we will monitor the situation constantly and highlight best practice.

On active schools, we most certainly work with our schools colleagues. Although I might not be able to influence what goes on in the curriculum, the success of the active schools programme, which everybody would acknowledge, is a reflection of the way in which we have worked closely with our schools and health colleagues. The programme is only two years old and I am sure that everyone who is involved in it would say that more work needs to be done with clubs and governing bodies. That is highlighted as being the next step for the programme.

One of the most important things about the Executive being in the lead with regard to the strategy is that we will be working with local authorities, governing bodies and sportscotland to monitor the progress towards achieving our outcomes. We will be publishing reports every four years and will show what works and what does not work. We have plans for annual conferences, which we can use to share good practice and address key issues that are emerging.

I will end by saying that we never saw the framework as being anything other than a start in a process that the Scottish Executive was leading and committed to.

The Convener: Susan, you can make a quick response to Professor Coalter now, if you like.

Susan Deacon: I do not disagree at all with Professor Coalter's analysis. I certainly do not view sport as a cost rather than an investment. The point that I was making was that it is incumbent on everyone who works in sports—and, indeed, other sectors—to consider how they pool their efforts and their money in relation to their shared objectives.

Professor Coalter: I apologise.

The Convener: Ian Reid can have the last word.

Ian Reid: Coming from a family with three women in it, I rarely get the last word. I appreciate your offer, convener—especially as today is my birthday.

The Convener: That is your time up.

Ian Reid: Sometimes it feels like my time is up.

On Christine May's point about budgets, I repeat the plea that those assembled around this table should engage with the third sector, which has a lot to offer and is extremely adept at finding funding streams. We have on-going projects that have at least 10 funders. None of the money is coming from sportscotland but we are providing for young people in Scotland with opportunities to participate in sport. For example, in Glasgow, we run a pilot project called jump to it. It involves 15 schools and will eventually be rolled out to 200, hopefully. None of the money that is paying for it has come from sportscotland. We can find other ways of promoting sport without being a drain on finance.

With regard to the bouncy castle-type pitch, I suspect that it was not paid for by sportscotland or from a sports budget. There are five more of those pitches being put in place in Glasgow. The money for all that has come from community safety partnerships. There are many ways of expanding sport and making it more accessible to young people in Scotland without raiding the sport budget—there are other budgets out there.

15:30

The Convener: The discussion has been helpful and has raised several issues. Obviously, there is not unanimity or consensus on all of them, but some themes have emerged, particularly on the role of school sport; on the need, to use the jargon, for joined-up government at every level; and on resources and their effective use. Gavin Macleod highlighted some of the remaining barriers to people gaining access to facilities, Julia Bracewell highlighted the investment that is required and Fred Coalter helpfully reminded us that there are two sides to the balance sheet.

We will lift out some of the main themes that have arisen and pass them to the successor committee that has responsibility for sport. At present, the committee covers a wide range of subjects—enterprise, lifelong learning, science and energy policy, tourism, sport and the arts and culture. However, in the next session of Parliament, the committee that deals with sport may well have a narrower responsibility and be more focused on sport. That would be my favoured solution, because this committee has too wide a remit and perhaps has not been able to give all the subject areas the attention that they need. Obviously, with the forthcoming Olympics and Commonwealth games, most of us would agree that sport needs to go up the agenda.

The discussion has been helpful. I thank all our guests for coming and for making excellent contributions.

15:32

Meeting suspended.

15:45

On resuming—

The Convener: The presentation for item 2 has not yet been set up, so I propose to take item 3 first. Do members agree with that suggestion?

Members indicated agreement.

Scottish Register of Tartans Bill

15:45

The Convener: I welcome Jamie McGrigor, who was the member in charge of the Scottish Register of Tartans Bill. As members know, he wrote to me to say that he would withdraw the bill.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): Since I discussed the bill with the Enterprise and Culture Committee, there has been an Executive debate in the Parliament on the promotion of tartan and Scotland's tartan industry. I spoke in the debate, and the Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, Allan Wilson, said that the Executive will consider the bill's general principles and, I hope, take action in the next session of the Parliament. I was satisfied by those assurances and, on that basis, I was happy to withdraw the bill.

I want to clarify a comment that I made at the committee's meeting on 5 December. I was talking about objections to the bill and I said:

"the number is down to one if Mr Winetrobe has withdrawn his contradictions".—[*Official Report, Enterprise and Culture Committee*, 5 December 2006; c 3526.]

I had misunderstood the convener's earlier comments about Mr Winetrobe's submission. I accept that at no point did Mr Winetrobe withdraw his submission to the consultation and that there were no contradictions in his submission. "Contradictions" was the wrong word to use and I apologise to Mr Winetrobe for any misrepresentation of his position.

The Convener: Now that that is on the record, I hope that the matter is closed.

The committee has nothing further to do with the bill other than to record that the member has withdrawn it and is satisfied that the Executive will take up the issues that arose from it. Are members happy with that?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: I thank Jamie McGrigor.

Legacy Paper

15:47

The Convener: We still have technical problems with item 2, so we will take item 4. We considered an earlier draft of our legacy paper and another draft has been circulated—I hope that it is close to being the final draft.

Stephen Imrie (Clerk): The clerks have endeavoured to make the changes and corrections that were suggested at the most recent meeting at which members discussed the legacy paper. I hope that we have done that adequately and to members' satisfaction.

We have fleshed out recommendations for future work that a successor committee might undertake. They are set out in paragraph 25 and I ask members to pay particular attention to the bullet points, which are members' suggestions for a work programme that a new committee might want to take on board.

The rest of the paper is pretty much the same as the previous draft, except that in annex A we have fleshed out the proposal for a skills summit, as Mr Fraser wanted us to do. I have not produced a full programme that includes potential speakers, but I have tried to give an overview of what might be considered in a skills summit. I have also provided details about the proposal for an event with the Scottish Trades Union Congress, which the committee thought would be a good idea.

This is probably the first time that members have seen the supplementary information in papers 7 to 10. Paper 7 contains all the information from the Executive on the inquiries that the committee has undertaken in the second parliamentary session. If members remember, the committee agreed to ask ministers for an update on the main conclusions and recommendations from the inquiries. Those are set out in the table in paper 7. There is an additional paper setting out the feedback on the committee's report into sport, which arrived after the papers had been sent out.

Finally, papers 8 to 10 are the clerks' notes on the various round-table discussions. I suggest that members should not treat them as committee reports, in the sense that they do not represent the committee's views. However, if members feel that we have missed anything from those papers, or if they would like more emphasis on any points, we would be happy to take that on board. The round-table discussion that is missing from the notes is the one on sport that took place earlier today. Although we will not be able to perform a miracle and have that ready for members by the time that we reach the next item on the agenda, we will type it up soon. Standards are clearly slipping as we approach the end of the parliamentary session.

The Convener: Just as an aide-mémoire for our successor committee on the way in which to deal with the clerks' notes, they are not something of which we approve or disapprove; we all know that they are done with the usual professionalism of our clerking team.

Christine May: We note the notes.

The Convener: The main issue is the legacy paper. We should bear in mind that the paper is purely advisory and that it will be entirely up to our successor committee—or committees—to decide whether to take any of our advice or none of it. The key issue is whether we are happy with the advice that is provided in the draft. Do members have any comments?

Susan Deacon: I have three points. There has been a lot of formal and informal discussion about our legacy paper, so if there is a good reason why my points are not in it, please tell me. We were asked to pay particular attention to the topics on page 7 of paper 6. We identified previously that we had not been able to devote time to science and science policy, but that we wanted explicitly to identify that area.

The Convener: Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

Susan Deacon: That was easy.

My other two points are more about process and the lessons that we have learned as a committee. I wonder whether it is worth including a point about opportunities for cross-sectoral or thematic discussions. I shall explain what I mean. Another committee of which I am a member, the Audit Committee, has spent a lot of time talking about that. One tends to spot recurrent themes in many different sectors. Today was a good example, in that many of the issues that were discussed were almost directly paralleled in our round-table discussion on the arts. There are wider issues, for example about how we develop facilities and communities and how we pool budgets and so on. For all that we have said elsewhere that there is scope, and perhaps a need, to narrow or reduce the committee's remit, one of the strengths of having a wide remit is that we can identify such themes. If colleagues agree, it is perhaps worth noting in the paper that there could be scope for building on those sectoral discussions to bring together some of the sectors. That is one suggestion.

In a similar vein, my final suggestion relates to a recurrent theme in the committee, which has become more of a recurrent theme in and around the Parliament. I refer to the Executive's involvement, relatively late in the day, in discussion about members' bills. Sometimes there is a good reason for that. The Executive perhaps

feels that it is right that members' bills—because they are members' bills—should be allowed to run free from Executive involvement and interference. However, the experience of this committee in particular—I think that we previously reached a view on this—is that earlier involvement would have been beneficial to the overall quality and outcome of the discussion and parliamentary consideration. I wondered whether there was room for a line in the legacy paper to that effect.

The Convener: We have written to the Executive about that, particularly with regard to the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill. I think that we drew some of the issues to the attention of the Procedures Committee as well. Is everybody happy for us to add in a line to that effect?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: I think that I am right in saying that our correspondence is always available for anyone who wants to see it. Is everybody happy to include a line on cross-portfolio thinking or joined-up committee thinking—however the clerks want to phrase it?

Members indicated agreement.

Shiona Baird: Are there any clerks' notes on the round-table discussion on social enterprises?

Stephen Imrie: Yes, there are notes. We did not specifically produce the notes on that batch—we were referring to the round-table discussions that we held recently. If the committee has no objections, there will be no problem in making the notes for the round-table discussion on social enterprises, which was held under the auspices of the business growth inquiry, part and parcel of the legacy paper.

Shiona Baird: I would appreciate that.

The Convener: Yes. Every member of the public can access the notes under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. We are not disclosing anything that cannot be disclosed.

Stephen Imrie: The notes are published as evidence for the business growth inquiry; it is just a case of extracting them and putting them alongside the round-table notes. The information is all in the public domain.

The Convener: I am sure that every member of all our successor committees will read all the notes in great detail before they meet. Is everybody happy to agree the legacy paper?

Members indicated agreement.

Annual Report

15:56

The Convener: I think that we have solved our technical problem, but given that our discussion of the annual report should not take long, we can clear it now, which will leave us free to concentrate on the substantive item thereafter.

Members have a draft of the annual report, which follows the pattern set by the rest of the committees of the Parliament. It is a document that is read widely in every pub and club in Scotland. Is everybody happy with it?

Christine May: It is a model of brevity, clarity and strength of purpose.

The Convener: That is very kind. Christine May is desperate to get on to discuss European structural funds. I take it that everyone is happy with the report.

Members *indicated agreement.*

European Structural Funds

15:57

The Convener: For agenda item 2, I welcome Dr Sara Davies, senior research fellow, and Professor John Bachtler, director, of the European policies research centre at the University of Strathclyde, which was commissioned to undertake the work that the committee had previously agreed to. I hand over to the witnesses to give us their presentation, after which we will ask questions.

Professor John Bachtler (University of Strathclyde): Thank you and good afternoon. We are pleased to be here. We cannot quite compete with the glamour of the previous discussion on sport, but we will do our best.

Dr Sara Davies, who is senior research fellow at the European policies research centre, has led the study. I am a director of the EPRC. Some of you might be familiar with the centre's research from previous work that we have done for the Parliament. The institute at the University of Strathclyde has been in existence for more than 25 years and works on European policy issues. Our *raison d'être* is to compare the design and implementation of policy throughout countries and regions of the European Union and to draw out interesting lessons and good practice.

We are involved in providing policy advice—we have worked with most EU Governments over the past five years—and promoting the exchange of experience. We have a particular interest in regional policy. We are especially interested in the cohesion policy of the EU, but are also interested in the regional policies of individual European countries.

Sara Davies will provide an overview of the report and its main findings and I will talk about some of the legacy issues for the committee.

16:00

Dr Sara Davies (University of Strathclyde): I will outline the research questions that the committee asked us to consider before talking briefly about the methodology and looking at an overview of the structural funds programme in Scotland in 1994 to 2006. I will then focus on the research findings on the implementation structures, the programmes and the case study projects that we looked at. As John Bachtler said, he will then look at some issues for the future.

The main focus of the study was the impact of the structural funds programmes from 1994 to 2006. We were asked to consider several questions under that heading. First, how

appropriate were the delivery and implementation frameworks for delivering the funding? Secondly, how well had the programmes performed? Finally, what were the effects of four major projects that showed evidence of good practice?

Our methods were conditioned in part by the fact that the study lasted for two months, which included Christmas and new year. A lot of the work was desk research on existing evaluation studies and reviewing information on the Scottish programmes and the international perspective. Therefore, we looked at evidence on other EU programmes at EU level and for specific countries. We took that approach to the delivery structures and the programmes themselves.

For the case study project, we looked in detail at five different projects—one for each set of programmes. That work was based on interviews, monitoring data and various documents and discussions. The methods were affected by some weaknesses in the monitoring data and evaluations; we might want to come back to that later.

I will give the committee an overview of the structural funds in Scotland between 1994 and 2006. Slide 6 lists all the programmes during that time, of which there were quite a few. A feature of the structural funds is that they are rather complicated—not only are there several different programmes, but different areas come under the different objectives of EU funding. In addition, EU resources are channelled through different EU funds such as the regional development fund or the social fund. There are various complexities in the structure of this type of funding.

When funding is allocated for a period of years at a time, each programme is divided into a series of thematic priorities, which are then subdivided into measures. Within each of those measures, people can apply for funding for projects. The programmes therefore fund hundreds, if not a couple of thousand, of projects each. They are very large and complex entities.

Slide 7 shows a picture of the Scotland structural funds areas between 2000 and 2006. Obviously, the areas were slightly different between 1994 and 1999 and they will be different again between 2007 and 2013. Again, some of the complexities can be seen. For example, if different partners are involved in a project, one of them could be located in a different area, which could lead to all kinds of complexities in setting up a project and getting it running.

On the research findings, I will talk first about implementation and delivery frameworks. Our general conclusion was that the delivery systems in Scotland worked well from 1994 to 2006. That is not to say that there were no problems; clearly

various administrative issues arose during that period. However, we found that the systems worked well overall and the problems that arose were not unusual from an EU perspective. It is fair to say that all member states and regional authorities have some problems with EU rules and procedures, and linking EU rules with domestic rules is a challenge. However, we found that the delivery systems worked well.

It is interesting to consider features of the Scottish system that are, to an extent, similar to those of the systems in other parts of the UK but distinctive from a European perspective. One issue is the challenge fund approach to resource allocation, which simply means that funding is allocated on a competitive basis. In many EU member states, funding has basically been channelled straight into the existing budget lines or programmes of public entities, which is very different from what has happened here. In Scotland, most administrative tasks have been undertaken by the programme management executives, which are separate administrative entities that were set up specifically for the structural funds. However, not all member states have taken that approach.

I will not go through every feature, but a particularly interesting one is the number and type of beneficiaries. Scotland's structural funds programmes have had a strong emphasis on community development and the participation of voluntary and community groups, but that approach has not always been taken in other countries and regions. A lot of funding elsewhere has been channelled into infrastructure and support for medium-sized or even large businesses. Although there has been business and infrastructure support in Scotland, there has also been a lot of funding for community development, which involves a different type of organisation.

The next component of the research findings relates to the programme level. The research on the programmes' quantitative effect is based on existing evaluations and studies of the programmes. We have provided data on matters such as the number of jobs that have been created and firms that have been assisted. There is a lot of information in the report, but I do not want to bore you with lots of figures. The annex to the study contains one-page overviews of each programme, which give a list of indicators and outputs and results that the programmes generated.

One issue is that, during the 1994-99 period, problems arose with data monitoring. For example, different programmes used different indicators, so it is difficult to bring together all the information, even at programme level, but certainly

for all Scotland. The issue seems to have been addressed for the 2000-06 programmes, for which the Executive set a relatively limited number of indicators that were to be used for monitoring all the Scottish programmes. It is therefore possible to draw out better information for the 2000-06 programmes. On the other hand, the 2000-06 programmes are not yet completed—they will continue to spend resources until the end of 2008. Various other monitoring and evaluation issues arise, which we could discuss further if members are interested.

The qualitative evaluations of the structural funds programmes found several benefits. There is clear evidence that the programmes targeted and ring fenced funding for certain areas, social groups and categories of spending that might not otherwise have received funding under purely domestic programmes. One feature of the programmes is that funding has been guaranteed for a period of years, which gives a certain protection from the pressures of annual budget setting. Another feature is that funding has been levered in from other external sources, such as lottery funding. Some money was given by the EU and money was then drawn in from other sources.

One effect seems to have been the stimulation of new project ideas and, to an extent, an improvement in project quality. That has happened partly through the work of the programme management executives, which have put a lot of effort into generating projects and bringing together people with similar project ideas. Evidence also exists of a more strategic approach and of efficiency gains as a result of matters such as improved project selection. However, there have also been efficiency losses, because the EU rules add an additional layer of administrative cost that is, to an extent, unavoidable. There is always a bit of a trade-off—more money is available, but more effort must be put into administering the programmes. The kind of evidence that we have for Scottish programmes is not unusual—we would expect such evidence for similar programmes in other parts of Europe.

Slide 11 deals with our case study projects. There was one for the Highlands and Islands, one for the east of Scotland, one for the west of Scotland, one for the south of Scotland and one for objective 3, which relates to labour market interventions. All the projects were relatively large, because that was the remit of the study, and all showed evidence of good practice—that is what we looked for when selecting the projects. We found that most of the projects would not have gone ahead without structural funds. Some might have gone ahead, but probably at a later date. It is also likely that they would have been of poorer quality or less developed.

We found some longer-term impacts on development. The projects provided the basis for further development and investment by public and private actors. In some cases, they changed the attitudes of individuals and groups, so that they were more open to new labour market opportunities or opportunities for private investment. The projects improved the quality of life for individuals in communities and provided longer-term resources for development of infrastructure and funding for business or more trained workers. It is difficult to say whether the projects that we examined were representative of all the projects that are funded, given that we looked at only five projects, in which there was evidence of good practice. However, other studies have provided evidence of other projects with good practice.

I will highlight a few issues that the case study projects suggested, which are the main lessons that we drew from them. First, many projects seemed to depend not just on partnership, but on leadership and a strong commitment by project holders to their local communities and areas. That came through strongly in a number of cases. Another issue is effective planning, identification of real problems and creation of solutions. It was interesting that some projects came up with complicated and interesting solutions to complex problems. The quest for employment project in west Fife, which offers employability support to young unemployed people with specific problems, provides targeted, tailored support to individuals, and works with local businesses to get them to provide work experience and a means of getting into work to the young people who are being trained. In other words, the project works with businesses to change their views of young people from disadvantaged communities, as well as with those young people to improve their skills and their motivation to look for work.

Other issues that we identified were the need to look at longer-term effects and the potential for follow-up projects, and the possibility of encouraging a greater willingness to take risks, in a managed way. That is a slightly difficult issue, because we do not want to encourage massive risk taking using public money, but there were cases in which the profitability of a project was perceived to be too low for it to be undertaken by private sector actors. Structural funds have encouraged projects that have ultimately proved successful to go ahead.

Another issue is the links between different types of interventions and funding sources. A lot of the projects found ways of complementing domestic policy frameworks. There is a need not to reinvent the wheel or copy the domestic programmes but, instead, to link the structural funds projects with the domestic interventions.

John Bachtler will talk about some of the issues for the future of the structural funds.

16:15

Professor Bachtler: We were asked to identify a few issues for the committee's consideration that might form part of its legacy paper, although they do not form part of the report. We believe that two sets of issues could be of interest to a future committee. The first concerns the effectiveness and efficiency of the new generation of programmes that are going to operate in the period 2007 to 2013. As we said in our report, the objectives of cohesion policy have changed for the next period, which has implications for who is going to get EU funding in Scotland and how it is going to be used. There is likely to be more of a focus on the Lisbon agenda—in other words, promoting economic growth and entrepreneurship and encouraging innovation—than on regional and local development, although that will still be part of the programmes. The programmes will operate on a Scotland-wide basis rather than in defined areas, as was the case in the past. In some respects, that is a significant shift from a regional-policy philosophy to an enterprise-policy approach. The Scottish Executive has still to finalise its operational programmes. We understand that it will do so by the end of this month.

Another aspect of the changes is that the Scottish Executive has proposed a new approach to administering the funds, moving away from the PME-based approach that we have seen up to now. That is likely to involve a mix of a commissioning approach—in other words, allocating tranches of funding to organisations, such as the development agencies or community planning partnerships—and the retention of a challenge fund approach for some of the funding, which will involve some of the funding being delivered through a competitive bidding system, but with fewer organisations being involved than are involved at present. There will be a programme for the Highlands and Islands and a programme for the rest of Scotland.

The arguments that have been used to justify those shifts relate to added value, value for money, effectiveness and efficiency. A successor committee might like to consider various questions in that regard. Will the new approach provide added value for Scotland? To what extent will the funding be used to promote innovation, in terms of not only research and development but experimental approaches to economic development, which is something that the European Commission has been pushing? Will the new system be more efficient and, therefore, provide value for money? Further, what will be the consequences for regional and local development

efforts of the fact that some of the existing beneficiaries will lose out in the new system?

The other set of issues that could be of interest to a successor committee is medium and long-term issues that concern the future of the EU's European cohesion policy in Scotland. It was only last year that the EU agreed a reform of its finances and policies, including cohesion policy. However, as you might recall, the budgetary debate was strongly contested and the agreement that was achieved was only a temporary compromise. Part of the budget deal contained an important provision relating to a major review of all areas of EU policy expenditure as well as its income. That budget review will take place in 2008-09 and will be carried out by the European Commission. Member states and others are already starting to think about how they can influence the outcome, as it could define the shape of EU policy areas and spending areas until 2020.

Some key questions will arise. What is the balance among spending on agricultural policy, cohesion policy, policies to promote competitiveness and the other areas that are rising up the policy agenda in Europe—energy, environment, security and so on? That debate clearly matters to Scotland, and it may be appropriate for this committee—perhaps working with other committees—to make a timely contribution to it.

The Convener: That was helpful, and thank you for the report. I invite comments and questions.

Christine May: I am getting the blame for the research—I use the word “blame” advisedly. I am sorry if I am an anorak, but I found the report and presentation extremely interesting. The key points that were pulled out—such as on the numbers of jobs created and sustained, on the fact that things happened that would not necessarily have happened in that way or at that time, and on the amount of leverage—were good and welcome.

I have some specific questions. Dr Davies talked about the difference in approach between us and many of the larger mainland European states. I was always struck by the extent to which politicians, particularly in France and Germany, took ownership of European structural funds. Ministers in various provincial and regional Governments used the funds for the benefit of key industries in their areas and also to generate a political platform for themselves. That gave European funding a level of recognition that it never seemed to achieve here. Will the new approach do more to highlight the impact, value and legacy of European funds?

My other question also refers to one of your findings and the idea of following the domestic

policy agenda rather than reinventing the wheel. That brings me to the age-old question: is the domestic policy agenda the chicken or the egg? Does the domestic agenda involve examining what might be available for match funding and tailoring policy towards it, or does the system work the other way round? Which do you think that it should be?

The Convener: We are a wee bit tight for time, so it would be helpful if you could keep your answers reasonably tight.

Professor Bachtler: Those are good questions. As was said, we have taken a different approach in Scotland. In part, that reflects the fact that the system in Scotland was created in a pre-devolution era, when we did not have the politicians to take ownership in quite the same way as we have post-devolution. It is true that politicians in some countries are more involved than here, but it is not always clear that that leads to optimal outcomes. It is fair to say that in some countries there is perhaps more of a carve-up behind closed doors within the relevant committees, and also that structural funds have had less visibility than in Scotland—here, to a certain extent, there has been a more objective approach to allocating the funding. However, we are in a new era with the changes being introduced by the Scottish Executive.

The question whether or not structural funds are better and what political impact they have depends on how they are used. What we have seen from countries that use the system that we are moving towards is that structural funds almost disappear from the public eye because they are subsumed in the domestic policy agenda. The Commission is pushing quite strongly for at least part of the funding in the new period—not only in Scotland but elsewhere—to be used innovatively, not just to add to the budgets of domestic policy organisations but to try new things. That is important for the Commission because, in the budget review, it wants to be able to say that structural funds have added value and that they are important for richer countries as well as poorer countries. Whether that happens here depends on how the commissioning bodies, such as Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, allocate funding and on the challenge fund approach.

Dr Davies: One interesting aspect of the new period, which runs from this year to 2013, is that EU rules are becoming more stringent on themes—on the categories of spending to which money is allocated—such as innovation. However, the rules will be less stringent on the areas to which funding is allocated. For people such as us who take a regional policy perspective, that is a bit concerning, because the feeling is that funding will

be channelled into sectoral spending that favours more dynamic areas, whereas the funding has traditionally been used to support the development of weaker areas. If Scotland did not want to go along with that approach entirely, some spending would have to be targeted on innovation and so on.

To an extent, it is up to Scottish authorities to determine whether to undertake geographical earmarking. Some authorities in the EU are deciding to move away from area designation, because it is too complicated and more bureaucratic. However, if it is thought that more EU funding should go to poorer parts of Scotland, perhaps such designation could be considered.

My personal view is that it is important that Scottish authorities and domestic authorities have a clear view of how they want to use structural funds resources rather than simply wait to be told that EU rules say do this, that or the other, because they will tell people to do too many things. People might as well have a good view of what to do themselves.

The Convener: The Executive recently announced that the minimum size of projects will increase to achieve more bang for the buck in the next six years, but small local projects and charities have complained about that. On the basis of your research, do you have a view on that?

The European Commission has looked back at previous years' allocations, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, and has a claim against the Executive for £20 million to be repaid on the ground that money was not spent properly. Have you reached a view on that claim's validity?

Professor Bachtler: As Sara Davies said in her presentation, like other parts of the UK, Scotland has allocated structural funds to a much larger number and more diverse range of beneficiaries, particularly at community level, than most other countries have. The shift partly reflects manageability—quite a lot of problems have related to managing structural funds over such a diverse range of projects—and the thematic shifts that Sara Davies talked about to focus more on matters such as innovation and entrepreneurship.

At a Scotland level, an argument exists in favour of the shift that you mentioned, if the aim is to follow the EU agenda of promoting a higher economic growth rate. However, the shift could be disadvantageous for smaller organisations, some of whose existence has been predicated on receiving structural funds. If vital projects are going to lose out, a domestic policy response must be made.

16:30

Your second question was on audit and clawback. That is a problematic area. We did not consider it in our research, but we know that it arose partly because the European Commission now employs a much more stringent approach to audit. In some cases, the Commission was not happy with the way in which structural funds were implemented, even though the delivery system was set up with the Commission's support and previous auditors approved it.

Many of the European commissioners' concerns were about small-scale systemic failures, such as a failure to keep the right paperwork. In many cases, there were concerns about the traceability of paperwork. The commissioners were concerned not that monitoring was not done or was not effective but that the paperwork was not always available to demonstrate that it had been done. That does not mean that there is a fundamental problem with corruption or the improper use of funding. My understanding is that there was a combination of systemic problems.

Christine May: I was part of a local authority that had a clawback from the first round of funding towards the end of the second round. That happened because papers were missing due to the change in local authority structures and because one contract was let—legally—before the go-ahead was given. That should not have happened, but it did. Some of the tightening up happened as a result of concerns about the use of structural funds in other countries. In some cases, the UK fell foul of that. Nevertheless, such technical breaches have to be dealt with.

I am much more concerned about the changes in the structure for the new round and the local impact that they will have. There is concern about the amount of dialogue that has taken place with voluntary organisations, and there is concern that we will lose a lot of the expertise that has built up in the system in areas such as project development, project management, evaluation techniques and monitoring. A lot of small organisations are likely to go out of existence. Will you comment on that area of significant concern?

Dr Davies: One reason for the strong focus on community development and voluntary organisations in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK is that, in the early 1990s, no one else was funding those areas. They have risen up the political agenda in Scotland, particularly since the creation of the Scottish Parliament, and there is now a strong focus on them. If one was starting from scratch, one might not use structural funds for such projects, but there is a great deal of expertise, and it would be a shame if it were lost. Perhaps local authorities in Scotland should consider whether projects should be funded

domestically from other sources. If some projects cannot be funded in that way but are still valuable, structural funds could be a good way of funding them.

Susan Deacon: I am conscious that Christine May was rather apologetic about raising the matter, so I stress that it is helpful that she did so. There are many issues that need to be addressed and we have touched on some of them today, but we are conscious that today's meeting of the committee is almost its last gasp in the current session of Parliament, so our capacity to address the issues is limited. Nonetheless, I would welcome comments on a couple of themes.

The complexity of the system was mentioned several times in the presentation. We live in a complex world, but, in my experience, structural funds programmes are particularly difficult to get a handle on. When organisations or constituents approach one to intervene on their behalf in the area, it is more difficult to work out how to do so than it is in many other funding areas.

You have talked a lot about the forthcoming changes at the policy level. How confident are you that the system's complexity will be reduced in some way? What efforts are being made to reduce that complexity? Many of the improvements that you have talked about cannot be made unless people can navigate their way around the issues and unless they know how to engage in the discussion.

A related issue is how we can encourage the human behaviour that will ensure that good practices or the characteristics of successful projects are adopted and that different tiers of Government speak to one another to make the best use of resources. I cannot remember what the heading of your slide on that matter was—I apologise. Many of the things that I am talking about are not rocket science. How can the right behaviour be encouraged? Does the Executive have any plans to encourage the best people practices, as opposed to tackling the policy and process issues that have been mentioned?

I echo Christine May's concerns about what the changes might mean and how they have been handled. Such issues should be considered in the future.

I have spoken about my local experience, but I am conscious that I cannot do much about things in the next three weeks.

The Convener: I stress that we are taking the research seriously and that our findings will be passed to our successor committee and to the European and External Relations Committee and its successor committee. A lot of helpful research has been done in the exercise, which has been useful.

Christine May: In addition, the repercussions of changes will be around for a while, not only in managing the changes but in picking up on issues afterwards.

I worry that we will lose some elements of innovation. In my experience, it is often the smaller, more localised groups that come up with the most imaginative solutions and the most creative ways of using funds.

The Convener: Professor Bachtler, do you want the last word?

Professor Bachtler: I do not know whether it will be the last word, but I will try to respond briefly to a couple of the points that have been raised.

On complexity, Christine May and others will recall the agenda 2000 document of 1997 and the heading on the simplification of structural funds. There was a big push on that in 2001, but programme managers who will be responsible for the next period do not talk about simplification. The EU regulations are quite small—only about 30 pages long—but European strategic objectives are associated with these issues and the translation of those objectives into practice inevitably brings with it a whole series of requirements.

Over time, more and more concern has been expressed at European level about spending money on European policies, which has led to increasing attention being paid to monitoring, evaluation, financial control and audit. Much of the bureaucracy comes from the monitoring and financial control. There is a clash between the desire for something simple and the criticisms of the way in which European money is being spent. I am not hopeful that things will be less complex in future.

However, I am more hopeful about the retention of good practice. Structural funds have been in Scotland as programmes since 1986 and as projects since 1975. Looking at what happened during the 1990s, one sees that a fair amount of what one could call the good practice associated with structural funds became part of the domestic policy agenda. Partnership in Scotland pre-dated structural funds, but it was given a powerful push by structural funds. Ditto community development, equal opportunities and the whole integration agenda, to which much importance has been accorded.

A fair amount of added value from structural funds has become embedded, so the question is, where do we go from here? Can structural funds continue to play an innovative role in future?

The Convener: Thank you—that was very helpful. I am sure that we will take these issues forward; as Christine May said, loads of issues will be around for the next six years.

I remind members that we will have one more meeting next Thursday, at one o'clock, to deal with 11 statutory instruments. You will have noticed that the Subordinate Legislation Committee had 68 statutory instruments to deal with in one meeting today, which is ridiculous. But there you go; we have to do our job.

I ask members to wait behind after I close the meeting.

Meeting closed at 16:41.

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