

THE ROLE OF SPORT IN SCOTLAND

“Sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels.”

(Council of Europe, 2001)

Introduction

Sport plays a major role *throughout* the life of many Scots and it also makes a unique contribution to Scottish society. Sport has a significant role to play in building a population which is physically and mentally healthy, competitive and passionate about striving to be the best it can be.

Sport supports employment for tens of thousands and it helps the economy to flourish. Sport is intrinsic to Scotland’s culture and sense of pride, making a positive impact on communities across the country. It is also highly valued by the many thousands of individuals who continue their close involvement as participants, coaches, leaders and administrators, and by the growing number of professional officers now working in Scottish sport.

Sport can lift the spirit of the nation. It can provide direction and purpose. It can develop leaders and it can teach lessons of endeavour, of winning and losing. Sport can build confidence and self-esteem, it can challenge and inspire, it can entertain us. Most of all, sport has a limitless capacity to provide endless hours of enjoyment and fun.

In all its forms, sport is a key aspect of life in Scotland today.

Scottish sport policy can achieve both increased participation and improved performance, but only if we have an integrated and coherently managed delivery system.

The key policies which the Scottish Parliament should adopt in order to achieve this transformation of the role of sport in our society are set out below. They are in part informed by the study published by The Scottish Institute of Sport Foundation (www.inthewinningzone.com) last autumn, entitled *‘How to achieve a sporting culture of excellence in Scotland’* (for more information on this study see Background comments below).

An important conclusion of this study was that there is need for clear and unambiguous *leadership* to reduce current fragmentation and to manage the various elements of the sporting 'supply chain' in Scotland.

Policy Proposals

1 School Sport

Sport needs to regain an important place in the school curriculum and competitive sport at school needs to be encouraged and to become an important element of the evaluation of school performance.

This can be achieved by **ensuring that every child at P5 level and above has the opportunity to play competitive school sport within the timetabled day, on at least one afternoon every week.**

This will necessitate investment in coaching, through adequate training, freeing up and funding the time of teachers / PE staff and engaging in innovative partnerships with business and National Governing Bodies designed to increase the pool of available coaching talent.

2 Sport and Education

The reinvigoration of school sport which is proposed above, offers the prospect of aligning the development of academic excellence alongside athletic excellence, both in school and at University, in such a manner that the educational experience of the 'student-athlete' is paramount.

Scotland lags behind many other countries in fostering schools of sporting excellence, where academic progress is a prerequisite of sporting success. The opportunity exists for sport to be seen in the context of being a valued enhancement to a quality (primary, secondary and tertiary) education experience, where 'student-athletes' will be better prepared to achieve their potential in life because they have participated in sport at an advanced competitive level.

Investment should therefore be directed at developing six (residential) secondary schools of sporting excellence in Scotland – to align with the existing Area Institutes of Sport (in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness and Stirling) – with the objectives of:

- discovering and developing sports talent;
- achieving international excellence in sports performance;

- providing an exceptional physical, mental, social and educational learning environment; and
- providing the highest international standards of sport science services.

In addition, further work needs to be done to engage with all Scottish Universities to recognize the role of sport in the development and well being of students and to foster a healthy competitive sporting culture at such establishments.

The enormous impact which intercollegiate sport can have on individuals and society is exemplified by the following quote from the current President of the National Collegiate Athletic Association ('NCAA'), Myles Brand:

'Intercollegiate athletics in America is a unique experience, linked both by tradition and value to higher education. Today, more than 360,000 student-athletes participate in college sports at NCAA member institutions. The overwhelming majority of them are students first and then athletes, and they participate for the love of the game.'

'As a former university president and current NCAA president, I believe in the developmental value of sports participation. Intercollegiate athletics is proof that the modern American university experience is much more than lectures and tests. College sports are both a laboratory in life-lessons for those who participate and a model of character development for those who watch.'

3 Coaching

The role of the coach in encouraging sustained participation in sport and to develop talent in and through sport is critical. However, to date investment in establishing coaching as a 'profession' has been insufficient. Coaches are excellent role models, especially for young people, and it is essential if we are to see the full benefits of investment in sport (including sports facilities), that we have an adequate pool of trained and remunerated *full time* coaches in Scotland. Excellence in coaching is not only about winning medals – it means that quality coaches should be delivering quality coaching at every level of the player pathway. This infrastructure will be the basis for linking coaches with Active Schools, local sports clubs, regional academies, Area Institutes of Sport and the Scottish Institute of Sport.

Sport policy must therefore ensure -

- **enhanced quality and quantity of coaching;**

- increased number of *full time* qualified coaches, leading to –
- sustained and increased participation in sport;
- improved performances in sport, underpinned by –
- the establishment of coaching as a profession.

4 Facilities

An audit conducted last year by **sportscotland** concluded that £300 million needs to be spent every year for the next 25 years to bring the country's sport facilities up-to-date. The audit found that almost three quarters of grass pitches in Scotland need upgrading or replaced to bring them up to standard.

Policy must ensure that sports facilities in Scotland are quickly brought up to date and thereafter, suitably maintained.

Policy also needs to address the use of the *existing* school sport infrastructure. At present many councils in Scotland are implementing strategies designed to reduce the number of school lettings, so that janitorial overtime and energy costs can be reduced.

Investment must be committed to maximize the immediate use of all available school facilities.

5 Leadership

Sport in all its forms is a key aspect of life in Scotland today. However, there is a need for **clear and unambiguous leadership** to reduce current fragmentation and to manage the various elements of the sporting 'supply chain' in Scotland.

Sport has a significant role to play in building a population which is physically and mentally healthy and of course, the broad impact of sport on our society starts at a young age. Sport has a particularly prominent place in the political limelight at present, given the 'home' 2012 Olympics and the hoped-for 'home' 2014 Commonwealth Games. If the legacy benefits of these two events are to be realised fully in Scotland, then it is time for Sport to be led in an unambiguous fashion at Cabinet level.

The evidence from around the world suggests that the time has now come for Government's management of Sport to be separated from the Tourism and Culture portfolios and given its own prominence -

Australia- Minister for Sport
Austria- The Federal Ministry for Public Service and Sport
Belgium- Flemish Minister for Sports
Bulgaria- Minister for Sport
Canada – Minister for Sport
Croatia- Youth and Sports Minister
Finland- Sports Division of the Ministry of Education
France- The Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Education are responsible for most physical and sporting activities. The Ministry of Youth and Sports is responsible for promoting all forms of sporting activities for all age groups, for the management and supervision of State aid support to sports groups and for defining and implementing training schemes for voluntary or professional sport leaders.
The Ministry of National Education is responsible for the matters of physical and sports education, which includes school sport.
Germany- Federal Ministry of the Interior
Greece- Minister for Sport
Hungary- Sports minister
Iceland- Ministry for education, science and culture
Italy- Minister for Education, Deputy Prime Minister for Sport
Luxemburg -The Ministry of Physical Education and Sports
New Zealand- Minister for Sport
Portugal- State Secretariat for Sport
Romania- Sports minister
Russia- Minister for Sport
Spain- Ministry of Education and Culture
The Netherlands- Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports.

Sport also needs to be seen as a distinct function with separate accountability within Local Authorities. The Executive and **sportscotland** must provide enhanced support to Local Authorities to ensure that the facilities and resources to develop sport throughout the country are in place. This will involve increased financial and coaching related support for local sports clubs, the bedrock on which sustained participation and sporting success can be built.

sportscotland must focus on increasing participation and building the coaching infrastructure in Scotland, leaving the Scottish Institute of Sport to push back barriers, be innovative and focus on supporting and challenging our key sports and top athletes to be world class.

Background

The Scottish Institute of Sport Foundation (www.inthewinningzone.com) recently commissioned a study by the University of Stirling to explore possible relationships between elite sporting success and aspects of Scottish culture, values and motivations. The report, entitled *'How to achieve a sporting culture of excellence in Scotland'* was published in September 2006.

The core unifying concern identified by the research team was the *general lack of sporting cultures of excellence in Scotland*.

Some comments from those interviewed for the study - 31 individuals involved in elite sport, selected to reflect experience (foreign coaches working in Scotland and Scottish coaches with overseas experience), type of sport (individual, partner and team sports), gender and some athletes who have achieved international success – are relevant background to the issues we now face;

"To raise standards you have to have intensity of competition ...If you don't have the quality of competition that tests your skill levels under immense pressure you are never going to develop that ... [In Scotland] we have to address the intensity of junior competition..."

"School does not encourage competition in the slightest ... Anything you do you are not allowed to single out performance, everyone has to be successful ... Everyone doesn't have to be successful, everyone has to gain a certain level of attainment, granted ..."

"When it comes to high performance sport, coaching has to be more than a hobby."

"They are satisfied to produce Scottish champions. But that is not what we want – we want to produce Olympic champions. But for achieving you have to learn... But if you think that you are already the best, you are not open-minded about learning ... we go abroad for learning."

"The existing performance culture in Scotland is the biggest obstacle for being successful in Scottish [sport] ... The problem of the Scots is the lack of the goal-oriented way of working, the lack of any performance culture. They don't want to work for goals... They are hard-working in terms of running after the ball, but they don't see the goal to beat the world-best ...nations; they are not at all achievement-oriented ... They act just for the sake of hard-working, not for the sake of winning."

As a result of the work carried out by the Stirling team, The Scottish Institute of Sport Foundation raised a number of issues for consideration, all of which are relevant to building a sporting culture of excellence in Scotland -

Strategy

- There is a need for a coherent and integrated *strategy* for the elite sport system. The inter-dependent roles of each partner in this continuum should be identified clearly and recognition and status accorded to each contribution.
- There is need for clear and unambiguous *leadership* to reduce current fragmentation and to manage the various elements of this 'supply chain'.
- There is a need to move beyond useful, but ad hoc initiatives, and view the proposed action points as part of an *integrated and coherently managed system*.

School PE and Sport

- There is a need to ensure the *early development of multi-sports skills*, with specialisation introduced at appropriate times dependent on the needs of individual sports.
- There is a need to provide earlier experience of *intense competition* via the establishment of school-based leagues and competitions or alternative approaches.
- There is need to promote and support best practice in developing *school/club links* (e.g. PE School Sport and Club Links initiative; table tennis' Premier Club System).
- Both schools and sports clubs need to be assisted to develop and implement more *systematic talent ID systems*.

Sports clubs and competition structures

- Clarification is required about the *relative roles of clubs and governing bodies* in the production of elite performers.
- Governing bodies need to develop and implement *whole sport strategies*.
- Consideration needs to be given to possible solutions to *weak competition structures*.

- There is need to identify and/or promote good practice in the development of a *coherent development continuum*, with links from schools to elite squads.

Coaches

- A thorough *review of coach education* is required, including the development of more athlete-centred approaches (especially for those working with talented and elite performers).
- The development and support of a system based on a *continuum of coaches*.
- There is a need for more *coherent strategic management* of this 'supply-chain'
- *Foreign travel* and knowledge of a variety of sports needs to be encouraged and funded. A system is required for the subsequent dissemination of this knowledge.
- There is a need for the funding of more *full-time coaches* and the development of more coherent career structure.
- In the context of greater professionalisation of coaching there is a need for a *strategy to protect and support volunteer coaches*.
- A systematic *review of benchmarking* is required for all sports.

Sporting cultures of excellence

- The *promotion of sporting cultures of excellence* and knowledge of what it takes to be an elite athlete should inform of aspects of the strategy and all investments.
- Early international experience and *systematic and integrated role model/mentoring* programmes should be introduced for both athletes and coaches.
- Funding organisations should ensure that *benchmarking* is set at appropriate, challenging, levels.
- Consideration should be given to a *media strategy*, including training to manage the impact of media coverage on athletes.

Funding

- There is need for a *sport-by-sport review of current lottery funding* within the context of the new strategy.
- Universities should be encouraged to adopt a more systematic and integrated approach to *sports scholarships*.
- Business funding and support should be sought, especially *for business/sport exchange programmes* and organisational, process and people management training.

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