

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

14 January 2010

Agenda Item	
Report No	

**Response to Parliamentary Petition on all Weather
Primary Sports Facilities**

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service

Summary

The Public Petitions committee of the Scottish Parliament wrote to The Highland Council on 4th November 2009 requesting a response by 1st December 2009 to Petition PE 1256 urging the Scottish Parliament to provide additional targeted funding to ensure that all primary schools have access to appropriate all weather sports facilities to encourage an active lifestyle from an early age.

This report outlines the response given recognising that the deadline required officers to reply before it could be presented to this Committee and invites members to comment so that any additional response may be forwarded after this meeting.

Background

- 1.1 The Public Petitions Committee considered Petition PE1256 calling on the Scottish Parliament to provide additional targeted funding to ensure that all primary schools have access to appropriate all weather sports facilities to encourage an active lifestyle from an early age. The Public Petitions Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government and 3 local authorities including The Highland Council seeking responses to the points laid out below. The deadline for the initial response was 1st December 2009 with a meeting to give further consideration to written responses being held on 10 February 2010.
- 1.2 The points raised were as follows:
 - How can schools meet the target of two hours PE when outdoor playing fields are not usable and there is no suitable indoor venue?
 - What specific action is it taking to address this?
 - Of the primary schools constructed since 1999 how many have a) dedicated indoor sports facilities, b) external sports facilities, and c) external weather facilities?
 - Further, of the pitches (whether all weather or not), how many are of a full size (i.e. football)?
 - Finally, with respect to the sports facilities constructed, how many were done so under PPP/PFI?

2. Response

- 2.1 Due to the deadline for response being in between committee meetings it has been necessary for officers to respond initially and to invite committee to make any further comment. The petition and response are provided as Appendices 1 and 2 to this report.
- 2.2 In summary, the response outlines that of 183 Highland Primary schools 117 have a reasonable facility providing for regular organised physical activity, either outdoor or indoor or both.

There are 66 Primary Schools which do not have suitable facilities for organised sport or physical activity. Of these 29 make arrangements to use community facilities in their area. This leaves 37 Primary Schools with no opportunity for regular organised physical activity.

Measures are being taken to address these issues with a programme of school building and refurbishment with a priority list of schools where there are plans to provide outdoor multi-use games areas (MUGAs) which provide opportunities less weather dependant. Priority is based on existing provision, rurality, distance to alternatives, school roll and areas of economic disadvantage. The aim is to ensure some measure of quality sports provision for each rural community is of parallel importance to maintaining good sports facilities in population centres.

In addition to providing facilities, Highland Council sponsors a course for Primary teachers to enrol on an in-service Post Graduate Certificate of Education in Primary PE Teaching. In year 2009-10 17 Highland Primary School teachers are undertaking this course.

Highland Council recognises that there is an issue of adequacy of facilities for PE in Primary Schools but there are measures currently in place to improve this position within the resources available. However, Highland Council would support the objective of the petition that additional provision of resources from the Government would greatly assist the ability of primary school staff to deliver adequate, regular and quality sessions of physical activity.

- 2.3 A table is provided in Appendix 2 detailing the provisions in schools constructed since 1999. Of the 9 Primary schools built since 1999, seven have been built under PPP contracts. All have external sports facilities, two have full size pitches and one, Kinlochleven, has external all weather sports facilities.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 Members are invited to: -
- i. note and comment on the response sent to the Public Petitions Committee
 - ii. agree any additional response required

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. H. Lee'.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 15 December 2009

Author:

Ref:

Background Papers



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE

Alistair Dodds
Chief Executive
The Highland Council
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX

TG.01
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

Direct Tel: 0131-348-5178
(RNID Typetalk calls welcome)
Fax: 0131-348-5088
(Central) Textphone: 0131-348-5415

4 November 2009

Dear Mr Dodds,

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1256

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide additional targeted funding to ensure that all primary schools have access to appropriate all weather sport facilities to encourage an active healthy lifestyle from an early age.

The Public Petitions Committee considered the above petition at its meeting on 3 November 2009 and agreed to write to the Scottish Government and a selection of local authorities (East Dunbartonshire, Dundee and Highland) seeking responses to specific points.

Purpose

The purpose of this letter is to seek a written response to the—

- specific issues raised in this petition
- the following specific questions—
- How can schools meet the target of two hours PE when outdoor playing fields are not usable and there is no suitable indoor venue? What specific action is it taking to address this?
- Of the primary schools constructed since 1999 how many have (a) dedicated indoor sports facilities, (b) external sports facilities, and (c) external all weather facilities. Further, of the pitches (whether all weather or not), how many are of a

Dear Ms Wilson,

Primary Sports Facilities: Petition PE1256

The Chief Executive has asked me to respond to your letter of the 4th November 2009. In it you asked two questions, and these are addressed below.

The Council does not meet formally until after the deadline for a response. Should Members wish to add anything to the position outlined below I will, of course, write to you.

Yours etc.

Ian Murray

How can schools meet the target of two hours PE when outdoor playing fields are not usable and there is no suitable indoor venue? What specific action is it taking to address this?

Highland Council operates 183 Primary Schools, and within that estate there is a complete spectrum in terms of adequacy of provision for PE, sport and physical activity. A recent survey recorded that 117 Primary Schools have a reasonable facility that provides opportunity for regular organised physical activity, some outdoor, some indoor and some with both. These spaces do vary in quality. Where there is only an outdoor area, physical activity can be weather dependent and in some cases playing fields do remain unusable after prolonged wet weather.

There are, however, 66 Primary Schools which do not have any suitable outdoor or indoor facilities for organised sport or physical activity. Of these, 29 make arrangements to use community facilities in the area. Not all of these are themselves of a high standard. This leaves 37 Primary Schools which simply have no opportunity for regular organised physical activity, with children simply playing as best they can in the immediate school surrounds. Several of these schools are very small and in rural locations, but this should not preclude the children from the same range of opportunities as everyone else.

There are some measures that can be taken to address these issues. Highland Council has a programme of school building and refurbishment. Adequate sports facilities for both the school and community is always a factor in these plans, and a factor in determining where priorities lie for these plans. Highland Council has also established a priority list of Primary Schools where there are plans, as finance allows, to provide outdoor Multi-use Games Areas (MUGAs), which provide outdoor opportunities that are less weather dependant. Priorities are based on a combination of factors including the current adequacy of existing facilities, rurality and distance to alternatives, school rolls, and areas of economic disadvantage. Highland Council aims to ensure that some quality sports provision (eg MUGAs) for each rural community is of parallel importance to maintaining good sports facilities in population centres. In all cases there is an assumption that, ideally, provision is based around schools, with joint school and community access.

In addition to the provision of facilities, it is important that Primary School teachers have the training and skills to conduct quality sessions of sport and physical activity. For this reason Highland Council sponsors a course for Primary Teachers to enrol on an in-service Post Graduate Certificate of Education in Primary PE Teaching. This is delivered by Glasgow University lecturers in the Highlands. In year 2009-10 seventeen Highland Primary School teachers are undertaking that course, providing a pool of PE specialists which are increasing year on year.

Highland Council recognises that there is an issue of adequacy of facilities for PE in Primary Schools, and this is a drawback to the level of physical activity the Council aspires to provide for primary school children. In recognising this, Highland Council does have a series of measures in place to improve opportunities over time within the resources available. However, Highland Council would support the objective of the petition that additional provision of resources by Government would accelerate progress, and would assist the ability of primary school staff to deliver adequate, regular and quality sessions of physical activity.

Of the primary schools constructed since 1999 how many have a) dedicated indoor sports facilities, b) external sports facilities, and c) external all weather facilities. Further, of the pitches (whether all weather or not), how many are of a full size (i.e. football). Finally, with respect to the sports facilities constructed, how many were done so under PPP/PFI

No	School	Year built	Indoor sports facilities	External sports facilities	External all weather sports facilities	Full size pitch	PPP
1.	Acharacle Primary School	2009	Yes	No	No	No	No
2.	Strathpeffer Primary School	2000	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
3.	Strathdearn Primary School	2002	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
4.	Speanbridge Primary School	2002	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
5.	Inshes Primary School	2007	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
6.	Culbockie Primary School	2007	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
7.	Resolis Primary School	2007	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
8.	Bun-sqoil Ghaidhlig Inbhir Nis	2007	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
9.	Kinlochleven Primary/High School	2008	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes