

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE**

**13 November 2008**

Agenda Item	
Report No	

**Parliamentary Inquiry – Pathways into Sport**  
**Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport**

**SUMMARY**

This report recommends a response from Highland Council to a series of questions posed by the Health and Sport Committee of the Scottish Parliament in connection with an inquiry into any barriers that people in Scotland, and young people in particular, are facing in the early stages of their participation in sport.

**1. The Highland Council Programme**

- 1.1 This report refers to the Highland Council programme objectives to continue to provide opportunities to enjoy the arts, sport and cultural experiences; to give a high priority to Highland's children being healthy and active; and implement the Highland Play Strategy

**2. Introduction**

- 2.1 The Health and Sport Committee of the Scottish Parliament is concerned that the number of Scots participating in sport is declining nationally, and targets for young people's participation in particular are not being met.
- 2.2 Organisations with an interest and involvement in sport throughout Scotland, including Local Authorities, are being approached with a series of questions concerning this issue in order to assist the Committee investigate whether there are significant barriers to participation, what these are, and how they may be overcome.

**3. Questions posed by the Inquiry**

- 3.1 The inquiry is focusing on three main topics, with questions structured around Children and Sport, Community Facilities and Coaching.
- 3.2 A draft response to the questionnaire is included in appendix 1 of this report. Members will be invited to comment on the response, and to make any additional comments for inclusion in the Council's response.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications following on from this report.

#### **3. Recommendation**

3.1 Members are requested to:

- a) comment on the draft answers to the Parliamentary Inquiry questions provided in Appendix One and to make any additional comments for inclusion in the response, and
- b) approve the submission of the response to the Health and Sport Committee of the Scottish Parliament.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 3 November 2008

Author: Graham Watson, Community Development Manager

Ref: HF/EM/GW

## **Appendix One:**

### **Scottish Parliament Health and Sport Committee Inquiry** **Pathways into Sport**

#### **Response of Highland Council**

##### **Children and Sport:**

##### **What level of sport and physical activity should be provided by primary and, separately, secondary schools?**

The two current targets set for children are 'one hour of physical activity each day' and 120 minutes of good quality PE each week.

Both targets are reasonably appropriate. However, there is some confusion in schools over the difference between the two targets. There is no separate target for sport in either primary or secondary schools as sport is deemed to be covered within the two targets for physical activity and PE. A more appropriate target for both primary and secondary pupils might be:

- 120 minutes of PE delivered by a specialist teacher of physical education or class teacher in primary schools.
- One hour of daily physical activity or sport. This target could include exercise, travel, play or school sport and should be seen as additional to 120 minutes of PE.
- Schools should provide a wide range of opportunities to support school sport and promote and encourage young people to participate in sporting opportunities within the wider sporting community.

##### **Is the lack of the right type of facilities in schools compromising sports education?**

In large and small primary schools there is a lack of appropriate facilities to provide good quality PE and sport, both indoor and outdoor. There are good emerging links between primary and secondary schools sharing facilities and the new build public private partnership schools provide good sports facilities. However, new schools are a small percentage of the whole school estate.

In secondary schools most facilities are suitable for a wide range of sports activities although many outdoor fields are in poor condition and flood easily.

##### **Who has the responsibility for ensuring that there is adequate sports education in the school system?**

There are no formal mechanisms to ensure that schools provide 'sports' education. Guidelines are in place to ensure schools work towards providing 120 minutes of PE. In Highland, Quality Improvement Officers, PE subject support and Active Schools Co-ordinators support schools attempting to meet the targets for PE, but this has proved very difficult with no new resource being provided by central government for provision of PE teachers.

Active Schools Co-ordinators in partnership with teachers, parents, senior pupils, school sport associations strongly encourage schools to participate in festivals, events and competitions. Ultimately the Head Teacher of the establishment sets the ethos and makes decisions within the school as to whether the school participates or not in competitions and events. Fortunately in Highland a high percentage of schools participate in school sports events.

##### **Are there enough of the right facilities in schools to deliver appropriate levels of sports education?**

Overall, there is a shortage of appropriate facilities notably swimming, outdoor playing fields and suitable gym and games halls.

School Sport Associations who voluntarily run the interschool events are supported by Active Schools Co-ordinators but are in need of funding to provide teacher release time to allow those staff involved in the organisation and running of events the time to organise them. Active Schools Co-ordinators have made a

real impact in supporting school sport but the move to tackling inequalities, targeting inactive children, girls, disability and BME can take away from the universal impact of developing school sport for all .

The funding of Active Schools has not kept up with wage inflation and has caused a reduction in service provision, particularly impacting on secondary schools.

### **How can the links between schools and sports clubs be improved?**

Active School Co-ordinators are the link between PE in schools and community clubs, and pathways from school PE to participation in the community has improved. Notice boards in schools and personal contacts between staff and community clubs are more detailed and extensive than previously. Clubs can and should be encouraged to contribute to school PE programmes, holiday programmes and taster sessions.

PE staff in schools should examine the activities delivered within core programmes and explicitly promote opportunities for community provision.

### **What differences have Active Schools Co-ordinators made to the links between schools and clubs?**

In Highland each community school grouping of secondary and primary schools has a pathways map identifying:

- Activities taught in curriculum time (primary & secondary)
- The out of hours opportunities for sport
- The availability of a community sports club.

Efforts to close gaps in the pathway to performance are being undertaken.

- Club contacts and details are posted on school notice boards
- Holiday programmes where club involvement is part of the programme encourage the links to be developed.
- Club volunteers are supported to gain NGB qualifications through the Active Schools Coach Education programme at no cost.
- Clubs are encouraged to deliver after school activity sessions for young people.
- Sports clubs are supported through local Sports Councils which Active School Co-ordinators attend.
- Active School Co-ordinators and sport development staff audit a sample of community club child protection policies.

### **What are the barriers to universal access for children, for example travel costs and the cost of equipment and kit?**

In the Highland Council area the biggest barrier to participation in sport is the cost and availability of transport. The most rural communities find the costs of travel disadvantages them both in terms of participating in out of school activity and the cost of transportation when accessing other sports events.

Lottery funding has been a good source of help for schools and community groups to access funding for equipment for sport. Regrettably this fund seems to be diminishing and it has become more difficult to make successful applications.

As school staffing levels tighten, schools are finding it more difficult to release teachers to take young people to sports events.

### **Community facilities:**

#### **How effective has the National and Regional Sports Facilities Strategy been in delivering facilities for community use?**

The impact of the National Sports Strategy has been lessened because of the level of local match funding expected in order to draw down funding from the Sports Lottery and **Sportscotland**. The expectation that the facility base required locally to meet national targets can be, in the main, funded locally, is unrealistic.

**Do local authorities have their own community sports facilities strategies? Where such strategies exist, what role do community planning partnerships and community health partnerships play in developing those strategies?**

Highland has had a sports strategy since 2002. A successor strategy is due to be considered by Highland Council's Education, Culture and Sport Committee in November 2008. It provides a logical basis for establishing the priorities for future sports facility development based on identifying the major gaps in existing provision based on **sportscotland** standards. This includes refurbishment of existing facilities where they are not fit for purpose to contribute effectively to the required standards of provision. This particular project has largely been driven forward by Highland Council as the main provider and funding agency for sports facilities. Community Planning and Health partnerships have been involved in the development of a parallel Sports Strategy which charts the way sport will develop in the Highlands, including through the use of Sports Facilities, and thereby influences the requirements for sports facilities in the Sports Facility Strategy.

**What are the barriers to making better use of school and other facilities, such as by the wider community, and how can such barriers be overcome?**

The barriers are not substantial, and all Highland schools are available for community use. However, there are difficulties to overcome. These include cost – there are staffing implications of ensuring the safety, security and customer service of wider community use. Secondly, facilities designed for one type of user group are not necessarily ideal for others. School facilities and equipment are generally designed for high volume, high impact usage. Community users often have different aspirations for the presentation and use of facilities and equipment. There are also child protection issues that can require school and community access to be separated.

Despite there being some barriers, overcoming these barriers comes down to the culture and priorities of the organisation, and dual use of facilities is a priority in Highland. Such joint use has increased considerably in recent years.

**How can examples of best practice in the provision of facilities be learned from and rolled out on a wider basis?**

There is availability of information on best practice for facility development and operation, at several levels. Scotland has national organisations for advice and information exchange, notably **sportscotland** and APSE Scotland. There are also more informal networks, including a Network Group of Facility Managers in Scotland who request and exchange information on a virtually daily basis. Information exchange is therefore operating quite effectively in both formal and informal settings. Highland Council would be willing to share its approach to joint community and school facility planning, which is based around a standard model for the geographical catchment areas of its twenty-nine secondary schools. This is designed to ensure adequacy of provision (the legal obligation on the Council, equity (across an area the size of Belgium), and best value (in terms of joint school and community use)

**What lessons can be learnt from the way in which community sports facilities are used in other countries?**

Highland Council officers have experience of observing the structure and operation of sports facilities and organisations in Belgium, France, Austria, Netherlands, Sweden and Australia. The overall impression is that there is a stronger emphasis on the provision of, and involvement in facilities by the community. More frequently community facilities are financially supported by Local Government, rather than directly provided. The operation of activities within these facilities also has a stronger emphasis on community involvement, particularly from parents. There is a clearer understanding of the requirement of parents to contribute, both financially, and in practical ways, be it coaching, facility maintenance, administration or fund raising activities. This commitment is a requirement, and children's activities or teams can be allowed to stall if parental commitment is not forthcoming. This tradition of community and parental involvement can contrast, in many instances, with Local Authorities providing the direct organisation and staffing of sports activities, which are sometimes treated by parents as childcare facilities.

Another difference is that, although there is an emphasis on grass roots sports development in Scotland, it is generally the most talented emerging from introductory and improver sessions that move on to more

organised competition or leagues. The impression in many European States is that competition and leagues are organised at many levels, thereby including less talented athletes in competition. This is seen as key to development.

Thirdly, the status of coaching is more highly valued, resulting in Coaches remaining as coaches. There is a danger in Scotland that the best coaches move “up” into administration and the organisation of activity, rather than continuing to provide the direct technical skills that help improve individual athletes.

## **Coaching:**

### **Are there enough coaches and volunteers to support sport in Scotland?**

There are a large number of qualified coaches in Highland, and elsewhere in Scotland. However many of them are inactive, having dropped out either because their child is no longer involved in the sport locally or simple burn out. We need to put more effort into retaining and re-engaging these coaches.

The UK Coaching Framework launched this year, which involves input by all four home country sports councils, highlights the need to ‘professionalize’ coaching standards. While we can never match the passion of volunteer coaches, we must never totally rely on them either. Investment in creating paid coaching positions to sensitively support and enhance that which is happening voluntarily will make a significant impact on sports development.

Initiatives such as Coaching Highland make the most of Local Authority expenditure by using it to generate a four-fold increase in budget by attracting additional funding. The project to date has trained and funded over 2,000 Coaches for NGB Awards, trained over 1,000 Active School Volunteers free of charge with NGB awards, qualified more than 1,200 Sports Leaders in Secondary Schools, plus many other forms of support such as mentoring and providing resources.

### **What systems exist to make sure that best use is made of the coaches who are currently available?**

With approximately 800 sports clubs in the Highland area, (the size of Wales), the resources to support coaches throughout the Highlands are extremely stretched, and are unlikely ever to be sufficient to meet all demand. However, those sports with Sports Specific Development Officers (SSDOs) are demonstrating significant inroads to support coaches and make best use of them for the benefits of the sport as a whole. This evidence would suggest that **sportscotland**’s pilots of ‘Regional Sports Partnerships’ which includes the provision of SSDOs as well as additional benefits of working strategically across sports should be expanded across Scotland.

### **What are the barriers to more people coaching, and volunteering to support, sport in Scotland?**

There are two main issues that we are aware of:

- Changes to Coaching Qualifications: The introduction of the UK Coaching Certificate is commendable to standardise coaching courses across different sports, but when a Level 1 award is typically 4 days long and costs approximately £200 this is having a damaging effect on recruiting coaches. Many NGBs have retained an introductory one day award outwith the UKCC levels costing on average £30 and are very popular but many people are not progressing past this. This will ultimately mean that we will have a shortage of quality coaches over time.
- Child Protection – clubs and volunteers are committed to the current Disclosure Checking process, but while we were consulting local communities for the Highland Sports Strategy, we heard of many coaches who had to undergo multiple Disclosures. One coach claimed to have 13 current certificates! Moves towards a single ‘passport’ type system is strongly encouraged.