

**DEVELOPING THE NEW SPORT ENGLAND
STRATEGY FOR 2008-2011**

SUMMARY REPORT ON CONSULTATION

**Sport England Policy Team
January 2008**

INTRODUCTION

Following the announcement towards the end of 2007 by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport that he wished to see a more focused role for Sport England in the future, Jennie Price, the Chief Executive, wrote to a wide range of sporting stakeholders on 2nd January 2008 seeking their views on the future direction of Sport England's Strategy for 2008-2011.

Although their views were invited on the general direction of the future work "without restriction", stakeholders were invited to focus their views around a number of key questions:

- Is there an overarching purpose for Sport England that would mirror the "4th in the medal table" and the "85% of children doing 2 hours PE in schools" targets of our two landscape partners?
- What organisations should be eligible for Sport England investment and how should it be allocated?
- What outcomes should investment into NGBs deliver and what kind of targets would be reasonable?
- What sort of relationship should Sport England seek to establish and build upon with local authorities?
- What quality measures can be used around clubs, coaches and volunteers in addition to quantitative measures?

The *summary analysis* that follows in this report is structured around these questions, although the wider views of stakeholders are also included in the first section, particularly around achieving clarity of purpose, ensuring there is a clear focus for Sport England's work, and comments on the 'structure' of the sporting sector in the future.

THE OVERALL FOCUS OF THE STRATEGY

Is there an overarching purpose for Sport England that would mirror the "4th in the medal table" and the "85% of children doing 2 hours PE in schools" targets of our two landscape partners?

The 'landscape partners' in the question are the Youth Sport Trust and UK Sport, both of which have a remit for working alongside Sport England in planning strategically for the future direction of sport in England and for putting in place a 'delivery structure' for each of their areas of interest. However it has been acknowledged by most consultees that the future direction of Sport England's strategy has to fit-in closely with the other two national landscape partners and the wider work on physical activity and

recreational sport and that any 'gaps' have to be identified and measures taken to 'fill them'.

Whether Sport England actually needs an equivalent overarching purpose with a similar distinct 'target to achieve is a matter of some debate amongst consultees. The consensus view is that, whilst a description of an 'overarching purpose' might be possible, it is not useful to try to set a 'target' or 'strapline' similar to the other landscape partners.

As with this final comment, the vast majority of consultees welcome the 'focus' on a 'world class community sports development structure' that embraces both the development of sporting pathways leading towards excellence and the development of opportunities to increase overall participation in sport amongst the population as a whole.

The views of the County Sport Partnerships (CSP) Directors' Forum are a useful summary of many of the principles of the 'world class system' that many consultees would like to see in place:

- There is a need for nationally driven strategies. However there will be a need to let local circumstances influence provision where effective joined up planning and coordination must be achieved to maximise economies of scale and reduce duplication of effort
- The principle that NGBs should define the needs of their sport based on developing strategies that are underpinned by the principles of LTAD and Equity. The scope of NGBs should include non traditional emerging sports, be comprehensive and not just focus on elite performance
- Future funding systems must ensure that NGBs deliver across a broad range of KPIs and it will be essential to ensure that NGB funding for community sport is ring fenced
- There is a need to develop a new breed of world class high quality clubs and sporting environments and be prepared to invest in improving facilities and people: world class coaches, volunteers and officials
- A national Community Sports Strategy for Sport England and its ultimate delivery must be embedded across all three landscape platforms and secure the absolute commitment of NGBs, YST, UK Sport and sportscoachUK
- Support to enhance local authority (as a major provider of facilities) sports infrastructure must be key, led and by the focussed intent to improve clubs, coaches and volunteers
- Clear accountability. This must run throughout the whole of the system, whilst recognising interdependencies and encouraging collaboration to achieve shared goals. There must be no competition between elements of the system
- It must be recognised that a World Class Community Sports System will need additional resources to match the spend in schools and performance sport.

There is also a clear message that Sport England has to be 'seen' as the leader of the development of sport across both parts of the new world class structure and not just another of the delivery agencies or a funding agency.

Some consultees also felt that the relationship with DCMS and Government as a whole needed to be agreed as part of establishing Sport England's role. At this stage, the key was to get the broad thrust of the Strategy agreed and for sporting landscape organisations and their partners to be allowed to 'get on with it'.

As far as the 'overarching description' of Sport England's role is concerned, many consultees attempted to come up with a suitable definition. There is an emphasis in many of these on taking a strategic lead, defining clearly agreed outcomes, working in partnership, developing sporting pathways, nurturing sports clubs and, most important of all, increasing overall participation in sport. Some also tried to set appropriate output measures of how this 'overarching description' might be measured, but as noted above the overwhelming view was that this was a difficult task given the wide remit of the Strategy.

There was some concern with the phrase 'world class', which was felt both to confuse where the focus of the Strategy might lie (i.e. with a focus on elite performers) and to mislead in terms of the overall ambition and how this might eventually be interpreted or measured.

Many consultees interpreted the need for the definition of Sport England's role to remain as broad as possible, serving the 'sporting community' in its widest sense, although this is couched in many different ways, very much reflecting the interests of the stakeholders. However, there was also felt to be a need for clarity and a consistent message as to what Sport England was trying to achieve.

There is also a very broad consensus on the overall focus of the 'delivery' of the Strategy and where the emphasis should lie. One consultee summed this up as the 'five Ps' and this type of definition has overwhelming support across the range of stakeholders:

- Provide opportunities for people to realise their potential;
- The partnerships between organisations that help to develop impact, value and sustainability;
- People are quite simply the resource that brings the Strategy to life. The importance of developing, supporting and resourcing coaches and volunteers in particular, who are vital in the development process for the talented and not so talented;
- The importance of performance not just at the very top of the sport for players with the ability and talent to reach that level, but also for those that aspire to improve;
- Sport is played in a range of places. Sports clubs could be regenerated to fulfil an accessible and vital role in introducing people to sport and, schools, with innovative approaches emerging in this environment to introduce young people to the sport

Others noted the need to join together each of these elements to maximise the impact of the Strategy at local level but also the need to take into account the complexity of the 'system' on the ground.

The emphasis on the role of NGB sports clubs in the Strategy has been endorsed by most consultees and the creation of 'thriving sports clubs' underpins many of the responses, and not just as one might expect from the NGBs. The need for clubs to strive towards delivering a quality experience is recognised, with quality facilities, quality coaching, good school links, appropriate competitive opportunities and work on where clubs might be able to grow beyond supporting their current members have all been regularly cited.

However, there is an acceptance that the Strategy should recognise the limitations of some NGB clubs to deliver 'community sport' and the need to recognise the contribution of public sports facilities and community

Following on from this theme, the continued role for Sport England to work *beyond* the NGB focus has been mentioned by a number of consultees. In some cases these are strong views, and it is clear that in determining the breadth of the Strategy, Sport England need to work with a range of partners to support NGBs and sports clubs. This includes support for 'external agencies', recognition of the role of local authorities, the need to work with organisations promoting the needs of 'priority groups', a recognition of the role of FE and HE and a broad remit to carry out research, promote best practice and identify future interventions:

Finally, there are a number of comments from consultees on the 'delivery structures' that need to be put in place to begin to bring around a strategic step-change. There is recognition amongst many consultees that the current structure is simply not working well enough. However, for some, the need for 'change' is recognised, but there are words of caution about the scale of the change that may be needed. Finally, some consultees feel there is a need for Sport England to reassess its own role and how it organises its relationship with other partners.

The future role of NGBs, the role of CSPs and the relationship needed with Local Authorities are discussed in more detail.

THE OVERALL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

What organisations should be eligible for Sport England investment and how should it be allocated?

There is an overall consensus that the Strategy should continue with the current 'mixed economy of investment', but that NGBs should be a major funding partner alongside 'local government'. In any exercise of this nature,

consultees will automatically 'make a case' for investment in their 'own activities' and so it is important to present an overview. On the whole there is a mature acceptance that 'priorities' will be inevitable, but there is a feeling that the focus now on 'sport' which the Secretary of State has identified is a positive move.

Nevertheless, there is an inevitable conflict in views between the larger NGBs and those medium sized and small NGBs as to the priorities for the future and these differences of opinion are shared by some consultees outside of the NGB structure. Perhaps the consensus view of those consultees who are *not* NGBs is the best approach to adopt in the future should be to invest in those NGBs and clubs who are best placed to deliver on the twin objectives of the 'world class community sports development structure. There is also a plea from some consultees that funding for NGBs should also reflect their sport's contribution to wider social outcomes. Perhaps more importantly, there is a clear consensus that NGBs should be able to demonstrate that they are 'fit for purpose'.

Alongside NGBs, there is recognition that 'local government' and local non-sporting third sector partners have a major contribution to make to the 'community' aspects of the Strategy. The links to 'other agendas' is often cited to justify this view.

In addition, consultees recognise the value of investing in 'expert' specialist organisations, similar to the current Sport England Funded Partners.

Many consultees, particularly those from the County Sports Partnerships feel that resources need to be invested at a regional and county level. It is not surprising to note that they see investment in this sub-regional structure as a vital element of 'delivering' the Strategy.

Finally, investment in school, FE and HE facilities and infrastructure has been highlighted with the role of HE felt to have been significantly undervalued to date.

The area of greatest consensus amongst NGBs is *not* who should be eligible for funding, but the funding mechanisms themselves. There is a regular plea that the current system place too many straightjackets on the NGBs and that they are overly bureaucratic. The current short-term nature of the funding regimes are seen as inhibiting 'risk taking' and 'innovation', thus holding back the potential development of sport at all levels. There are a number of shared views about how things could be improved:

- a 'new assessment method' based on self-assessment and peer review that focuses on objective judgements about excellence, innovation and risk taking
- risk taking needs financial security, so the system should move to long-term funding for the 'most able' organisations with innovative ambitions
- the funding should reflect the existing sports structures – mainly national and county, with member clubs at the local level

- at the county level, a degree of clarity needs to be provided around the contribution made by CSPs, so that this is consistent across the country
- a series of ‘non-departmental bodies’ need to be established to provide the ‘quality input’ to NGBs

In addition, the ‘relationship management regime’ with NGBs should be a ‘light touch’, with significant investment in to NGBs to develop the quality of people to carry out self-assessment ‘health checks based on agreed standards. Any evidence of failure should be followed up in one of three ways:

- conditional continued funding based on agreed improvement criteria
- short term funding introduced until issues have been resolved
- and in extreme cases, removal of all funding

The key to making this new approach work is that individual NGBs should be trusted with the maintenance and measurement of standards within their own sport.

There is also considerable support for the introduction of a ‘single pot funding’ approach and a single planning process and regular criticism of the impact of ‘regionalisation’ and ‘ring fencing’ of the funding. A related view expressed by some consultees is that more needs to be done to maximise the return on existing investment by ‘joining up’ the current ring-fenced funding streams which support NGBs and other sporting partners.

There is a general feeling, however, that some of the recent capital programmes have been successful in delivering substantial investment into sport in a non-bureaucratic way, and that these may be models for future capital funding. There is considerable support for the continuation of capital funding, but also recognition that the current Sport England funding streams are not large enough to invest in large-scale capital facilities.

In this respect some of the consultees have expressed opinions on ‘how Sport England’ should structure their investment teams in the future to maximise the value of the new investment approach. Although the problems with regionalisation of decision making have been outlined above, there is a general consensus that ‘national’ teams alone cannot deliver the degree of ‘local’ knowledge required to fund investment programmes at ‘county’ level.

One consultee has proposed the following approach to improve the current relationship with funded partners and build on some of the new proposals outlined above:

- “National funding should be focused on NGBs and this should be facilitated through a small high quality team at Sport England headquarters. This funding should be allocated based on single plans for funding (which should sit as a broader strategy for the sport) – i.e. the expectation that an NGB can develop a plan and get it all funded needs to be managed.

- There may need to be a county level (as this is where sport is organised) delivery agent and these should be funded by Sport England, but only to deliver the needs of NGBs. This will predominantly relate to activity planned by those NGBs who do not have the capacity to deliver at anything other than national level. The County level agent must be held accountable for delivery of the agenda set by the sport – almost operating in a “sub contractor” relationship
- Activity relating to increased participation will predominantly take place at local level through local agencies and these should be funded through a separate HQ team or through regional structures. The activity delivered at this level must be “signed-off” by the relevant sport to ensure that any increases in participation can be accommodated in clubs, by coaches etc.

THE RELATIONSHIP WITH NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES

What outcomes should investment into NGBs deliver and what kind of targets would be reasonable?

The general consensus is for the need to move from the regime of a system based on measurement to one based on outcomes. There is a strong view that purely quantifiable targets can become demoralising, especially for volunteers, and also they can be distorting in terms of work priorities. The overall approach should be to combine simple quantitative measures with those that give an ‘indication’ of quality.

One consultee summarised the sort of more detailed outputs and outcomes that might be appropriate: These can be summarised as:

- Coaching - numbers of coaches with UKCC endorsed qualifications
- Officiating – numbers of referees with NGB qualifications
- Volunteers – numbers of volunteers with a CRB check
- Clubs – numbers of clubs with club “accreditations”
- NGB’s – the number of coaching qualifications with UKCC endorsements
- The number of referee qualifications endorsed by the NGB
- Child welfare policies in place.
- These can be supported by indicative measures of quality, based upon the assumption that quality and well run clubs attract and retain members/participants.
 - The growth in the number of adult players
 - The growth in the number of U18 players
 - The growth in the number of volunteers” (NGB)

However, some consultees feel that we need to ensure that when we agree these ‘measures’ there is a consistency of effort in collecting them and that NGBs should provide simple means of collecting data.

In addition, it was accepted by many consultees that there needed to be appropriate targets built in around equality.

The overall emphasis of the 'target setting' should be on measuring each NGB against the whole plan for their sport and not linked to specific programmes. An alternative view, put forward by one national organisation, is that the Communities and Local Government Department have now agreed a 'participation indicator' in the new set of National Indicators and that this should form the basis of measuring success across the entire strategy.

THE RELATIONSHIP WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

What sort of relationship should Sport England seek to establish and build upon with local authorities?

In answering this question, many consultees have linked the relationship with Local Authorities to the ongoing working relationship with the County Sports Partnerships (CSP). At one extreme is the view that because of the presence of CSPs, Sport England should have no direct relationship with Local Authorities, but should develop 'strategic' relationships through Government departments and the Local Government Association to 'strategically' support CSPs.

At the other extreme is the view that Local Authorities are such a big 'player' in the provision of sports facilities and services that it is vital that the Strategy recognises their role and supports the development of these services in the future.

For the most part, the vast majority of consultees recognise the role of Local Authorities and support the role of the CSPs in being 'the main link' with Local Authorities. It is only the scale and nature of the relationship that is being debated in the responses.

At the 'strategic level, there is strong support for Sport England to strengthen its successful relationship which has been built up in recent years. Many of the consultees working most closely with local government make the point that sport has to continue to be seen as a means of helping local authorities deliver outcomes on the wider 'local government agenda', including combating obesity, promoting wellbeing and delivering safer and stronger communities.

There is also a view amongst local government consultees, that Sport England need to do more to persuade the Government of the importance of public sector leisure services in delivering the new Strategy.

There is a strong support for Sport England to continue to adopt a wide advocacy role with local government to ensure that 'grass roots' provision and

sport development teams are maintained, but also a recognition that the way 'local government works' is changing and the sporting sector needs to keep pace with those changes.

There is also support for Sport England helping local authorities to 'plan for the future' in their areas, supported by CSPs and a dedicated 'team' of experts in local authority systems, including the planning and development control functions.

One consultee set out clearly the five challenges that Sport England faces in engaging with local government in the future:

- the great majority of local authority chief executives have not got the faintest idea of the recent announcement by the Minister. Nor do they know what is the role of Sport England, the Youth Sport Trust or UK Sport, although mention of 2012 may cause them to pay attention
- it is necessary for the relationship between Sport England and local authorities to be seen to extend beyond leisure officers into the statutory children's services agenda and into the corporate policy agenda.
- local authorities increasingly need to be regarded as having different roles, e.g. strategic, influencing, delivery. The role of the local authority as community leader and, mostly, as chair of the Local Strategic Partnership, is certainly relevant
- consultation with local authorities by a body such as Sport England requires new approaches if it is to be meaningful. This puts a premium on the role of Sport England in the regions, not least in identifying senior local authority figures who are able to offer an informed view on sports policy development.
- probably most important from a local authority perspective, there is a need to assess the impact that the changes within the wider physical activity agenda are likely to have

Some views on the future role of CSPs have already been highlighted, but their relationship with local government has received much attention within the consultation process, not least because of the number of CSPs responding. Many of the *general consultees* have recognised the value of the CSPs in linking together the NGB and local authority work streams. There are also suggestions as to how the current working relationships between CSP and other partners, including NGBs, can be improved.

The CSP consultees are obviously endorsing their role as the key link with local communities and with local government and their role in facilitating the 'planning' process at a local level.

INTRODUCING QUALITY MEASURES IN TO THE STRATEGY

What quality measures can be used around clubs, coaches and volunteers in addition to quantitative measures?

Most consultees have recognised the need for effective quality measures to be established to ensure that the new Strategy delivers the 'world class' structure in the future. Whilst there is not seen to be the need for an 'overarching scheme' against which club and workforce development can be measured, there is an acceptance that new approaches might be needed and that NGBs are aware of the current tools.

For quality coaching measures, several consultees have suggested that sportscoach UK are best placed to lead on this area of work on behalf of Sport England, but there are also calls for the introduction of a licensing scheme for coaches.

Many consultees have suggested that club volunteers represent the most difficult area in which to introduce quality measures. One consultee has proposed that a pragmatic response could be to adapt the Investing in Volunteers (IiV) UK quality standard for volunteer management for the needs of sports organisations

Those consultees from within the generic volunteering sector believe that without good volunteer management, sport will be left behind in the volunteering marketplace. Sectors such as youth, environment and first aid are all offering tailored volunteering. These sectors are able to do this because they plan for their volunteering, they manage their volunteers as the most important resource they have because without volunteers they would not deliver. They invest in their volunteers. One possible solution has again been put forward to combine existing volunteering qualifications with existing runningsport courses.

Finally, some consultees have recognised the need for 'research evidence' to underpin the overall quality of the new 'world class community sports development structure' as a whole.

FINAL OVERALL COMMENTS

The majority of consultees recognise the need for the world class community sports development structure, or whatever title it finally emerges as, to be a **balance between the elements and partners that make it up** and that it should **not lose sight of the progress that has already been made**. Striking this balance is the key in the eyes of many people to overcoming the issues that have faced English sport in the past decade.

There is also a regularly expressed view that the new Strategy **presents an opportunity that must not be missed 'to get it right'**. The Government has challenged the sporting sector, and Sport England, to deliver a structure that

will finally 'work'. After a decade of being told that things must change, most of the consultees now appear ready to take up the challenge.