

ABAC's response to DCMS questionnaire on the future of sport

Foreword. The forthcoming cuts in Governmental spending will fall on those Departments whose budgets have not been ring fenced. The DCMS has published a questionnaire of the future of sports' funding with the aim of making radical changes to future funding programmes. The survey closed at the beginning of October. Government plans for moving forward are due out before the end of 2015.

Here are some of the key responses and comments from ABAC. Will any of the suggestions be implemented? Only time will tell.

Question.

Government would welcome views on what action could be taken - by Government, Sport England and the wider sector - to achieve a long-term, sustainable increase in sport participation in England.

ABAC Response

Differentiate between competitive sporting activities and mass fitness projects. Fund competitive sport using Lottery funds only. Combine and shrink Sport England and UK Sport, Sport coach UK. Fund mass participation through the exchequer via Department of Health. Return school funding to Youth Sports Trust and not to Department for Education. Remove Ltd Company by Guarantee status from NGB's and make them accountable to clubs

Question.

Government would welcome views on how we can ensure that funding goes to those organisations which can best deliver an increase in participation.

ABAC Response

Rather than take this approach we recommend that Government looks at the facilities needed to increase participation. The SE Inspired Facilities programme went directly to clubs to enhance facilities for increased local use. One member club who owned freehold property used infrequently by members now is open to a variety of sports and is used by the local community. This is how funding can help. Do not fund through NGB's who are bureaucratic and not cost effective

Question.

Government would welcome views on how to address the participation challenge in under-represented groups and in particular where maximum value for money can be found in delivering long-term, sustainable change.

ABAC Response

Same comments as above. Co-ordinate the various potential funding bodies such as charities and trusts.

Question.

Government would welcome views on: i) the role of the private sector in delivering public policy objectives in sport.

ABAC Response.

Mass participation runs are self financing and profitable to the private Companies so need no help, Encourage Community Companies to fund local clubs and activities by tax breaks and other

inducements. Make local club support part of negotiated packages when planning permission for major build projects is given. For example Wandsworth Council missed a trick when granting planning permission for the Battersea Power Station developers.

Question.

Government would welcome views on: ii) how public sector bodies, National Governing Bodies and other sports bodies can work with the private sector more effectively, and vice-versa.

ABAC Response.

NGB's are outwith the FOI and are totally unaccountable. Funding bodies such as Sport England do not properly check claims by the NGB's and often refuse to release data which they claim is commercially sensitive. There is a state of opaqueness which means that situations cannot be assessed and changes made when things are going wrong. The state of coaching for athletics is a case in point where there has been much obfuscation . The terrible state of coaching has yet to be fully revealed

Question.

Government would welcome views on how we can best support participation in new sports and activities, along with new and more flexible formats of traditional sports.

ABAC Response.

There is going to be a big collapse of track and field athletics competition in the future due to the shrinking pool of athletes. There are only 20,000 active athletes over the age of 16 years as opposed to claims that the numbers are 111,000. What is needed is an independent statistical review of say 7 major sports.

Question.

ii) how we can make best use of the vast data sources which could be made available from the public and private sectors.

ABAC Response.

By splitting sport (lottery funded) from participation and health issue (Exchequer funded) the use of data from NHS and local participation may be correlated. We believe activity should be promoted by the NHS

Question.

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ABAC Response.

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Question.

Government would welcome views on: i) whether we should be encouraging particular types of participation.

ABAC Response.

It starts at the schools. If participation in schools is increased and post school activities retained then reduction in obesity and life style illnesses will be reduced. Remove funding numbers targets as these lead to distorted and inaccurate survey results as targets have to be met and justified. Active People Survey Poll should be separately audited as its results are demonstrably inaccurate

Question.

Government would welcome views on: ii) what these particular types of participation should be.

ABAC Response.

Sport needs to take higher priority in schools. That means a proper career structure for PE teachers. See YST plans. Major mass runs are commercially viable in their own right and cater for the charity runners and fancy dress joggers. They do not need Govt support.

Question.

Government would welcome views on: iii) how whatever forms of participation in sport and physical activity we seek to encourage should be measured in future and how their return on investment can be proven.

ABAC Response.

That is the problem. When providing funding checks do need to be made on achievement against targets. A four year plan which cannot be modified is a blunt tool. Rather have a four year plan but with a review after the second and third years.. If there needs to be changes to plans then re-allocate resources..

Question.

Government would welcome views on how we can ensure that funding goes to those organisations which can best deliver an increase in participation.

ABAC Response.

Rather than take this approach we recommend that Government looks at the facilities needed to increase participation. The SE Inspired Facilities programme went directly to clubs to enhance facilities for increased local use. One member club who owned freehold property used infrequently by members now is open to a variety of sports and is used by the local community. This is how funding can help. Do not fund through NGB's who are bureaucratic and not cost effective

Question.

Government would welcome views on how we can best join together the relevant organisations and government departments to realise the positive social outcomes which sport can deliver, and whether government funding should be directed to achieve particular social outcomes.

ABAC Response.

We have covered these points. ABAC has 9 years of operation in the athletics sector. ABAC has commented on enforced structural changes to the sports' funding and organisation, identifying at the time many pitfalls which have come about.

The whole pathway from schools to senior participation has not been co-ordinated properly and is piecemeal. In some respects initiatives have been counter-productive.

Question.

Government would welcome views on how sport can specifically address the number of people who are physically inactive.

ABAC Response.

Events for the family will encourage participation. ParkRun in athletics is proving popular but the downside is that it is reducing the number of similar club events which in return is impacting negatively in club finances

Question.

Government would welcome views on how it can promote the sustainability of the Primary PE and Sport Premium's impact, in terms of: i) improved provision in primary schools themselves

ABAC Response.

Existing systems appear to be working well. There are enormous numbers of 9 -11 year olds seeking athletic competition. The limit is number of volunteers to run meetings Athletic Networks comprising around 6 clubs each need financial support to run events for young people. England Athletics did provide funding but this has stopped

Question.

Government would welcome views on how it can promote the sustainability of the Primary PE and Sport Premium's impact, in terms of: ii) continued participation and engagement of current primary school pupils as they progress through to secondary school.

ABAC Response.

Drop out is a major problem. The Sport England financed Satellite clubs project is being trialled around the country. After 2 years ABAC club's report pupils attending these after school clubs are mostly in clubs already. They are not reaching out to other children. Schools are partly to blame as they will not use funds provided by DfE for sport as they are not ring fenced for sport.

Question.

Government would welcome views on how we can encourage our young people to be more active, and the role that schools can play in supporting this.

ABAC Response.

Schools need a proper career structure for PE teachers and to devote more time to sport. They have to find ways of creating interest from all pupils. See YST plans

Question

Government would welcome views on how we can ensure that the School Games: i) remains relevant and inclusive.

ABAC Response.

It is working well. No need to change

Question.

Government would welcome views on how we can ensure that the School Games: ii) can promote both talent pathways and competitive sport for all.

ABAC Response.

Improve links with clubs.

Question.

Government would welcome views on how we can further encourage sport participation at Further and Higher Education levels.

ABAC Response.

It is at Universities that the drop out occurs. Set up University competitions. Probably there are about 5 Universities which attract serious sports people. It is the remainder who need to look at physical activities. There must be a way of incentivising them.

Question.

Government would welcome views on: i) the potential for growth in commercial investment for the sport sector.

ABAC Response.

The investment based on commercial sense is probably saturated now. To extend support needs additional carrot and stick initiatives. Local authorities have a role to play, Ref our earlier comments about linking sponsoring projects to planning grants.

Question.

Government would welcome views on the role of those benefiting from lucrative TV rights sales in ensuring that a portion of that income is distributed to support grassroots sport.

ABAC Response.

There needs to be more sport on Terrestrial TV. Local TV companies could encourage local events. More of the satellite TV companies' money should go to grass roots.

Question.

Government would welcome views on how the impact of the National Lottery on sport can be maximised.

ABAC Response.

Scrap Sport England and UK Sport and set up a new body just to allocate Lottery funds. This body would also deal with Arts Council and English Heritage awards. At the moment these bodies act

independently. For example the Great North Run Foundation in a single year received in total £1.2 million from the Arts Council, Sport England and English Heritage for the same project.

Question.

Government would welcome views on: i) the potential for growing philanthropic giving in sport.

ABAC Response.

CASC recognition could be extended and potential donors given guidelines on how their donations are tax efficient. How about a survey register of CASC registered clubs sub divided into sport sectors so that potential donors can see what is available. Perhaps clubs could have their own prospectus included. Aims and Objectives of the club.

End of on-line survey