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Health & Sport Committee  
T3.60  
The Scottish Parliament  
EDINBURGH  
EH99 1SP

15 November 2008

Dear Sir or Madam,

### **Pathways into Sport Inquiry**

The Scottish Orienteering Association (SOA) welcomes this consultation and the opportunity to contribute to the development of sport among children. Our detailed response to the specific issues raised in your letter is appended to this letter.

This accompanying letter contains a summary of what we feel are the key issues and, to provide some context for our response, a brief outline of orienteering, examples of pathways within the sport, governance & orienteering's contribution to national & local communities.

### **Key issues**

The areas identified as key to the long-term development of orienteering, and Scottish sport in general, are:

- Improved physical literacy and fundamental skills of schools age children (e.g. more curriculum time for sport and physical activity).
- The need for increased investment in coaches and quality coaching structures (e.g. support for coaches to gain UKCC accreditations and to support a career pathway for coaches).
- The provision of facilities for Community and Sports Clubs to work in partnership in developing sporting interest and talent
- Increased access by clubs and community groups to the school estate
- The need for substantial investment in Scotland's stock of sports facilities

### **The sport of orienteering**

Orienteering is an outdoor sport in which participants use a specially prepared large-scale orienteering map and a compass to find a series of control points. It is essentially a running sport, offering significant physical challenge as well as exercise for the brain. For the recreational orienteer, it provides an opportunity for a walk or jog in the countryside with the additional interest of a navigational challenge. At a competitive level, it involves route choice, technical skills, speed, stamina and concentration to maintain navigational

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accuracy. For the serious athlete, a structure of events from local to regional to national level enables the more able & committed to aspire to success at Scottish, British and World, elite and age-group, Championships.

Events are usually held in woodland, heath or moor, preferably with height variation to provide contour detail. Good liaison with rural communities, landowners and conservation bodies is essential and the governing body (SOA) & clubs work closely with organizations such as the Forestry Commission, SNH, RSPB, SRPBA and NFU Scotland. The SOA has access agreements with these bodies and works in partnership with them in assessing the effects of orienteering on habitat; studies have shown that orienteering has a low, and transitory, environmental impact.

Recent developments include the introduction of middle distance & sprint races (to supplement the traditional long race) and urban orienteering in city centres, suburbs, parks and university & college campuses. These provide more accessible opportunities for newcomers, novices and experienced orienteers, especially in the Central belt.

### **Examples of pathways within orienteering**

Performance pathways have been in place for many years and the current top UK orienteer, Jamie Stevenson, began orienteering as a schoolboy in Edinburgh. He progressed through club, Scottish and British Junior squads and was first selected for GB to run in the Junior World Championships in 1993. After university he taught in the UK before moving to Scandinavia, in 1999, in order to train and compete with the best in the world on a regular basis. He first ran in the Senior World Championships in 1997 and has represented GB in every subsequent World Championships. His skill and dedication have led to medal success at World, European, Nordic & British Championships and World Cup races. This year he anchored the GB Relay Team to a gold medal in the World Championships, the first time that GB have been Relay World Champions

Other Scots are following in his footsteps and Scotland typically has a 25% - 30% representation in GB squads at junior and senior level. The current SOA Professional Officer, Scott Fraser, was also a member of the recent World Championships team and won a bronze medal in the Sprint race at the 2008 World University Orienteering Championships.

The established club, regional, national pathway has been strengthened with the introduction of the Active Schools networks. As examples, clubs in Ayrshire and Royal Deeside have developed successful partnerships with Belmont Academy and Aboyne Academy and this has led to increased participation and competitive success. In the 2008 World School Championships Aboyne Academy won silver medals in the Long & Middle distance races and came second in the overall team competition.

The experiences of another club, Moravian Orienteering Club, is given in their submission to the inquiry (PS10)

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/hs/inquiries/pathwaysintosport/submissions.htm>. In recognition of their endeavours and achievements Mike Rodgers, a member of the club, has been nominated by Active Schools for the **SportMoray Services to Local Sport Award**.

## **Governance and orienteering in the community**

The sports governing body (SOA) comprises a President, 7 Directors (Operations, Development, Performance, Marketing & Communications, Partnerships, Secretary and Treasurer), all volunteers, supported by two staff members (a Professional Officer and a Development Officer) and a membership of approximately 1,400 who act as volunteers planning, organizing and staging events. Many also take on coaching, coordinating & committee roles within SOA and the affiliated clubs (18 open and 4 closed clubs such as universities); the majority of the support activities (website, newsletters, organization of training etc.) and other activities, such as social events, are all done by volunteers.

Over 400 events are organized each year, from small local events through district & regional events to the Scottish Championships. In addition, other major events are regularly held in Scotland; these include UK national events, such as Home Internationals and British Championships, and international events. During the last fourteen years three world championships have been held in Scotland; the World Schools Orienteering Championships (2008), the elite World Orienteering Championships (1999) and the World Veterans Orienteering Championships (1994). The World Championships in 1999 were run in conjunction with open races for all age groups (from under 10 to over 80) and attracted approx 6,000 visitors from all over the world; the SOA, in partnership with British Orienteering, the International Orienteering Federation and EventScotland, has plans to increase the frequency of international events in Scotland.

The open races at the 1999 World Championships were part of a weeklong International Orienteering Festival, which has been held in Scotland in alternate years since 1977. The last such event, in 2007, attracted over 4,000 competitors including 1,000 from overseas; many from Europe but also competitors from Australia, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Russia, Ukraine, USA. It is estimated that the events generate approximately £2million<sup>1</sup> for the local economy and the festival is moved around the country over a 12-year cycle. This spreads the benefits to different regions, provides local clubs with new orienteering maps and provides income to supplement that from membership fees, event levies, sportscotland development funds and lottery support.

The SOA and its clubs, in addition to helping local authorities map school playgrounds, also works with them and private landowners in developing permanent courses in woods and parks throughout Scotland; these are available to local communities, holidaymakers and sports-tourists throughout the year. A particularly popular scheme is that based in forests around the National Orienteering Centre in the Cairngorm National Park. The quality of the terrain is such that it attracts local, club, regional and international squads to the area for training camps.

Yours faithfully,

Scott Fraser

Professional Officer  
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<sup>1</sup> This figure is based on competitor questionnaires and endorsed by EventScotland & a tourism professional.



## PATHWAYS INTO SPORT INQUIRY

### Scottish Orienteering Association Response

#### Children and sport

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

At least 45 minutes per day for primary and 1 hour per day for secondary schools. The activities in the primary school curriculum should be as varied and as fun as possible to help develop the cardio respiratory (aerobic), musculo-skeletal (strength, stamina and flexibility) and neuro-muscular (balance, agility, coordination) systems. In line with current talent development models<sup>2</sup> sport and activity in secondary schools should be more performance related with the aim of becoming better at a given sport after learning the basic fundamentals in primary school. Elements of 'training' are introduced and a move towards peak performance.

**2. Is a lack of the right type of facilities in schools compromising sports education?**

Yes. The limited facilities provided by schools mean that only a few select sports get taught e.g. football, tennis, badminton, rugby, and gymnastics. Sports like orienteering suffer if there isn't an orienteering map produced of the school grounds (or any surrounding areas). We appreciate that it isn't realistic to try and cater for every sport, however we think it is important for children to see beyond the popular sports and get to try other sports, such as orienteering. A child may not be suited to, or talented at, the traditional school sports but may be a star in the making at orienteering if given the chance. By trying as many sports as possible in school there is a higher chance that they will find the right sport for them and will consequently continue participating in it upon leaving school. Some sports, like orienteering, also act as a learning zone for other subjects in the school curriculum such as geography and maths.

It is worth noting that orienteering is a key part of the physical education curriculum in England and it would be good to see this happening throughout the United Kingdom.

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<sup>2</sup> Abbot, A., Collins, D., Sowerby K. & Martindale, R. (2007) *Developing the Potential of Young People in Sport*. A report for sportscotland by the University of Edinburgh. Edinburgh: sportscotland. ([www.sportscotland.org.uk](http://www.sportscotland.org.uk) →Home/ Resource Library/ DPYPS)

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

First and foremost a clear strategy should be developed at government level, which would be implemented by all the staff available. Especially in the primary school - head teachers, class teachers, visiting specialist PE teachers and active schools coordinators all have a role to play in ensuring children receive adequate physical education. In the secondary schools it would be the head teacher and the head of PE as well as PE teachers and the active schools coordinator.

**4. Are they're enough of the right facilities in schools to deliver appropriate levels of sports education?**

See question 2.

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

Our organisation is trying to tackle this problem head-on. We believe that the best way to do this is for the schools and local clubs to work together at all levels. By this we mean schools inviting volunteer coaches from local clubs to come and help at 'after school' training or competitions. This relationship would hopefully develop so that gradually children from the school start joining the local club training and subsequently join and compete. Active School Coordinators would play a vital part if this was to be successful. The training of teachers about the basics of the sport would also be important.

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

It is clear that by making effective partnerships with Active Schools Coordinators, both the club and the school will benefit. Having a dedicated coordinator in each community school network to work with a number of different schools, as well as to build contacts within the community and to link with clubs is a very positive step. It becomes easier for schools to approach clubs and vice versa if it can all be done through this one independent contact.

Active Schools can not only help build a school/club link but also provide opportunities for coaches to go into schools and deliver sessions, identify volunteers (teachers, parents, other staff) to lead sessions or even become coaches, promote clubs, assist in organising inter-school festivals, and even identify funding opportunities for equipment and other resources. All this would be very difficult for a school to do individually as they are unlikely to have the time or resources.

The differences Active Schools Co-ordinators have made to the links between schools and clubs is already very noticeable and will only become more so once clubs see the enormous benefit to working alongside ASC's.

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

Excessive cost of out-of-hour activities, equipment and kit, lack of facilities nearby, insufficient programs, lack of transportation, lack of volunteers/supervisors and also lack of funding for coaches. The motivational aspect could also be a factor i.e. children haven't been 'turned on' by sport yet. For the participant, orienteering travel costs are generally high compared to the cost of equipment and kit which is minimal for the beginner.

**Community facilities**

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

Whilst the National and Regional Sports Facilities Strategy introduced in October 2003 has undoubtedly improved facilities for specific sports and communities, the level of funding and its distribution (very often through clubs) has resulted in significant improvement for some but has done little to improve the health and well-being of the nation. More recent strategies, such as those outlined in "The Potential of Sport: Maximising sports contribution to national and local outcomes", are more likely to lead to improvements in the overall health of individuals and hence the nation.

**2. 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?**

Developments, such as "Edinburgh Partnerships: Access to Sport and Culture", are seen as key vehicles for maximising the potential of sport outlined above. However, based on attendance at meetings, correspondence, questionnaires etc, there is a danger that the important contribution from the sports community is not fully appreciated or collected. A high percentage of people actively involved in sport, either as competitors or coaching (or both), are unlikely to have the time or inclination to attend meetings especially if little progress has been achieved in the past. The greater involvement of sports & health specialists would lead to a more successful partnership in achieving Scotland's strategic objectives.

**3. 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?**

Most people don't realise that some school facilities are available to the wider public out of school hours. A marketing campaign to inform the general public that facilities are available should overcome this. Initiatives such as 'open evenings' could also help. Additionally, one of the concerns that came out of an 'Edinburgh Partnerships' meeting was that only some schools were available; the ideal thing would be to make every school available in every region.

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

Examples of best practice can be learned from by evaluating its effectiveness. This could be achieved by using feedback forms from facility users and also by monitoring usage numbers. Key points where they think it's been successful need to be drawn out and made sure they are included into strategies in the future.

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

Many lessons can be learnt but there needs to be an investigation into which countries are more successful than others in facility usage. Then we would need to investigate further to find out *why* facility usage is higher and try to implement any lessons learnt.

**Coaching**

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

There can never be enough if we want to develop to desired participation levels. More could be done to encourage people to become volunteer coaches – in particular, more recognition and reward. Plus of course, the more volunteers the less time each person needs to give and is, therefore, more likely to give this time. A lot of people are put off volunteering thinking that it needs to be a big time commitment (See Q3).

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

Club coaches; join a club and you would no doubt get access to their coaches at club training sessions etc. The SGB's should have a register of all qualified coaches which clubs/groups can contact to find a local qualified coach. Perhaps a regional structure to mastermind and coordinate local volunteer coaches, with some form of government incentive to assist volunteers would be beneficial.

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

Cost of coaching qualifications, lack of free time for volunteers often spending significant time on other support activities, lack of funding to pay coaches and also a lack of confidence from individuals who don't think they have what it takes to be a coach. It could also be that the amount of 'red tape' is also detracting volunteers to become more involved in coaching e.g. child protection legislation.

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