

Personal Best

Policies on Sport and Fitness

Policy Paper 66



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Key Proposals

The basic principles of Liberal Democrat policy on sport and fitness are promoting social well-being and responsibility; enjoyment and choice.

Participation in sport from an early age should be developed by:

- Guaranteeing the current commitment to two hours per week of sport in schools for every child, through including those two hours within school curriculum time.
- Promoting opportunities for children to sample a range of sports, especially in our proposed 7-14 phases of education.
- Promoting partnerships between schools and local sports clubs.
- Reforming the role of PE Teachers so that they become PE Coordinators, delivering information about fitness and healthy eating.

Promote grassroots activity in sport by:

- Supporting clubs in making bids for funding by providing advice and expertise through local government.
- Developing key clubs across the country as a hub for sharing, developing and supporting other clubs so that their sport can develop.
- Maintaining good standards in clubs by introducing a 'Club Mark' scheme for sports clubs.

Reform the role of government in sport by:

- Giving the main responsibilities for sport to elected regional assemblies in those regions of England which choose to have them, with these assemblies taking on the role of current regional sports boards and Sport England, which will be abolished. This will benefit sport by bringing decision-making on sport closer to the people affected.
- Focusing national government work on sport on health promotion, through the Department of Health, abolishing the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Promote excellence and achievement in sport by:

- Allowing sports governing bodies the independence to determine their own attainment standards, development of qualifications, incentives and reward schemes that fit their activity.
- Fund quality training service provision, while maintaining support to individuals for living costs.

Tackle current issues in elite and professional sport by:

- Encouraging professional sports which attract large sums of money to take responsibility for funding lower levels of sport through a 'Next Generation' funding model.
- Allowing professional sports clubs the freedom to make their own decisions on issues such as ground location and merchandising, while promoting examples of good practice in involving supporters in decisions.

Why Sport?

1. What is sport?

1.0.1 Our approach is based on the Council of Europe's description of sport as "all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels".

1.0.2 Traditionally, when people think of 'sport', many imagine a competitive physical game, either team or individual. But sport is much broader than that - exercise such as aerobics should be seen as no less 'sporty' than something that involves competing against other people. For some people, especially those with disabilities, sport can also include physiotherapy. We also recognise that sport includes the experience of people watching sport as well as those actively participating in it. Sports and interest in different healthy activities change over time and policy should reflect this.

2. Why should political parties be interested in sport & fitness?

2.0.1 Sport matters to people. Millions participate in it - the UK has over 110,000 amateur sports clubs with over 5 million members. Millions more enjoy watching sport. For many people, sport is a central part of their lives. The sport people are involved in during their leisure time often gives them much more pleasure than any other part of their lives.

2.0.2 People often say that "Something must be done" about sport issues, ranging from sport in schools to high profile aspects of professional sport. Too often, political parties ignore such day-to-day concerns. Liberal Democrats believe that parties have a duty to make it clear to people what they do or don't intend to do about the issues of concern to the public - and why.

2.0.3 In addition, any political party which wants to improve the success and well-being of the nation should value the positive benefits of sport in terms of health, social cohesion, and national prestige. Health is a particularly important issue, with over 30,000 deaths a year in

England due to obesity. The adult obesity rate has tripled since 1982, with 19% of people in the UK obese, and 39% overweight.

2.0.4 We also know that sport is a key vehicle to help us succeed in other policy areas, such as crime reduction, education development and equal opportunity. It is vital that both local and national government, which have major responsibilities in these areas, recognise that sport can play a part in meeting policy goals - often by striking at the root of specific social problems. That means recognising the value of different types of individual and community sport in a wide range of circumstances.

3. What are Liberal Democrat principles on sport?

3.0.1 On all policy issues, Liberal Democrats start from the principle of freedom. We want to protect and enhance individual freedom, recognising that freedom is often strongest when individuals are part of a thriving community.

3.0.2 Many sports activities are best left to individuals, volunteers, local communities, or sports clubs. That means we believe that there are major areas of sport in which government should not get involved. Instead, we need to create a climate in which individual and community sport can thrive.

3.0.3 However, where government does have a role - and this role is defined below - our approach is informed by the following principles:

- Social well-being and social responsibility: the value of sport is not just in the sport itself but in all the other benefits it can bring. Therefore sport policy links with many of our other policies, but especially health.
- Enjoyment: to encourage people to take part in sport so that they can secure, for example, health benefits, sport should be enjoyable from people's first involvement in sport as children at school.
- Choice: the best people to decide on how a sport is delivered are those people who play,

volunteer, spectate, and work in their sport or activity, both nationally and locally.

3.0.4 Underpinning this is a strong belief that government money available for sport should be devolved to an appropriate body as close as possible to the people actually involved in sport, be that local government, regional government, or sport governing bodies. Where any overview is necessary, that can be carried out by bodies such as UK Sport and Skills Active UK which have the right expertise and structure to carry out such work.

4. What do Liberal Democrats think is right and wrong with sport at the moment?

4.0.1 There is a lot that is right about sport. Much sport in school is taught by committed staff who encourage a love of sport among children - for some children, sport is the best part of school.

4.0.2 In elite sport, many of our national teams are successful, such as England winning the 2003 Rugby Union World Cup. The English Institute of Sport is beginning to support services to elite athletes which we welcome.

4.0.3 It is also important to flag the extent to which professional clubs work hard in their communities, through schemes - often unsung - such as literacy projects.

4.0.4 Meanwhile, major sporting events with international appeal are regularly and successfully hosted, ranging from annual events such as Wimbledon, to those such as the Commonwealth Games.

4.0.5 Sport promotes volunteering which we believe is essential to developing supportive communities. Recent research by the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) points to the fact that 26% of all volunteering in the UK takes place round sport and recreation. The Grattan report to Sport England (1997) estimated that there were 1.5 million volunteers underpinning UK sport and that they represented approximately 108,000 full-time equivalents.

4.0.6 Sport is a significant part of the economy, generating wealth and employment. Sport

England estimates that in 2000, just under 2% of all employment was in sport-related activities - that means 400,000 people.

4.0.7 It is encouraging that the government recognises that programmes such as 'Positive Futures for Young People' which *use* sport are vital in improving social cohesion and interpersonal relationships among the socially excluded.

4.0.8 However, there are also three major problems. Firstly, participation. Only 46% of the population participate in sport more than 12 times a year, compared to 70% in Sweden and almost 80% in Finland. In terms of wider physical activity, only 32% of adults in England take 30 minutes of moderate exercise five times week, compared to 57% in Australia. Participation is lower among specific groups. Women are 19% less likely to take part in sport than men. Professionals are three times more likely to participate than people working in manual jobs. Ethnic minority participation is 6% lower than the national average.

4.0.9 This has consequences for health. There is a strong link between the amount of sport or exercise that people take part in, and their general health. This is something that has been recognised in Finland over many years, and helps to explain high levels of participation there. A major indicator of what is wrong with the health of the nation is obesity. Over 30,000 deaths a year in England are due to obesity. The adult obesity rate has tripled since 1982, with 19% of people in the UK obese, and 39% overweight. There is a particular concern about obesity in children. 10% of six year olds are obese, and 17% of fifteen year olds. While many factors cause this, especially diet, the lack of physical activity by many people is an issue.

4.0.10 The governance of sport is also a problem. It is over-complicated, with overlapping responsibilities among key agencies. In particular, Liberal Democrats believe that the current system for allocating funds to grassroots activity is too centralised. Our responses to these issues are outlined in the following sections.

What Role Is There For Government?

5. What role is there for national government?

5.0.1 There is a strong case for national government keeping out of many aspects of sport, including (perhaps controversially), aspects of professional sport. At the same time, however, there is a case for governing bodies asserting themselves more for the long-term benefit of sport. This case is set out below.

5.0.2 However, we do believe that national government should have a role in enabling and facilitating, rather than regulating. It also has responsibility for funding schools and health services, and operating tax regimes which will not hinder the voluntary sector unnecessarily.

5.0.3 Government can also promote sport for the wider benefits it can bring. In particular, this means health promotion, and for this reason we believe that the Department of Health is the best place for national sport functions. It should have central responsibility for government funding of sport, working with UK Sport. At the same time, we will abolish the Department for Culture, Media and Sport as part of our plans for slimmer national government, giving regions, local government and sports bodies a bigger role in sport policy and support.

5.0.4 There is also a role for government in supporting national bids to host major events such as the Olympics. Bids of this nature may involve a strongly regional element, or may require good coordination between different regions. This is particularly the case if the nation as a whole is to benefit from hosting an international event, as we hope will happen with a successful London bid for the 2012 Olympics. For this reason, we believe that such bids should be supported through our proposed Department of the Nations and Regions.

6. What role is there for local/regional government?

6.0.1 Local government and regional government have a special place in our approach to sport. Liberal Democrats believe that there are too many different levels of government and bodies linked to government dealing with sport.

We support the establishment of elected regional assemblies in those regions of England which wish to have them, and we also want to see local government less constrained by the demands of central government. So in keeping with our general approach to devolution within England, we believe that the main responsibility for sport should rest with regional assemblies. They would have responsibility for sports issues which have to be tackled on a wider basis than local authority boundaries. That would include, for example, oversight of the provision of centres of excellence or Olympic standard facilities.

6.0.2 We will scrap the unelected regional sports boards which are currently (although rather slowly) being created, with some already distributing funds. Giving their responsibilities to regional assemblies will be especially important as we envisage assemblies having a major role in health policy and want sport to be integrated in this effectively. They will also operate as an effective interface between national sports governing bodies and regional projects.

6.0.3 Regional assemblies would take on the work of Sport England, in the following key areas: distributing lottery funds, in conjunction with UK Sport; starting sport, to improve health; and staying in sport, by encouraging clubs, coaches and volunteers. These tasks would be better carried out by people who are locally accountable.

6.0.4 We would also like the English Institute of Sport to be brought into this regional framework with its nine regional multi-sport hub sites becoming the responsibility of regional government, but with UK Sport providing overview and strategic guidance. That would mean that the Institute is more involved than it currently is in grassroots sport. There should be regional centres of excellence with access for each region to state-of-the-art facilities.

6.0.5 As regards local government, Liberal Democrats already propose to give the main health commissioning functions currently discharged by Primary Care Trusts in England to elected local government, at the same tier that has responsibility for social services to ensure coherence of health and social care planning (see

Policy Paper 53, *Quality, Innovation, Choice*). We further propose that local government should plan for sport at the same level as it takes on the work of current Primary Care Trusts, so that it can integrate health and sport effectively. Meanwhile, planning for facilities would be part of the Community Plans that we also propose (see Policy Paper 55, *Planning for the 21st Century*).

6.0.6 We also want to see local government working in cooperation with the voluntary sector through partnerships to address inequality of opportunity, and to work with schools on providing facilities for local communities. This is covered in more detail in 16 and 9 below.

6.0.7 It is important to note that our existing policy on devolving power includes measures which will enable local authorities to fund sport more effectively, such as allowing local authorities to borrow for capital investment under similar rules to the central government, and reducing ring-fencing of local budgets.

Sport In Schools

7. How should sport in schools be improved?

7.0.1 The government says that it wants to see all children and young people taking part in two hours of sport a week at school. However, unless this is actually timetabled within the curriculum, many miss out. So as a first step, we want to see this two hour commitment as part of the curriculum until the age of 14. Where a young person has little interest in sport or has a special need which makes it hard for them to participate in mainstream sports provision, the PE Coordinator would be expected to work with that pupil to find a form of activity that is appropriate to them.

7.0.2 At the most basic level a child should learn how to swim and the principles of movement involved in running, jumping, turning, rolling, balancing and lifting, using a ball, how the body works, and how to lead a healthy and active lifestyle. Beyond this, we want to see children take up a sport which they enjoy, and which they will continue to take part in when they leave school. One of the biggest problems with school sports at present is that there is a diet of forced variety. Pupils tend to do one sport for twelve weeks and then another sport for the next twelve weeks, without ever getting good enough at any one sport really to enjoy it and to be able to sustain the activity independently.

7.0.3 The context within which we would deliver our two hour per week commitment is a reformed school system.¹ This would begin with a single Formative Stage of early years support for all children, lasting from birth until the September before the child turns 7. In the Formative Stage we do not advocate many compulsory, whole-class activities, and so we would advise staff to make equipment available to children, and to teach them how to use it if they are interested, rather than having “football lessons”. A model of good practice is the Youth Sport Trust TOPS

programme (Top Tots, Top Start, Top Play, Top Sport, Top Skill and Top Link).

7.0.4 From the September before they are 7 until the September after they turn 14, children would be in a Development Stage school, with a break in provision at the age of 11 - similar to the current break in primary schools between infants and juniors. From 7-11 would be an ideal time for children to experience a wide range of sports, and to decide which ones they enjoy most. From 11-14, children would be taught predominantly by subject specialist teachers rather than generalists, and they would be offered a choice of sports through the work of PE Coordinators (see below). If a child showed a particular aptitude for tennis, for example, the school would make an effort to introduce the child to the local tennis club or indoor tennis centre.

7.0.5 From the September after they turn 14 until they reach 19 young people would have a much freer choice of where, what and how they study in the Specialist Stage. They would be able to choose from studying at a school, a Sixth Form College, an FE College, or in the workplace on an accredited training scheme, or in a mixture of some of these places. There would be no compulsory sport involved in this, but all young people would be encouraged by their personal mentor to participate in sports. This could be done by offering young people in the first two years of the Specialist Stage credits towards a general certificate of all-round achievement for having participated in sport, or designing other reward schemes. A key aim of this stage would be to develop enjoyment of a sport so that healthy exercise can continue when people have left school. In order for this to work, all providers of Specialist Stage education must be participating. However, this would not mean that FE Colleges or workplace trainers would have to have their own sports facilities. Rather, access is the key, and the facilities used might be in schools, voluntary clubs, or local authority or commercial facilities.

7.0.6 To ensure that 14-19, Higher Education and Further Education institutions do encourage participation inspection reports should include an assessment of how effectively institutions are promoting sport.

¹ Further details are contained in the September 2002 Conference Motion ‘Foundation for the Future’ and *No Child Left Behind: Report of the Howson Commission into School Education* (August 2002).

7.0.7 Liberal Democrats want to see a sports structure that breaks out of the confines of traditional PE, and sees local sports clubs as a key provider of the training and competition element of sport. This would go a long way towards providing a sport and activity culture that does not end at the school gate. This requires a re-thinking of the role of PE teachers, and a re-working of the school curriculum, but the rewards to the individuals concerned and society at large are considerable. PE teachers, or PE Coordinators as they would become, would cease teaching a variety of sports, many of which they may not play well themselves, and would focus on one or two specialisms. They would teach these sports not only to pupils in their own school, but to pupils in other schools as well. Likewise, pupils who were not interested in the specialisms of their school's PE Coordinators would be able to choose a sport offered at a different school. Where needs can best be met through using facilities at local clubs and leisure centres a further role of PE Coordinators would be to help non-school providers to deliver high quality sports education.

7.0.8 PE Coordinators would also have a vital role in delivering information about fitness and healthy eating through the mainstream curriculum. This would include lessons on diet and nutrition, and advice on how much exercise young people should take each day. The PE Coordinator, rather than instructing young people in sport, would try to create patterns of healthy living for all pupils that will extend beyond their school years.

7.0.9 A key part of our approach to school sport is that we want to see Development and Specialist Stage schools play a role in providing a sport facility in rural areas. This is especially the case where there is a Multi-Use Games Area which can be located at the school, but be open to members of the local community out of school hours. School sports halls and grounds should be seen as a community resource in their own right, but also as part of a wider package of provision within a locality to tie in with the provision offered by Specialist Stage schools and local authorities.

7.0.10 Some parents are worried about the effects on children of participating in competitive sports when they are very young. We believe that competition, of the right nature, has an important place in school sport. However, under our proposed structure, children would be unlikely to

participate in many competitive activities during the Formative Stage, although these decisions would be left up to the professionals involved. Once children reach the Development Stage we believe that competition presents no problems as long as it is delivered sensibly. Children are often naturally competitive and allowing them to compete is an important way of developing their skills and level of achievement. For example, it is usually much easier to improve running speed by running against other people. So a sport, such as football for example, delivered on a pitch the right size for a child, with a ball of the right size will create the right ingredients for a child to begin enjoying a sport and playing competitively, as well as encouraging team building. Linking with local clubs will allow children to play in teams rather than age group which is both safer and more rewarding for a young person.

8. What can be done about the sale of playing fields?

8.0.1 This is a major concern for many people, but we believe that the matter is best dealt with locally by people who understand the particular local issues. It is difficult to take a national position on the issue because there may be good reasons for schools or councils to sell playing fields, for example, to raise revenue to invest in other sports facilities.

8.0.2 To make sure that local people can make decisions on these issues themselves, we will introduce a community led system of planning under which a community will set out land use policies within the framework set by the local council. A community plan will need to consider locations for communal facilities such as parkland and playing fields. The community plan will be reviewed on a regular basis by both the council and the community to ensure it continues to address the needs of the area.

Sport In Communities

9. How can strong local clubs be developed?

9.0.1 The UK as a whole has over 110,000 amateur sports clubs with over 5 million members. The clubs are the bedrock of many communities and make an important contribution to many people's lives. We have already set out our aspiration for clubs to be an integral part of school life and vice-versa. Clubs should be central to delivery and not peripheral.

9.0.2 Our aim is to have clubs linked with schools, operating during the day, evenings and weekend, and with a range of age groups and levels of ability. There are reasons for this which will benefit clubs. Rugby has had problems with the transition from mini-rugby to the full game. Children have different maturity rates and clubs have had to be careful not to put children in danger. Only big and well-resourced clubs have the membership numbers and coaches to make playing at ability rather than age possible. Linking into schools and paying for coaches will increase the participants in the club, allowing children to play to ability not age and provide the resources for a small club to develop the game. As part of this approach we would encourage schools to become part of the School Sport Co-ordinator (SSCo) Partnership network, promoting partnerships between schools and between schools and local sports clubs.

9.0.3 Initially we would want to develop a series of key clubs across the country and sport by sport, using existing clubs as a basis, with regions and local government working together. These clubs would need training resources and finance to deliver on our education and community priorities. They might work in conjunction with local schools, perhaps by sharing facilities. These clubs, by virtue of their special status, would become the hub for sharing, developing and supporting other clubs so that their sport could develop in the wider area, from county through to region and nationally. How each sport and activity develops from here will depend on their structures and the nature of their activity, but the aspiration would be to fund the development of clubs beyond the hubs to expand demand.

9.0.4 In particular, we would want sports clubs which:

- Are family, friend, community and spectator orientated, with the local community reflected in the supporter base, and are accessible to all.
- Raise money from selling their specialism to the education sector, the community, from grants and lottery, from health promotion and commercial sources.
- Have a strong record of expertise and professionalism.
- Have a strong volunteer structure.

9.0.5 To maintain good standards in clubs the Liberal Democrats will introduce a 'Club Mark' scheme for sports clubs similar to that operating in Northern Ireland. This involves accrediting sports clubs on, for example, coaching standards, qualifications, child friendly, safety, supporter development, and child protection. Clubs receive kite marks for each area of accreditation from their governing body, and we emphasise that it is important for sports themselves to judge standards, rather than have it done by government.

9.0.6 Some of the difficulties faced by local clubs are financial. Local sports clubs have often been hit hard by tax bills when they have only limited incomes. The Liberal Democrat Peer, Lord Phillips of Sudbury proposed a successful amendment to the Local Government Bill in 2003 to give community amateur sports clubs parity with charities for tax and rating purposes. The change will open the door for tens of thousands of amateur sports clubs to register as community amateur sports clubs (CASCs), and save millions of pounds.

10. How would Liberal Democrats use sport to boost participation and achieve other policy ambitions, such as health and supportive communities?

10.0.1 Sport should be thought about as being more than just sport. This is where the Liberal Democrat principles highlighted in 3 above come in. Our approach to sport means that in making decisions about, for example, funding, our top priorities will be activities which improve health.

10.0.2 Beyond that, we need to make sure that sport is properly integrated with other public policy decisions. Too many decisions are made centrally, when they could be made more locally, close to the people affected, and alongside other decisions relating to planning and local economic development. However, where there is a need for central government coordination of policy, this should be done by the Department of Health, to which we propose giving the main responsibility for sport at a national level (except in coordinating hosting of international events as stated in 5 above). This reflects our belief that a major focus of government involvement in sport should be health promotion.

10.0.3 Sports development needs to be a community based service which takes opportunity, information and support to where people are, rather than expect them to come to facilities.

10.0.4 Reforming school sport (see 7 above) is vital, but there also need to be links with transport policies which are beyond the remit of this paper. For example, cycling needs to be an attractive and safe option.

10.0.5 Overall, participation needs to become a lifetime behaviour pattern, starting in school, and expressed through a variety of sports at different stage of life.

11. How will Liberal Democrat policies make sport accessible to and relevant to every individual?

11.0.1 Sport at the Formative and Development stages of school is the place to start. With more opportunities to learn basic skills and then taste and excel at different sports, we will give young people the chance to find a sport that personally suits them.

11.0.2 We know that not all sports can totally adapt to all disabilities, but we would fund and encourage in-depth awareness training to ensure that no one is being stopped from taking part in a sport that they are able to do - this includes remembering that people with disabilities are all different and come with a variety of needs. We would like to reach a situation where nobody rules out involvement in a sport because of gender, race or disability.

11.0.3 However, we do accept that because of cultural identity, gender or ability some sports may be more popular than others. We would not force people from different cultures, gender or ability to play a particular sport to tick equalities boxes, but instead emphasise the need for governing bodies to ensure quality of access that does not discriminate so people are free to make the choice they want.

11.0.4 We would assist this through legislation (a single Equality Act), and ensuring that our funding regime for governing bodies includes cash for specialist advice and training to ensure that every citizen has the same opportunities. We also would continue to support initiatives to tackle particular areas of discrimination (such as Kick Racism out of Football).

11.0.5 We respect the role sport plays in helping address inequality in other areas of policy and how it can help make the difference in building a person's confidence and skills, bringing together communities, providing positive role models as well as developing personal athletic excellence.

12. How can we encourage employers to invest/support their staff in pursuing sport/healthy lifestyle?

12.0.1 Liberal Democrats believe that many employers will see great value in their employees taking part in sport. It can have social benefits among colleagues, promote business links with local communities, and of course, improve the health of the workforce.

12.0.2 There are many options that employers might pursue to encourage involvement in sport. For example, employers could arrange special memberships at a discounted rate with leisure centres or clubs. Large employers might decide to set up their own facilities and there are many

examples of this happening. Employers might also wish to give employees time off for helping out with local voluntary groups. Many successful businesses already do this because they recognise that fit and happy employees are a good investment.

12.0.3 However, we do not see any role for government in promoting such activities, or making them a right, any more than we would do so with regard to involvement in the arts, or charities. It is up to employers and employees to develop involvement in sports in a way that suits the individual business.

Governing and Funding Sport

13. What should happen to Sport England?

13.0.1 We would abolish Sport England. As stated in 6 above, regional assemblies would also take on the work of Sport England, in three key areas: distributing lottery funds, in conjunction with UK sport; starting sport, to improve health; and staying in sport, by encouraging clubs, coaches and volunteers. We believe that both of these tasks would be better carried out by people who are locally accountable.

13.0.2 At the same time, Sport England's work on succeeding in sport, by working to build an infrastructure capable of developing world class performers, would be better carried out by UK Sport in conjunction with governing bodies. These governing bodies would have a particularly important role where competition by 'England' rather than 'UK' or 'GB' teams is most common. There may be research, advice or support which might currently be carried out by Sport England, and which government felt necessary to provide to sport in order to meet government objectives, for example on improving health or furthering equal opportunities. This would be carried out by the Department for Health or contracted out to academic bodies.

14. What should sport governing bodies do?

14.0.1 Sport governing bodies (such as the Football Association, or the England and Wales Cricket Board) should regulate competition, quality control of coaching and development strategies, and enable the regions and clubs to build up the participation based and identify potentially elite performers.

14.0.2 The government is currently investing heavily in community coaching which 'tells' governing bodies what they should do and the standards they should achieve. Liberal Democrats believe that governing and umbrella bodies should have control over the development of qualifications, incentives and reward schemes that fit their activity. However, government should actively encourage people training in sports coaching to get qualifications which are

compliant with Learning and Skills Council requirements. That could be moderated through the Sector Skills Council, Skills Active UK.

14.0.3 Sports governing bodies should decide their own attainment standards (for example, swimming badges or judo belts). These are different to coaching qualifications and need to be done on a sport-by-sport basis, and in a way that encourages higher performance and rewarding success. These should be recognised and promoted by schools.

14.0.4 We also believe that in sports which are generally wealthy, governing bodies need to take on more of a role for encouraging grassroots activity. Further details are contained in 15 below.

15. How should sport be funded?

15.0.1 At present, sport funds much of sport, and this is important to recognise. The funding either comes in membership fees or spectator charges, or in kind from the time given by volunteers. At the same time, through taxation, sport makes a contribution to the Exchequer.

15.0.2 Where there is government funding, the main priorities for funding should be physical exercise and mass participation. Any judgement we take in government will be informed by those priorities, and we are not persuaded that current funding arrangements promote them. We would therefore review sport funding, so that where public funds are used, this money should be directed towards five aims in the following order of priority:

- Health. Focusing funding on sports which by encouraging participation have a beneficial effect on people's health.
- Youth. Creating good habits which will last a lifetime by encouraging people to find sports which interest them when they are young, promoting the idea of 'lifetime participation'.
- Access. Boosting participation among social groups and in areas (such as inner urban and rural areas) where participation is low,

building on existing preferences that particular groups may have for specific sports.

- Winning. Achieving national success in international events.
- Diversity. Supporting those sports which are less well funded than others through spectator or media incomes, but still have significant numbers of people involved.

15.0.3 Building on our fifth priority for funding above - diversity - our long-term vision for funding sports involves developing a 'Next Generation' model where wealthy sports, through their governing bodies, become entirely self-financing at all levels. This means that government funding can be focused in the less well-off sports. We believe that where professional sport attracts large sums of money from sponsorship, ticket sales and merchandise, it is legitimate to expect professional sport to support grassroots sport. The stars who make such money-making possible have all begun at grassroots level at some point in their career, and to some extent, the popularity of professional sports depends on participation across age ranges and abilities. There are good examples of this beginning to happen, for example, investment in community projects by football and rugby union have been particularly effective. However, there is still too much reliance on government money in sports which are relatively well-off at the upper levels, so we would work to ensure that the funding of grassroots sport in these cases could be less dependent on government, to allow more for the rest.

15.0.4 A key issue on funding of sport at present is the position of lottery funding. In recent years, this has been used to fund areas of core public services which we believe should be funded through taxation. We would aim to implement this principle and seek instead to use lottery funds more for the original good causes which include sport.

15.0.5 It is sometimes suggested that tax breaks for sport might be a useful way of encouraging participation, for example, in promoting links between businesses and sports clubs. We do not believe this is a useful way forward. In general, Liberal Democrats wish to see the tax system simplified, and tax credits are usually a complication. Moreover, we are not persuaded that tax breaks would promote participation beyond groups which are already involved in sport.

15.0.6 One important issue relating to the funding of sport in schools is sponsorship, for example by food companies. We believe that there is a clear role for a wide range of companies to support sport through providing equipment on a sponsorship basis. However, we have concerns about schemes which encourage the purchase of specific products in return for vouchers, and would prefer companies to support sport through sponsorship.

Volunteers

16. What can be done to encourage volunteers in sport?

16.0.1 The voluntary sector is an unacknowledged community resource. The Grattan report to Sport England (1997) estimated that there were 1.5 million volunteers underpinning UK sport and that they represented approximately 108,000 full-time equivalents. Of all volunteering in England, 26% is in sport.

16.0.2 However, the voluntary sector faces huge difficulties. Every report on the voluntary sport sector, in all its diversity, has concluded that one factor unites every segment: the chronic shortage of volunteers who have the time and the skills to carry out all that needs to be done to develop their sport *and* keep abreast of the demands for increasing 'professionalism' in both coaching and administration.

16.0.3 The voluntary sector has a fundamental dissatisfaction with the way in which public policy in general deals with the issue of financial support. It is almost exclusively 'project based', biased towards 'new' approaches and time limited.

16.0.4 Provision of facilities for voluntary sport is also fraught with difficulty. Before 1997, Conservative policies, both locally and nationally, favoured the commercial sector in delivering leisure services. There were occasions where the 'contracting culture' of the Conservatives looked to the voluntary sport sector as a contracted provider of service but neglected to develop the sector to the point where this could be a realistic option for local government. The traditional Labour approach has been direct provision of service through leisure centres. However, Sport England in the *Centres and Pools Study* (1999) showed that the usage of local government owned centres and pools was seriously biased towards social classes A, B and C1.

16.0.5 Meanwhile, funds earmarked for the voluntary sector in disadvantaged areas have been consistently underspent despite the recommendations of the Government's Policy Action Team 10, which argued for the part which voluntary activity in sport and the arts could play in Neighbourhood Renewal.

16.0.6 Liberal Democrats have an existing

volunteering policy (see policy motion on *Volunteering*, March 2003). That covers a wide range of areas and this would have implications for sport, for example by providing a higher profile for volunteering across all government departments.

16.0.7 While there is clearly a role for providing such a high cost activity as swimming through subsidised local authority pools, it is not the only option. Volunteers can also be involved. More creative approaches such as provision of pools on school sites with the active involvement of the local swimming club have proved their worth. The experimental school/community pool at Melbourne has demonstrated the value of this form of partnership. Equally, the 'Community Sports Clubs' pioneered in Birmingham have shown how partnerships between voluntary sports clubs and schools can provide the club with a good facility base and the school with experienced coaches.

16.0.8 It is clear that the sort of growth and development which the present government seems to expect from the voluntary sport sector, if its demand for international success and participation targets for 2020 are to be met, will be difficult to achieve through clubs and governing bodies. They are struggling to survive and to meet the endless demands of Sport England and Government bureaucracy. There is an urgent need for access to support services, whether for a brokerage function which will plug the club into 'professional' services or for assistance to navigate the funding jungle. To some degree this can be provided through the parent governing body of sport, but the scale of the sector and multiplicity of the clubs demands a local solution. The realistic answer is for local government to play an enabling function. The Sports Development Officer (or equivalent) concept can - and should - be redefined in terms of volunteer support after a joint strategy has been developed.

16.0.9 At the same time, the 'Coaching for Teachers' system could be extended to the voluntary sport sector. This could be on a selective basis with the 'trigger' for accessing this resource being a readiness to work in partnership to increase participation and improve standards of performance.

Professional Sport

17. What can government do about the relationship between professional clubs and their supporters/spectators, and the conduct of some individual professionals?

17.0.1 Professional sport has a massive following in England, and some of the world's leading performers are based here. Millions of people are gripped by the achievements of teams and individuals, and supporting professional clubs is an important pastime for many people. That applies particularly with regard to football, but rugby union, rugby league, and cricket also have large followings. Around £600 million a year is spent on attending spectator sports, aside from the sums that supporters spend on merchandise such as replica football shirts.

17.0.2 Yet there is a feeling among many supporters that clubs take them for granted. This is a particular issue with regard to football. Because of this, several criticisms have been made about clubs and the way they treat their supporters. Concerns are raised about ticket prices, merchandising (especially replica shirts), levels of salaries, the location of sports grounds, and the local effects of clubs going out of business.

17.0.3 Professional clubs, particularly football clubs, have a strong community support base. Although they clearly have to work within a business framework and regulation, there is a responsibility to the community whose support is vital.

17.0.4 We do not propose that national government should become involved in their day-to-day running any more than it should be involved in other businesses. If professional clubs face going out of business, government cannot provide support for them, any more than government would do so for any other local business. For the same reason, we believe that the matters such as ticket prices and merchandising are matters for clubs and sport governing bodies, rather than for government. While we believe that wage caps are a good idea, and support measures that have already been introduced in some parts of football, we believe that it is down to sports

governing bodies themselves to implement any cap.

17.0.5 However, as regards involvement by supporters in clubs, one way in which government can help is to continue to support Supporters Direct. This is a government initiative, funded by public money, which aims to help people "who wish to play a responsible part in the life of the football club they support". In particular, they aim to promote and support the concept of democratic supporter ownership and representation through mutual, not-for-profit structures.

17.0.6 Beyond this, it is important to recognise that there are many good examples of clubs involving supporters in decisions relating to the future of clubs. In football, clubs such as Queen's Park Rangers even hold regular consultations with supporters on more ephemeral issues such as the usually annual redesign of the playing kit. However, it is for clubs themselves, as organisations which have to make their books balance, to decide exactly the nature of their relationship with supporters/customers, and there is no room for government intervention in this area. Although we recognise that, for example, the relocation of Wimbledon FC from South West London to Milton Keynes has been traumatic for supporters, we cannot see any role for government in this decision any more than in other businesses deciding where to locate. The reality is that we expect clubs considering following the example of Wimbledon to look closely at the example of Charlton Athletic, where fans' pressure forced the board to reconsider a permanent move. Charlton returned to The Valley and have steadily built up support and attendance since and are now one of the most profitable clubs in the country. Wimbledon's support, in contrast, is vanishing fast, and the team appears to be steadily slipping down through the divisions.

17.0.7 There is one key area where action is the responsibility of government and that is safety in sports grounds, notably the provision of terracing in sports grounds, and the rules regarding alcohol in sports grounds. The dreadful events that led to new rules on safety mean we support the current position with regard to all-seater stadiums, and do not propose to relax rules on standing areas. We

also understand the reasons behind current rules restricting the bringing of alcohol into football grounds and do not propose any changes.

17.0.8 We feel it is important to emphasise the extent to which professional sports clubs can, and already do, play an important role in local communities. The power of the professional sports clubs to motivate young people extends beyond the sport itself. It is increasingly being used to deliver a range of educational and training programmes. Learning centres in Premier League and some Football League clubs help improve English, maths and IT skills for both primary and secondary school pupils. The Prince's Trust Football Initiative works with over 60 professional clubs to help deliver personal development courses to unemployed 16-25 year-olds, and Kick Racism out of Football has begun to have an impact. Other sports including rugby (both codes) and cricket are now running a series of educational programmes.

17.0.9 Government can promote such work by using its position on the Football Foundation to expand the Foundation's educational programmes, and building on the experience of European Year of Education through Sport (2004) to ensure that any future EU sports programmes have a clear educational component.

17.0.10 The proliferation of TV channels and the expansion of sport into satellite channels has produced a massive increase in the range of sports available to view. This expanded availability of viewers usually involves some cost outlay in a decoder box, satellite dish and/or subscription. As the vast majority of sport is of a minority interest it is not an unreasonable situation for those who wish to view a large amount of sport to pay for their viewing choice.

17.0.11 Despite the growth of satellite it is arguable that there is more sport on terrestrial channels than was the case in the past. Live coverage of football matches for example was much rarer than is currently the case on terrestrial TV before the arrival of Sky.

17.0.12 Increased competition to show sporting events has also led to a massive increase in the quality of coverage with new broadcasters being willing to innovate and develop new technologies to improve the experience for the viewer. Channel 4's coverage of Test cricket has maintained the high level of coverage but also introduced new technologies like Hawkeye and made greater efforts to explain the intricacies of the game to the new viewer.

17.0.13 The "golden list" of specific events which can only be shown on terrestrial TV should be preserved but kept under review as at present. The development of terrestrial digital will lead to changes in the number of channels that are freely available. When digital penetration reaches an appropriate level "golden list" events should be allowed to be shown on free to view digital channels that do not involve any ongoing subscription charges (for example, those available via Freeview boxes or through digital TVs).

17.0.14 Sports administrative bodies should be encouraged to build an element of promoting participation into their contracts for television rights. Channel 4 does a particularly good job in promoting club cricket alongside their test match coverage.

Elite Sport

18. How can we support national success in sport?

18.0.1 Elite sport can be the country's shop window, the mechanism by which national pride through sport is achieved and the avenue by which talented individuals are encouraged, supported and allowed to reach their full potential. Elite sport produces role models for society and through its success encourages young people to take up different sports.

18.0.2 By broadening the participation base of sport Liberal Democrat policies will provide a better start for the elite athletes of the future. Moreover, success at an elite level can improve take up of sport by all. For example, the outstanding achievements of the British Paralympic team should be celebrated and promoted as one of the most successful sports teams of the modern era. We fully support and encourage events such as the Paralympics as an integrated part of able-bodied events. These provide a positive image of disability and achievement to a wide audience.

18.0.3 The provision of grass roots sport should be the responsibility of local based organisations, schools and devolved to a regional level. However, once athletes in any sport reach national standards we do not believe that devolved regional support *alone* can provide the level of funding, backing and standard of support necessary to improve our sporting excellence. It is at this point we have to provide a back up at a national level to achieve international standards.

18.0.4 Previous efforts to achieve this through the British Academy of Sport and the United Kingdom Sports Institute have failed. The provision of training and funding through UK Sport has not been a success. It has been marked by confusion, delay and inefficiency.

18.0.5 Liberal Democrats believe that support to elite athletes in all sports should be by elite coaches and managers and run from national sporting and regional facilities as appropriate. It should look to embrace and set the best practise in the world by employing the best practitioners from the UK and the rest of the world. Funding

for living costs of athletes should be separate to funding for coaching. We believe that the current system of providing athletes with living costs works well, and want to see it enhanced through lottery funding. However, we believe that funding for coaching should be given to specific training centres rather than to individual athletes.

19. Is it in the country's interest to host major sports events?

19.0.1 Yes, and we would work hard to make it happen. The Commonwealth Games held in Manchester in 2002 proved an overwhelming success both as a sporting event but also as a regeneration tool for Manchester. It also clearly united the country, fostered national pride and increased interest and participation in sport.

19.0.2 The success in regeneration and participation in Manchester are clear: new jobs; £46m additional expenditure in the Manchester area; 10,500 volunteers took part; tourism increased within the area by 300,000 per annum; and there were an additional 250,000 visits to sports facilities per annum.

19.0.3 Hosting major sporting events can have a beneficial effect both on the physical infrastructure of the host city and boost the drive towards a more sustainable society. Recent examples of this can be seen in the physical transformation of Barcelona and Sydney with ambitious regeneration plans being driven off the back of successful bids.

19.0.4 Liberal Democrats support London's bid for the 2012 Olympics, although we hope that the benefits of hosting the Olympics can be spread throughout the UK as far as possible. Only with the full support of governments can such bids be successful. The failure of the World Athletics Championships and the stadium disaster of Picketts Lock have done much to dent our international reputation and show what can go wrong if the Government does not provide effective backing and support.

19.0.5 The siting of major stadiums should (wherever is practical) be regionalised to encourage access throughout the country, and we

would provide clear government guidance and backing to achieve the aim. However, we do recognise that to win some major international events London does have to be the favoured location.

19.0.6 This all means that we want national government, in conjunction with regions, to develop a long-term strategic plan to ensure that this country secures major international sports events.

20. Should government tell national sports teams where they can and can't compete?

20.0.1 Ultimately, the decision must rest with the teams, but government shouldn't abdicate its national leadership role. We believe as part of foreign policy, the government is responsible for giving clear guidance to UK teams looking to compete in events held in countries where clear human rights abuses are taking place. For example, we have clearly expressed a view against England's cricket team participating in matches in Zimbabwe in the Cricket World Cup.

20.0.2 However, we believe that there needs to be a change in rules of international bodies which say that teams pulling out of tournaments will be fined unless they have been prevented from doing so by their national government. We believe that international rules should recognise that there are many legitimate reasons for teams pulling out of events. Finance should not prevent teams from making the right moral decision, and we have to recognise that if teams suffer financially from taking a moral position, government may have to help with regard to penalties incurred.

This paper has been approved for debate by the Federal Conference by the Federal Policy Committee under the terms of Article 5.4 of the Federal Constitution. Within the policy-making procedure of the Liberal Democrats, the Federal Party determines the policy of the Party in those areas which might reasonably be expected to fall within the remit of the federal institutions in the context of a federal United Kingdom. The Party in England, the Scottish Liberal Democrats and the Welsh Liberal Democrats and the Northern Ireland Local Party determine the policy of the Party on all other issues, except that any or all of them may confer this power upon the Federal Party in any specified area or areas. If approved by Conference, this paper will form the policy of the Federal Party, except in appropriate areas where any national party policy would take precedence.

Many Liberal Democrat policy papers contain proposals which would change the way public money is spent. Many also involve passing new primary legislation. Clearly, in a single parliament, it might not be possible to implement all of our policies. Therefore, at the time of a General Election, the Liberal Democrats produce a manifesto which details specific spending and legislative priorities should the party be elected to government. This means that no proposal in this paper should be taken as a guarantee or as a spending commitment for a first parliamentary term until it has been published in a fully costed manifesto containing our priorities and guarantees.

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