

## Facilities Inquiry launches report

Independent panel says, "No need to build new sports facilities"

The Facilities Inquiry, an independent inquiry into the nation's sport and recreation facilities, today launches its potentially controversial report and recommendations.

Driven by a panel led by sports broadcaster John Inverdale and supported by some of the sport sector's biggest hitters, the inquiry suggests that little or no new spending on sport and recreation facilities is required to sustain any significant increases in participation.

The Inquiry members, after five months of evidence-taking, visits and deliberation, conclude that there are currently enough sport and recreation facilities in the UK – but many are either in too poor a condition or frustratingly sealed off to potential users.

Specifically the panel recommends two priority actions:

1. Local authorities should not be afraid to 'rationalise' facilities where they are no longer fit for purpose or are located in the wrong place
2. Schools should be forced to open their premises for out-of-hours usage.

Chair John Inverdale believes that implementing these recommendations could play a key role in delivering the participation target set as part of a legacy from the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

"It's not that we don't have enough facilities – we have some unloved ones which need taking better care of and we have some really well-cared for facilities which people can't get into.

"In some cases, councils should bite the bullet and close a poor or unused facility if it means it can re-invest in a better-placed or better-used facility. These kind of decisions aren't always going to be popular but they are necessary if we are going to make proper use of what we've got."

Commenting on the fact that many new school sport facilities are closed to the public even when demand to use them is there, he added:

"It's madness that we are spending hundreds of millions on gleaming new sports facilities around the country which then lie vacant at weekends and evenings – when community demand for them is the greatest. Schools already have the option to open them up – and some do – but they need to be compelled to improve access so that everyone has the chance to use them.

"The public spending environment isn't going to get any easier. There's no point in sport shouting into the wind for more money. That's just not realistic any more. This country has to be a bit smarter about how it spends money on sports facilities and how it uses them and that will go a long way to solving some of the problems we have now."

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