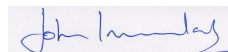


Background information

Community sports facilities come in all shapes and sizes. From the state-of-the-art lottery-funded facility, to the canal towpath, to the local bowls club. Some are natural, some man-made; some are publicly owned whilst others have been built on club fundraising.

The following pages give a very brief snapshot view of sports facilities in the UK. Two key questions are included at the end of each section and we would be extremely interested to hear your views on these issues. Don't worry if you can't answer all the questions or don't have the time to go into detail - any feedback that you can give us will be much appreciated. Alternatively a more detailed version of the document can be found [here](#).

Thank you for your interest.



John Inverdale
Inquiry Chair

1. The Built Environment

1.1 Local authority facilities

In England, 65% of local authority sports facilities are over 20 years old^[1]. Also, it was estimated in 2003 that £550 million investment per year was needed simply to keep the stock in working order, whereas a full rebuild would cost approximately £4.5 billion and would reduce dramatically the current high levels of subsidy^[2].

1.2 Educational facilities

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) is a long-term programme of investment aimed to renew the secondary school facility stock. Every BSF school will be an extended school, offering additional or dual use facilities including sport halls to local communities. However, VAT liabilities arising from community use could prevent this becoming a reality in many schools.

1.3 Sports club facilities

Results from the CCPR sports clubs survey 2009 show that overall clubs are three times more likely to hire playing facilities (68%) than own their own facility (23%). For those clubs which hire a facility, half hire from a local authority. This reliance on local authority facilities brings into stark relief the need for investment in the maintenance and upkeep of local authority facilities.

2. The Natural Environment

2.1 Playing fields

Protection of playing fields has improved since the 80s and 90s when sales of playing fields escalated. Sport England figures also reveal that 1,157 out of 1,186 (97.5%) concluded planning applications affecting playing fields in 2006-07 resulted in improved or protected sports provision. The number of applications which have led to a detrimental impact on sport is down from 40 in the previous year to just 29 (2.5%)^[3].

2.2 Land access

Around 1.4million ha/3.4million acres of land in England and Wales are designated as access land, where the public has a right to walk under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW)^[4]. The Government has recently legislated to create a coastal path around England.

In Scotland as a result of The Land Reform Act 2003 walkers now have a statutory right of access to all land, except for areas such as railway lands, quarries, harbours, airfields and defence land where the public are excluded by law.

2.3 Rights of Way

England and Wales have an extensive network of off-road routes classed as public Rights of Way. Local authorities have a duty to protect and maintain these and to record them on official "definitive" maps. Around 225,000km/140,000 miles are recorded on official maps.

2.4 Access to waterways

In England and Wales the public cannot assume there is an automatic right to have access to rivers. In contrast, Scotland already enjoys that right. There is no access to and along 98% of the rivers in England and Wales. The Environment Agency currently favours a policy of voluntary access agreements to improve access.

3. Pricing

3.1 Local authority pricing

Councils have a responsibility to their residents to ensure that access to its facilities isn't restricted by cost, particularly in socially excluded or economically deprived areas. However, councils must also ensure that the resources are in place to maintain high quality facilities. These resources would, in part, be raised from charges to the public.

3.2 Sports club pricing

There are no rules about how much clubs should charge for membership fees or use of their facilities. Fees therefore vary widely between sizes of club and type of activity, with golf clubs generally charging a lot more than, for example, a local football club. Results from the CCPR Sports Club Survey 2009 show that the average adult subscription fees are £70 and average junior subscription fees are £46.

3.3 Private pricing

Charges in the private sector are primarily market driven. Some private providers purposely target high income groups and others provide a more affordable offering. It should also be noted that private companies also run a significant number of local authority centres, thereby also providing for the general public.

4. Funding

4.1 Department for Culture, Media and Sport

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport spends around £173 million each year on sport at all levels, which is largely delivered through Sport England, UK Sport and the Youth Sport Trust.

4.2 Sport England

Sport England is responsible for promoting community sport and distributing exchequer and National Lottery funding. It is not clear how much of their £203 million budget is spent on the development of community facilities and there is no requirement to spend a minimum/maximum amount on facilities. However, due to the ageing community stock Sport England has allocated £10 million to be spent on sustainable community facilities.

4.3 Local authority funding

Local councils invest around £1.5 billion annually in facilities and services^[5]. This investment seeks social as well as sporting outcomes – e.g. improved health and reduced crime. Sport England's Facilities Planning Model; is a computer model which helps local authorities to assess the strategic provision of community sports facilities.

4.4 Other funding streams

There is funding available for community sporting projects outside the mainstream funding streams outlined above, however this funding is not systematic and is based on individual bids, so there is no pattern of funding for community facilities.

5. European models

5.1 Swedish right of common access

The Swedish countryside is open to everybody under the "The Right of Common Access", a unique Swedish right which allows everyone to move freely throughout the countryside. It guarantees the right to swim in and boat on lakes, rivers and other open water. In relation to its geography and population, Sweden is one of the world's most sporting nations.

5.2 Multi-sport clubs

In many countries professional sports clubs are multi-sport clubs. Galatasaray SK offers one of the most extensive professional multi-sports club models. The football club was founded in 1905 at an elite high school and still runs two schools as well as 10 football academies across Turkey. It also has men and women's teams in athletics, basketball, wheelchair basketball, volleyball, water polo, swimming, rowing, sailing, judo, bridge, equestrianism and motorsports.

5.3 Can the government lead behavioral change?

This investigation prompts another question of whether more investment in sports facilities would necessarily result in increased participation. Examples from Europe suggest that it would have a positive impact, for example, the UK spends £1 per person on cycling compared to Denmark's £5 per person. Consequently 2% of journeys in the UK and 20% of journeys in Denmark are by bike.

Thank you for your time and input. The panel will reflect on all the evidence received and make recommendations in due course. If you have given your contact details we may be in touch once our report is written.

[1] Ibid

[2] Patrick Carter *Review of national sport effort & resources* (March 2005)

[3] For more information – http://www.sportengland.org/facilities_planning/putting_policy_into_practice/playing_fields.aspx

[4] http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000037_en_1

[5] Cllr Chris White, Chair of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board (December 2008)