

Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity.

To: All APSE main contacts in England. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for information only.

1. Executive summary

The 'long anticipated' report from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 'Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity' was released on 30th August 2023

The report builds on the 2015 government sport strategy "Sporting Future: a new strategy for a more active nation" retaining the 5 outcomes at its core:

- physical wellbeing
- mental wellbeing
- individual development
- social and community development
- sustainable economic development

It identifies 3 core priorities of this strategy:

1. Being unapologetically ambitious in making the nation more active, whether in government or in the sport sector.
2. Making sport and physical activity more inclusive and welcoming for all so that everyone can have confidence that there is a place for them in sport.
3. Moving towards a more sustainable sector that is more financially resilient and robust.

The report envisages an enhanced role for local Active Partnerships and a new cross-government **National Physical Activity Taskforce (NPAT)** to ensure that tackling inactivity is at the forefront of government decision-making. It also prioritises the promotion of women's sport and clarifies the policy of participation against gender-ID

2. Local authorities

Whilst the report is all embracing from elite sport and facilities to grass roots local sports clubs and mass participation events it holds little for local government. It anticipates facility closures and no future financial support to 'prop up' local leisure provision:

*“To support our ambitions on strategic investment and local decision-making, we need a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of where facilities and spaces are, and how they are used. For this reason, we will work with the sector to develop a **National Vision for Facilities before the end of 2023.***

*When making decisions about the future of public leisure, **nostalgia must not be allowed to play a part.** Whilst the rationalisation of services and **the closures of public leisure facilities are difficult,** when done for the right reasons and managed appropriately, they deliver important efficiencies and improve the participation experiences for all users.*

*Whilst the government acted quickly to support public leisure services during the COVID-19 pandemic, and more recently through the Swimming Pool Support Fund, **central government cannot be relied upon to provide financial support to prop up local leisure provision in the future.** As we move forward, systemic change is now needed to ensure that public leisure is both relevant and viable in the coming years.”*

The plan envisages Councils working with schools and partners to establish a local plan paid for in part by borrowing:

*“This means that we want **local authorities, schools and sector partners to work together to establish a local plan** for what they need in their area, which should then help develop a pipeline for delivery and evidence to underpin their funding requests across government.*

*The government encourages all parts of the sector to explore creative funding routes to enable delivery and investment in revenue generation capabilities, such as **repayable finance** and social impact investment opportunities.”*

3. Summary of proposed actions

Participation

- **Tackling disparities in participation**

The paper states that the Government will introduce cross-government and cross-sector ambitions to increase activity rates and reduce levels of inactivity.

Improve cross-government working and prioritisation of physical activity by establishing a new cross-government National Physical Activity Taskforce.

Better evidence the impact of investment:

- Sport England to set an evidence-based measure of success in “Uniting the Movement” around tackling disparities in sport and activity
- support Sport England to introduce a new partner evaluation framework which tracks the impact of sector partners and provides 6-monthly reports evidencing spend and impact

- undertake discrete monitoring and evaluation of government-funded facilities programmes, including the multi-sport grassroots facilities investment programme
- work with the sector to build the evidence base on potential mechanisms that could be introduced to enable the further growth of the private sector

- **Children and young people**

The paper states that Government will introduce a cross-government ambition that all children should meet the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines on physical activity (at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day, or 20 minutes for disabled children) and that it will work across government, arm's length bodies and with commercial partners to establish the viability of a new unified campaign to encourage children and young people to get children active.

It seeks to improve the quality and access to PE and school sport for all pupils:

- introduce new equality criteria to the School Games Mark that encourages and recognises schools providing equal access to girls and boys
- launch a review of the sport offer in schools outside of PE
- continue to support active travel to and from school and Bikeability delivery in the school day

- **Active spaces and facilities**

The paper also states that the Government will continue 'our strategic investment in facilities:

- deliver the investment in grassroots facilities, with over £300 million to be invested by 2025
- deliver £21.9 million investment in park tennis courts by 2024

It will establish a strategic framework for the future of facilities: - develop a National Vision for Facilities before the end of 2023 - Sport England to work with priority places to deliver an enhanced place-based working process'.

Integrity

When it comes to issues of integrity the paper states:-

- **Elite sport**

It will continue our support of Olympic and Paralympic sport through funding of UK Sport.

- **Diversity**

It will support efforts to tackle discrimination across the sector and holding organisations to account for failings in this area.

It will use opportunities presented through our support of hosting major sporting events, encouraging the sector to focus on the diversity of talent pathways.

- **Governance**

Alongside UK Sport and Sport England it will continue to monitor the impact of the revised Governance Code on the sector, particularly in terms of the effectiveness of Diversity and Inclusion Action Plans in increasing accessibility and equality of opportunity across the sector and at all levels of sport.

- **Doping and corruption**

It will ensure UK Anti-Doping continues to have the appropriate framework to carry out effective investigations, in line with evolving challenges.

The UK will ratify the Macolin Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions.

- **Complaint handling and dispute resolution**

It will launch a call for evidence to understand current experiences, and work with the sector to decide how the prevention and handling of integrity issues could be strengthened.

Sustainability

As APSE members will be aware APSE has long campaigned for environmental and financial sustainability in sports and leisure services. The paper states:-

- **Economic sustainability**

It will support organisations to develop long-term financial sustainability by signposting to resources for building stronger governance models and sharing best practice across the sector.

It will work with the Department for Business and Trade to highlight best practice and opportunities for inward investment into the domestic sport sector, including in women's sport.

With cross-government input and with the support of UK Sport and Sport England, It will deliver a new economic snapshot that articulates the economic value and growth opportunities that exist within sport in the UK.

It will continue to bid and successfully host major sporting events that deliver significant socio-economic benefit across the UK - to maintain our world-leading track record in this area - and commission additional analysis of the economic value of these events to support future decision-making.

- **Technology, data and innovation**

It will work with both the technology and the sport sectors to help identify innovative, inclusive digital solutions which help increase participation and activity.

The government will support organisations to make use of existing technology and data to drive investment to the sector.

- **Environmental sustainability**

It will champion the importance of environmental sustainability within sport, including at major events, and encourage all levels of the sector to prioritise development of their own sustainability initiatives. This is in line with UK Sport's goal for high-performance sport to be having a net positive impact on the environment by 2040, and for NGBs to have reduced

their emissions by 50% by 2030.

It will convene a forum of government departments, experts, and organisations across the sports and physical activity sector to share expertise, guidance, and support, which will help the sector to implement and deliver on its ambition to become more environmentally sustainable.

It will work with UK Sport, Sport England and wider stakeholders to:

- assess the current provision of sustainability initiatives across the sector, from elite to community sport
- identify the support needed to help the sector adapt in the long term
- support NGBs with their sustainability ambitions
- ensure resources, information, and best practice are freely available within the sector, to enable all organisations to know how best to start and continue their sustainability journey
- work towards embedding environmental sustainability as a pillar of funding agreements

4. APSE Comment

Central Government remains too cautious of stating targets for physical activity and whilst recognising the potential substantial improvement in public health, it still appears adrift from the main healthcare system within the NHS. Covid-19 demonstrated the perilous nature of the sector finances and the need to change. That will require fundamental questions of what councils are trying to achieve within limited budgets. Without substantial investment, public swimming especially is at risk. APSE calculated £10 billion would be required to provide one Passiv standard pool in each authority to meet net-zero standards. The £300 million promised by this report, for the entire sector, including grass-roots sport, is therefore, in context minimal.

The paper acknowledges that physical activity is not necessarily about delivery in purpose built facilities, such as sports centres and swimming pools and highlights examples in other areas. Parks and public realm offer opportunities for communities to engage in physical activity however, like leisure funding, spending on neighbourhood level services has been negatively impacted by over 12 years of austerity. APSE has consistently called for a more holistic approach to engaging local services in ill-health prevention strategies. The cost of such services should be viewed through the prism of a spend to save opportunity when considering the costs to the NHS and the public purse of treating preventable diseases, particularly those linked to obesity and physical inactivity.

The topic will be fully explored at the forthcoming APSE Sports and leisure seminar on November 2, 2023 in Loughborough. Details may be found on the APSE website www.apse.org.uk. You may reserve your place using this [link](#).

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