

facilities inquiry



Report and Recommendations

Facilities Inquiry

Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to present this report which details the results of five months' painstaking investigation into the quality, affordability and sustainability of our community sports facilities.

During this time my fellow Panel members and I have heard from key strategic and funding agencies such as Sport England, essential facility providers such as local authorities and determined campaign groups. We've hurtled around Derbyshire in the back of a Skoda and West London in a mini-coach. We've met with people determined to provide the best possible facilities, yet hampered by cumbersome structures or limited finances. We've also reviewed over 250 online questionnaires and over 50 written papers offering vast amounts of data.

With the support of colleagues from CCPR we have condensed this information into this report, illustrating the challenges we face in providing community sport and recreation facilities, indoors and outdoors, which can be accessed and enjoyed by all. Not content with simply listing the problems however, we have also made a number of recommendations which in our view can provide the solutions to these challenges. Some of these will cost little financially and could make a huge difference in a short space of time. Others require some investment, whilst some require a change in mind-set. All of them, we believe, are realistic and can significantly improve the sport and recreation infrastructure in this country.

We hope that the new Government will look favourably upon this report as a means to improve community sports provision at a time when finances are tight. This Panel and our colleagues at CCPR stand ready to work with all partners to implement these recommendations.

I hope you will enjoy reading this report, and considering the challenges it presents. I also hope that you will commit to joining us in tackling these.

Yours in sport



John Inverdale
Chair – the Facilities Inquiry

The Facilities Inquiry Panel

John Inverdale, Chair

John has been one of the BBC's leading radio and TV presenters for the past 20 years. He has attended most major sporting events since the Seoul Olympics of 1988, and is due to host the athletics coverage for London 2012. He is chairman of rugby at National Division One club Esher and has two daughters who play sport which gives him an insight into operational issues and facilities at the grassroots.

Derrick Anderson CBE, Chief Executive, Lambeth Council

Derrick has 25 years' management experience in local government and more than 30 years in the public sector. Throughout this time Derrick has been closely involved with community sports provision including spells as a Non-Executive Director of the 2012 Olympic Bid Company, Chair of Sport England West Midlands 2004-06 and as a Board Member of Sport England – London.

Adrian Christy, Chief Executive, Badminton England

Having worked in local authority Sport Development units and Sports Coach UK for several years Adrian moved into national governing bodies, first with the Lawn Tennis Association and then onto England Squash as Director of Development and Competition. In 2006 he was appointed as Chief Executive of BADMINTON England.

Dr. Catherine Flitcroft, Access and Conservation Officer, British Mountaineering Council

Having completed a BSc in Environmental Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh, Cath spent many years in the Scottish wilderness as an archaeologist. She moved to the Peak District in 2000 working as an Education Officer for the environmental charity Groundwork and then with the Peak District National Park Authority. In 2006, Cath joined the BMC as their Access and Conservation Officer.

Steve Philpott, Chief Executive, DC Leisure Management Ltd

Steve is a former Managing Director of David Lloyd Leisure and Crown Sports. He is also a founder Director of Energie Fitness Clubs and joined DC Leisure as its Chief Executive in November 2003. DC Leisure is the largest operator of leisure centres in the UK running more than 100 local authority leisure centres for about 30 councils. It has been Leisure Centre Operator of the Year for the last two years running.

Sarah Winckless

An Olympic bronze medallist and double World Champion, Sarah has represented Great Britain at three Olympic Games and seven World Championships. She is an athletic all rounder, with an England vest for discus throwing and Cambridge Blues in netball, basketball, athletics and rowing. Sarah therefore has a keen understanding of a broad range of community and high performance sports facilities.

Introduction

The Facilities Inquiry is an independent investigation into the quality, accessibility and sustainability of community sport and recreation facilities – both built and natural. The Panel was prompted to undertake the inquiry as a result of concerns raised by a range of stakeholders and collated by CCPR. These included issues such as to whether:

- the cost of accessing community facilities was prohibitively high
- asset owning sports clubs were able to maintain their facilities to an adequate level
- sports halls were being given over to other broader leisure activities
- our open spaces and natural environment are sufficiently well-maintained and promoted

Staff at CCPR agreed to provide a secretariat to the Panel, and to assist the Panel with gathering the necessary evidence to inform the inquiry. This five month investigation has included an online survey facility, formal written submissions, interviews with key influencers and funders, and also a number of site visits.

The evidence received has now been fully analysed and is presented in the pages that follow. The Panel has also agreed a set of recommendations which they believe flow from the evidence received. It is the Panel's belief that these recommendations address the concerns originally raised, and that implementing them can result in significant improvement in the quality of community facilities, increased local pride and responsibility for facilities, and, as a result, improved usage and revenues to secure their future.



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Executive Summary and Recommendations

As part of the 2012 Olympic Games legacy, Sport England is seeking to achieve one million people taking part in more sport by 2012-13. This target includes those undertaking more strenuous recreational activities such as hill trekking and gorge walking. The latest results from the Active People Survey 4 show seven million adults (aged 16 and over) participating in sport at moderate intensity, for at least 30 minutes, a minimum of three times a week.¹ In order to reach the one million target by 2012 a further 815,000 adults need to undertake 90 minutes sport per week. This amounts to over 400,000 hours more sport a week and potentially as much as 1.2 million hours.

The Panel does not believe that in order to meet this target a swathe of new sports facilities needs to be built. Whilst almost nine in ten people (88%)² do not think that there are enough facilities for sport and recreation in the UK, five months of investigation have shown the Panel that the UK currently has enough community sports facilities, *but* they are not in good enough condition, and in some cases not even available for use. The solution, the Panel recommends, lies in maximising usage of those that already exist through the following actions:

The recommendations of the Panel

- 1) **Local authorities must not be afraid to rationalise facilities where they are no longer fit for purpose or located in the wrong place**
Evidence shows that closing two poor facilities in order to create one good one can lead to increased sporting participation.
- 2) **Schools must be obliged to open their premises for out of hours sporting usage**
Evidence shows that the availability of school sports facilities varies according to the attitude of the individual school. Yet opening up all school facilities could enable many more people to participate.
- 3) **Greater research is required to understand the current location, condition and usage of facilities**
Only then can investment be directed to where it will have the most impact.
- 4) **All new facilities, whether on school or community sites, must include social space for players, spectators and others**
This contributes both to the quality of experience and, crucially, may generate income to sustain the venue.
- 5) **Voluntary and community groups must be more fully involved in facility provision**
This would reduce costs and generate greater community ownership of the facility. Examples are as follows:
 - A school providing access and giving responsibility to a badminton club one evening, and a basketball club the next; the security of venue would incentivise responsible stewardship;

¹ Sport England, *Active People Survey 4*, 2010

² Online Poll hosted through the CCPR website, 111 total respondents

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- A sports centre and local clubs creating formal user agreements, thus providing secure income for the centre and guaranteeing facility time for sport as opposed to other non-sporting uses
 - A local authority transferring a pavilion or changing rooms to local sports clubs, thus reducing costs for the local authority and providing an asset for the club from which to create a firm base and identity.

6) **Freely available outdoor space must appear more accessible**

Whilst there is now increased access to open space, people do not understand how to get there, nor where to go upon arrival. Improved transport links to natural areas, and improved information on paths and routes would encourage greater usage among non-participants.

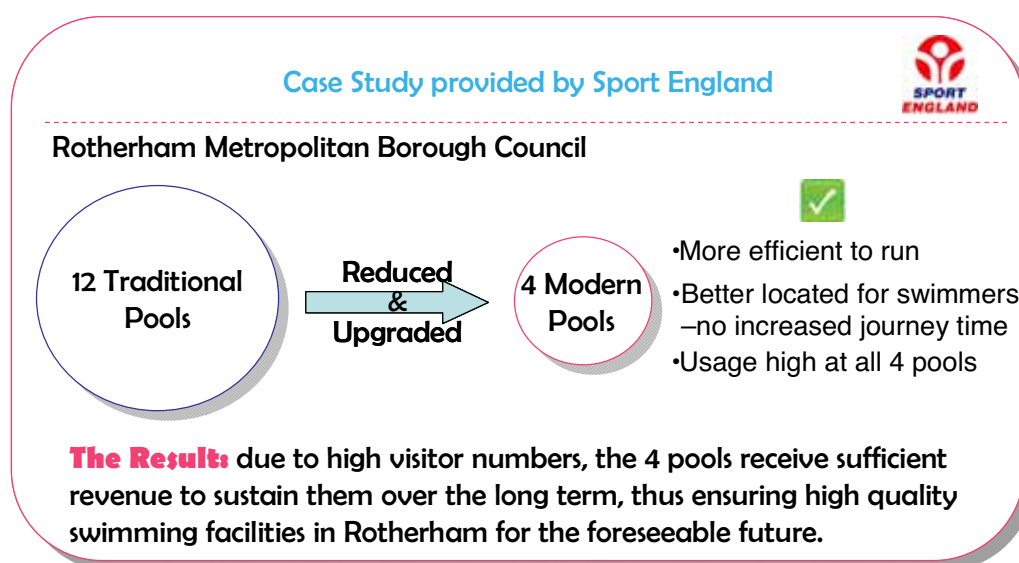
7) **Access to, and maintenance of, waterways must be improved**

At present access to the UK's waterways is highly restricted, and maintenance is dramatically under-funded. Opening up high quality water and waterside recreation would hugely increase the facility stock.

Summary explanation of recommendations

1. Rationalise where necessary

The Panel has found a need to significantly improve access to high quality facilities, but recognises that achieving this at a time when public funding is severely restricted will prove challenging. The Panel therefore believes that in some cases it will be appropriate to dispose of existing facilities that are no longer fit for purpose, of poor quality or in the wrong place. This can release the finance necessary to improve or develop those facilities which research has shown to be in the right place. Whilst this requires political courage and leadership from local authorities, evidence shows that closing a number of poor facilities in favour of a lesser quantity of higher quality facilities can lead to increased sporting participation.



2. Open all school facilities

Schools should be at the centre of communities and as such every effort should be taken for their facilities, be they sports, music or ICT to be available to the wider community out of school hours. Evidence shows that the availability of school sports facilities varies according to the attitude of the individual school; the Panel therefore recommends that it is made obligatory for schools to open their premises for out of hours sporting usage, as opening up all school facilities will provide many hours worth of facility use, which could enable many more people to participate.

In 2007, there were 3,343 local authority secondary schools in England,³ but there is no data to identify how many of these were, and still are, opening their sports facilities for community use (and this inquiry recommends further investigation of this). However, if all of these were to open their sports facilities for five hours an evening during the week this would generate an extra 83,575 hours of facility time per week that could be used by numerous people at any given time. Assuming that an average of ten people were involved in using one facility each hour, such provision would generate 835,750 hours across a week (not accounting for potential weekend use), making a valuable contribution towards the 1.5million hours more sport a week target.

³ Department for Children, Schools and Families, Schools in England Statistical First Release, 2008

Knowsley's Centres for Learning -BSF Wave 1 project

11 Schools

transformed

7 centres of learning

The Result: an estimated **8575** total hours per annum for community use beyond the school day

'At the heart of everything we do is our commitment to the local community... We want everyone to enjoy the academic, vocational, technological, sporting, artistic and linguistic opportunities we offer. Open outside school hours and during school holidays, we offer something for everyone.' Knowsley Park Centre for Learning

The Panel acknowledges that a number of obstacles interplay to prevent wider community use of school sport facilities, and that facility requirements may vary across various sports. These issues are tackled in the full report and the Panel does not believe them to be insurmountable.



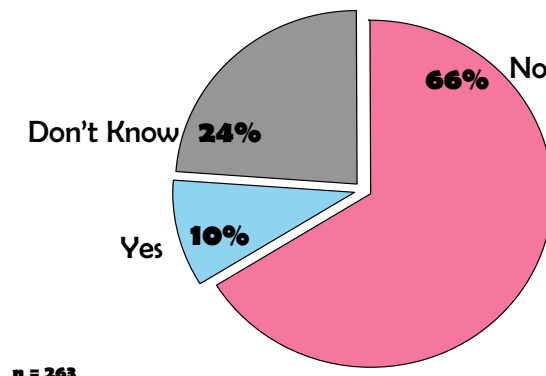
3. Further research

Establishing a greater research base detailing the location, quality, usage and local need of the current facility stock is essential to any attempt to optimise usage of existing facilities. Such knowledge would enable local authorities to make intelligent choices regarding strategic investment decisions, resulting in the provision of high quality, sustainable facilities.

Two in three people (66%)⁴ do not currently believe that development is adequately planned at a national level. This view may be a result of witnessing what Sport England has described as the creation of some impressive developments, which do not necessarily address the needs of the local community, or significantly deliver on outcomes such as increased participation. Ultimately such 'white elephant' developments can lead to increased subsidy costs to the public sector if they fail to generate sufficient revenue.

⁴ Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 263 respondents across the UK

Do you think that development is adequately planned at a national level?



The Leisure Database Company, which undertakes the comprehensive Active Places research for Sport England, has highlighted to the Panel that the lack of strategic data at a national level is the result of many organisations capturing data in different ways. This varied approach to data collection results in differing quality standards and an incomplete dataset, which cannot be shared to its full potential. This ultimately makes investment decisions harder. A more consistent approach to data collection is required so that investment can be directed to where it will have the most impact, and facilities can be confident about their future sustainability.

Key Areas for Further Research

- School sporting facilities –existence, extent and availability for community use
- Relationship between facility quality and participation rates
- Usage levels and quality of existing stock
- Specific facility needs of local communities where development or improvements are planned

4. Social space and ancillary facilities

The Panel believes that in order to make facilities welcoming and user friendly, ancillary features, particularly those accompanying outdoor sites, must be improved. Updating changing rooms, ensuring suitable social space exists (on school and community sites) and providing cafes and viewing areas, will provide an improved sporting and social experience for participants. Furthermore, viewers may be inspired to join in, and crucially, income will be generated to sustain the venue. This is particularly important for supporting the longevity and standards of outdoor facilities which the London Playing Field Foundation have described to the Panel as inherently loss making. Previously, the inclusion of suitable and accessible social space has been notably absent from educational facilities. Community users require such areas and the Panel advocates that all future school developments incorporate social space for community use into their design phase in such a way that they can be isolated from the wider school of an evening.

'Some of the club facilities I have seen have been so poor that I would never under any circumstances get changed in them or indeed even want to stand in them dressed in protective clothing.'

Numerous submissions to the inquiry outlined in particular the unacceptable standards of changing facility provision. The Panel also experienced first hand how dire these could be during a site visit to one outdoor sports centre in London which took place in March. Reminiscent of an industrial warehouse, it was colder inside the changing rooms than it was outside. Broken mirrors or faded rectangles on the walls marking the former presence of a mirror, along with taps which didn't work and peeling paint, all contribute to the unwelcoming feel. From a practical perspective, the space is not suitable for shared usage of adults and children, and the whole building is serviced by one boiler, making it highly likely that at peak times, there will be no hot water available in the showers. The Panel is clear that such facilities are not conducive to increasing sport participation.

Changing Facilities, Outdoor Sports Centre, London



5. Community and voluntary involvement

Voluntary and community groups must be more fully involved in facility provision. This would both reduce costs and generate greater community ownership of the facility. It is essential, however, that these groups are willing to take ownership and responsibility of the facilities and that the process is managed properly. In May 2007 the Quirk Review, *Making Assets Work* found that, *'the benefits of community management and ownership of public assets can outweigh the risks and often the opportunity costs in appropriate circumstances.'* Commitment from the community and a realistic business plan will be needed to ensure that this happens. Organisations such as the Development Trusts Association exist to assist communities looking to undertake asset transfer schemes.

Examples of how increased community and volunteer involvement could work well include:

- A school providing access and giving responsibility to a badminton club one evening, and a basketball club the next; the security of venue would incentivise responsible stewardship
- A sports centre and local clubs creating formal user agreements, thus securing income for the centre and facility time for the clubs. The agreements would outline the number of hours of facility usage required by the sports club over an extended time period, the cost which they will pay for this usage and that the facility will ensure it provides the appropriate number of hours' worth of use
- A local authority transferring a pavilion or changing rooms to local sports clubs, thus reducing costs for the local authority and providing an asset for the club from which to create a firm base and identity. The pavilion or changing rooms are less likely to be allowed to run into disrepair when club identities are associated with them.

Case Study -Basketball



Bradford Dragons
Basketball Club



Buttershaw Business and
Enterprise College

Basketball Academy

The Result: The Basketball Club gives a reduced rate membership to the pupils of the college, and the college provides the club with prime time evening slots on their brand new court at the discounted price of £12 an hour

6. Outdoor access

There is now increased access to open space, yet the outdoors are not being fully utilised as a space for sport and recreation. Half (50%) of those who completed our online questionnaire viewed access to natural facilities to be crucial for encouraging people into the outdoors. This covers the need to remove restrictions over land ownership and also to provide better transport links to rural areas and facilities.⁵ Additionally, evidence shows that there is a lack of information and clarity for the general public around access laws and existing routes, and an absence of comprehensive transport links to and from outdoor spaces across England, Wales and Scotland.

Promotional Material –The Hub at Regent's Park, London

- Beginner, intermediate & advanced running routes mapped out with facilities
- Available free online and as a fold out leaflet
- Currently being piloted, possibility to roll out to all the London Royal Parks



- User friendly
- Aesthetically appealing
- Highly portable
- Model should be widely adopted to promote outdoor space

Around two in five people (43%) spontaneously mentioned that better promotion and publicity of the natural environment areas which are accessible to the public, and the activities which can be undertaken there, would encourage people to use outdoor areas.⁶ In addition, expert witnesses, county councils and NGBs also shared the view that greater promotion of outdoor facilities is needed and that information regarding access to and availability of outdoor facilities

⁵ Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 202 respondents across the UK

⁶ Ibid

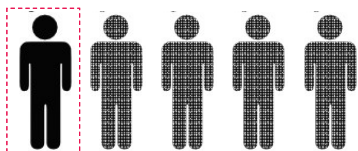
needs to be more widely publicised. The Panel believes that good promotional material exists but recommends that this should be more strategically targeted at non-participants, rather than core current users so as to move beyond 'preaching to the converted'.

7. Waterways

At present access to the UK's waterways is highly restricted and maintenance is underfunded. Opening up high quality water and waterside recreation would hugely increase the facility stock. Over 90% of the population live within two miles of a waterway and so could easily be able to access water facilities if restrictions were removed.



1 in 5 people (20%)



would like to see more funding spent on the outdoors

A KPMG review has estimated that in relation to the costs necessary to keep its waterways in good condition, British Waterways is currently underfunded by approximately £30 million per annum and as a result there is a backlog of around £200 million in maintenance requirements. Despite British Waterways hoping to be able to devote an additional £10 million to maintenance through restructuring, the

funding deficit does not look likely to improve as for 2010/11, British Waterways will receive almost 17% less grant from the Government than it did in 2009/2010; this is a reduction from £57.4 million last year, to £47.8 million this year.

At least 1.5 million hours more sport are needed per week

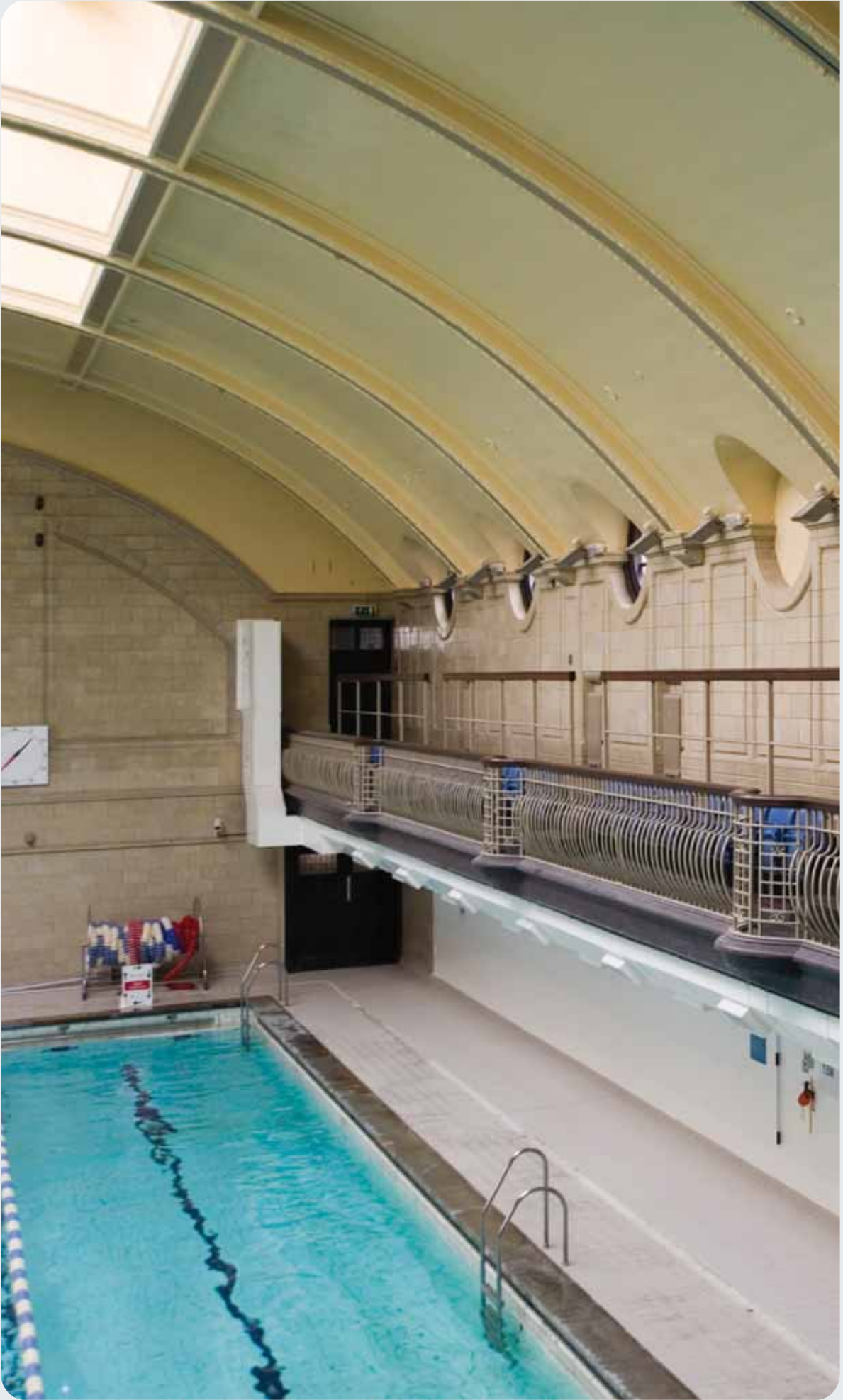
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THROUGH

Maximising Usage of Existing Facilities

- Improvement of existing stock –through rationalisation where necessary
- Education Facilities –compulsory opening to community
- Research –facility quality, location & need
- Ancillary Facilities –must include social space and be of a high quality
- Community/Voluntary –involvement and partnerships
- Outdoor Access –increase through information, promotion and improving transport links
- Waterways –access to and maintenance of must be improved



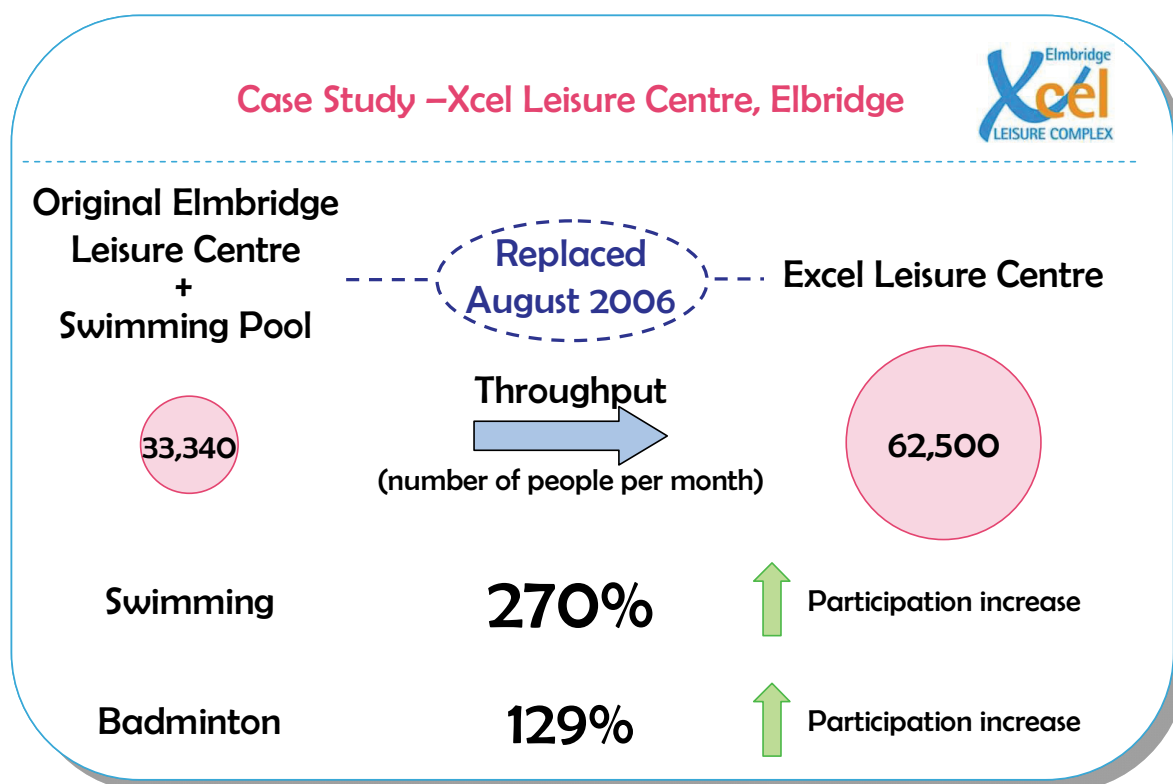


Full report of the Facilities Inquiry Panel

The Built Environment

From the evidence which they have received, the Panel strongly believes that the provision of high quality, correctly located, appropriately priced, accessible facilities can play a key role in encouraging people to participate in sport and active recreation. Whilst there is no comprehensive databank of evidence directly demonstrating the correlation between good quality facilities and levels of participation, the accumulation of case studies and the input of public and expert opinion received firmly support this conclusion.

A diverse range of witnesses hold the view that strategic facility provision must be tackled to reach participation targets. Sport England, Community Matters, England Netball, UK Athletics, the Lawn Tennis Association, the Amateur Swimming Association and StreetGames to mention a few have all presented this view to the Panel, and the Rugby Football League, whilst not believing facilities in themselves increase participation do see them as vital to supporting and sustaining participation.



Wider participation in sport and recreation is a vital part of the 2012 Olympic Games Legacy, with Sport England aiming to achieve one million people taking part in more sport by 2012-13. The latest results from the Active People Survey 4 show seven million adults (aged 16 and over) participating in sport at moderate intensity, for at least 30 minutes, a minimum of three times a week.⁷ In order to reach the one million target by 2012 a further 815,000 adults need to undertake 90 minutes sport per week. This amounts to over 400,000 hours more sport a week

⁷ Sport England, *Active People Survey 4*, 2010

and potentially as much as 1.2 million hours.⁸ Although we cannot anticipate the breakdown of these hours across built and natural facilities, it is certain that improved nationwide access to high quality built and natural facilities will be required in order to reach this target.

Crucially, the Panel does not believe that a swathe of new sports facilities must be built in order to create this level of provision, rather the usage of existing facilities must be optimised. This view is contrary to popular opinion, with an online poll indicating that almost nine in ten (88%)⁹ people do not think that there are enough facilities for sport and recreation in the UK. The Panel's five month investigation has however shown that the UK currently has enough community sport and recreation facilities, *but* they are not in good enough condition and in some cases, are not even available for use.

Local authorities in England are measured against a set of 198 national indicators, of which they choose 35 as priorities. 82 local authorities,¹⁰ which amounts to over half of the 152 principal authorities in England, have chosen National Indicator 8 (NI) '*the percentage of the adult population (age 16 years and over) in a local area who participate in sport and active recreation*' as a priority. Councils make up the largest public funder of sport and physical activity infrastructure, and this places a large amount of responsibility with local authorities to deliver high quality, financially viable and sustainable built facilities which meet the needs of their communities. Providing appropriate and accessible facilities is therefore integral to both Sport England's 'one million participants in sport' target, and also to achieving a priority national indicator for over half of the country's local authorities.

In addition to meeting their own sporting targets, such as those deriving from NI8, data from CCPR's Sports Club Survey 2009, and from submissions to the Panel by NGBs, indicates that sports clubs rely heavily on local authorities for the provision of suitable facilities. According to CCPR's Sports Club Survey 2009, sports clubs are three times more likely to hire playing facilities (68%) than to own their own facility (23%). For those clubs who hire their facilities, half hire from a local authority.¹¹ Additionally, England Hockey state that for hockey, demand on local authority facilities is high considering that only 17% of hockey clubs have access to their own facilities. Similarly, England Netball represents a primarily non-asset owning sport and netball is highly likely to remain this way in the near future. Such sports are therefore heavily reliant on facility providers, including local authorities, in order to sustain themselves.



'It needs to be recognised that a great deal of club participation is dependent on local authority facilities.'

⁸ The figure of 400,000 hours has been derived as the minimum amount of hours needed for an extra 1 x 30 minute moderate intensity session per week. 1.2 million hours is the figure required for the 815,000 extra participants to participate three times a week. This figure is intended as an estimate.

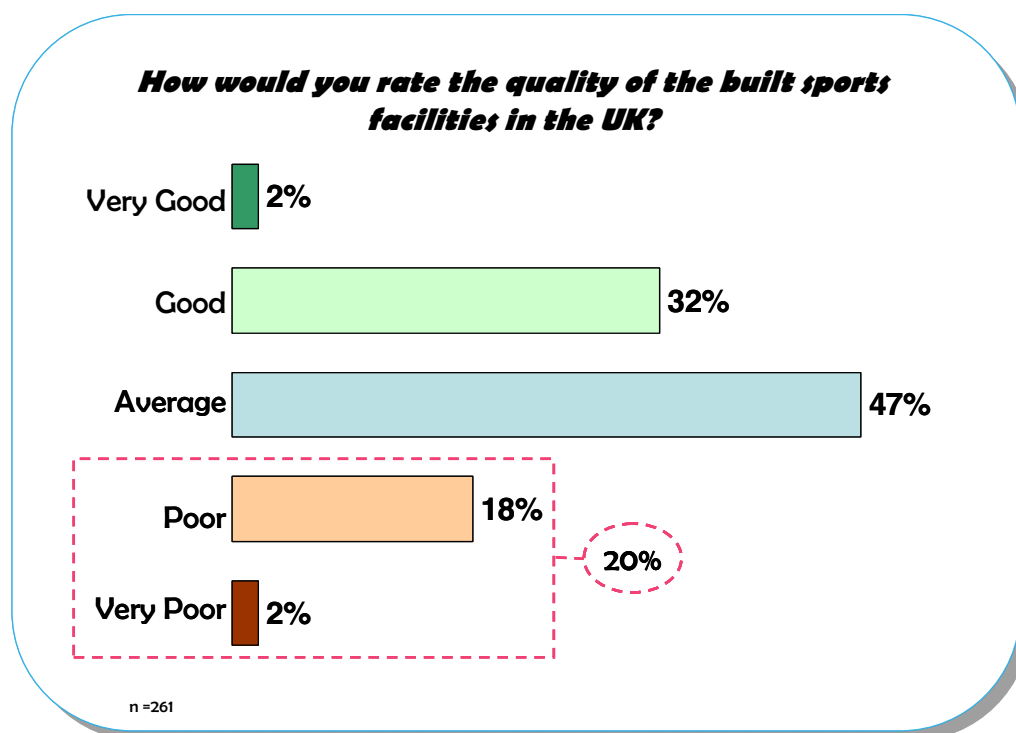
⁹ Online Poll hosted through the CCPR website, 111 total respondents

¹⁰ Sport England, *Facilities Inquiry Submission*, 2010

¹¹ CCPR *Sports Club Survey 2009*, available at <http://www.ccpr.org.uk/ourcampaigning/uk/Research/Sports+Club+Survey+2009.htm>

‘The sport of springboard and platform diving is not one that can exist without the provision of local authority facilities.’ -GB Diving Federation

Whilst there is believed to be a downward trend in local authority ownership of swimming pools, they are still the major provider of indoor water facilities, owning just less than half (46%) of swimming pools in 2007.¹² Provision of high quality, suitable swimming pools impacts not just on swimming, but other water based sports too. The British Canoe Union relies heavily upon indoor swimming pool provision with a long history of utilising swimming pools during the winter to sustain member levels and keep the club active. They state that, *‘there is more demand for reasonably priced pool time than there are pools.’* Likewise, springboard and platform diving is dependent on major swimming facilities which have springboards and deep water. Such facilities typically involve very high levels of capital expense which when coupled with such specific usage means that private funding is extremely rare. The Panel has therefore heard from the GB Diving Federation that, *‘the sport of springboard and platform diving is not one that can exist without the provision of local authority facilities.’*



Although there has been little robust evidence showing that there are insufficient facilities available for community use, the quality, cost and accessibility of built facilities has been shown to vary across the UK, with almost half (47%) of the built facilities reported to be of only average quality. More promisingly, a third of built facilities (32%) were rated as being of good quality, however for one in five (20%) the quality can be described as either poor or very poor, whilst only 2% feel that the quality reaches the standard of very good.¹³ A valid consideration raised by leisure facility auditors and consultants, submissions from NGBs, and the wider public is that in contemporary society, public expectations regarding the quality of facilities are higher. This is due to private and public facilities having to compete alongside each other for sport and leisure

¹² Amateur Swimming Association, *Facilities Inquiry Submission*, 2009

¹³ Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 261 respondents across the UK

activities which have become more closely aligned with lifestyle choices. Therefore, of the 65% of built facilities that are over 20 years old, as identified by the Carter Report (2005), those which have not yet been upgraded, have little hope of reaching the quality expectations of today's users. Charles Johnston, Director of Property at Sport England, has agreed that when considering the progress made five years on from the Carter Report, recent observations have shown that, *'a lot of the stock out there is probably not fit for purpose.'*

Public expectations regarding the quality of facilities are higher. This is due to private and public facilities having to compete alongside each other for sport and leisure activities which have become more closely aligned with lifestyle choices

Crucial to building or developing appropriate facilities which meet user expectations both as they currently stand, and as we predict them to be in the future, is gaining a real understanding of what these expectations are. Once expectations are established, the aim should be to meet them via a strategic, cohesive approach to the planning and development of both new facilities and improvements to existing facilities. This is currently a requirement under Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17); a document which outlines the policies that local planning authorities and regional planning bodies need to take into consideration when preparing development plans. PPG17 states that, *'local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities. Assessments will normally be undertaken at district level, although assessments of strategic facilities should be undertaken at regional or sub-regional levels.'*

The Panel believes that the principles proposed by PPG17 are sound; however, evidence from this inquiry indicates that this guidance has not been sufficient to secure consistently strategic facility development. There may be a number of reasons for this.

In some cases it may be that authorities do not undertake a sufficiently robust assessment of needs and opportunities, whilst in others it may be that authorities do not act on their assessments, whether due to a lack of available finance, other pressures on land-use, or local resistance to change. The Amateur Swimming Association has provided evidence which indicates that whilst the Sport England Facility Modeling tool is helpful for strategically identifying the best location for a new pool, local authority funding for the development often comes from an independent source which, *'compromises logical planning.'*

At the time of writing, the Department for Communities and Local Government was consulting on streamlined planning guidance for sport, recreation and open space, merging it with guidance on bio-diversity. This could reduce strategic consideration of sport and recreation needs yet further. The Panel would strongly urge the Government to ensure that strategic consideration of sport and recreation facility need is strengthened, not weakened, and that resource is made available to act upon the findings.

The Panel also received clear evidence that where community groups felt some ownership and involvement with their facility, they were more likely to take pride in it, which contributed to ongoing facility usage and maintenance. The Panel therefore believes that the assessment process should include community discussions about local need and that in the words of a rower from Bedford, the local authority, *'should be an enabler, not a total provider.'*

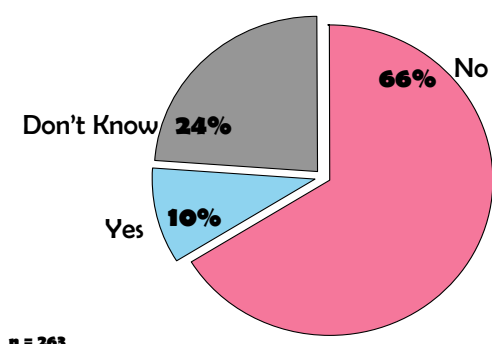
The examples of inappropriate, unsuitable and/or poor quality facilities which have emerged from this inquiry have raised concern amongst the Panel regarding the research that underpins facility planning and development.



'Facilities themselves should always be a function of local demand – it is not always obvious that where new facilities are developed or where existing ones are modernised, that a thorough consultation regarding local demand (perhaps, especially with regard to adult users) has been undertaken.'

A key source for wider data on sports facilities is Sport England's Active Places online database. This database includes information on over 50,000 sporting facilities across a variety of sports, owned by local authorities, commercial enterprises and clubs. The database is intended as a tool for members of the public to locate local facilities so that they can be more widely used. Currently information is held about 11 types of sports facilities with the acknowledgement that, *'this is the first stage in an ambitious project.'*¹⁴ In addition to this publicly available database, the Active Places Power website exists in order to act as a planning tool for sports facilities, and holds the most comprehensive data currently available on the numbers of facilities and where they exist across England. It is worth noting however that access to the site is limited to local authorities, national governing bodies of sport, government departments and lottery distributors and must be applied for through Sport England.

Do you think that development is adequately planned at a national level?



There is at present no existing overview of sports facility provision as a complete offering to the wider community that unpicks and assesses such things as the quality of facilities available, the strategic planning of facilities at a national level, the areas which are most in need of improvements, and the practices that are working well at engaging members of the public. The Panel recognises that one of the ten satisfaction

measures in the Sport England Satisfaction Survey is 'facilities and playing environment' and that under this heading such areas as the aesthetics of the building, quality of surfaces, cleanliness and ancillary facility provision are covered in terms of both satisfaction and importance. This has led to the collection of very useful data, which will continue to be gathered through future waves of this research.

¹⁴ <http://www.activeplaces.com>, last accessed 30/01/2010

Whilst in its current format, the satisfaction data on facilities is not sufficiently comprehensive, the raw data which would allow for deeper analysis has been collected and merely needs further investigation. Previously, satisfaction data has been considered in detail individually for each of the 45 sports which completed the survey, and briefly as part of research into the quality of sporting experiences. Such research is the starting point for generating comprehensive data on the quality of facility provision and the Panel recommends that Sport England should look to gain further insights from data which they have already accumulated, or make the data more widely available for others to do so.

The prevailing absence of appropriate research to inform the correct strategic approach to facility development until now has resulted in what Sport England has observed as the creation of some impressive developments, which do not necessarily address the needs of the local community or significantly deliver on outcomes such as increased participation. Such developments can ultimately lead to increased subsidy costs to the public sector if they fail to generate sufficient revenue. Indeed, the wider perception amongst the general public is that development is not adequately planned at a national level, two in three people (66%) believe this, compared to only one in ten (10%) who say that ‘Yes, development is adequately planned at a national level’ whilst the remaining quarter (24%) did not know.¹⁵

Further reasons identified to the Panel for the inadequacy of planning development at a national level include a lack of co-ordination between key partners, failure to consider the whole locality of an area, and disparities in the size of funding for both adults and juniors, different sports, and with other sectors such as culture. Community Matters for example, state that, *‘there is a need for much greater co-ordination of central government, private and third sector strategic planning, and targeted capital development as part of national and local strategy.’* There has also been reasonably widespread acknowledgement that Sport England have played a positive role in directing development funding to NGBs and that this partnership is starting to work well, in particular through the obligatory development of Facilities Strategies. This leaves the Panel optimistic that future development planning will see some improvement following the Sport England production of a national facilities strategy.



‘The English Table Tennis Association is in the process of developing a Facilities Strategy with considerable help from Sport England...these strategies and supporting documentation (such as technical guidance) will undoubtedly provide a starting point and guide.’

As outlined above, planning authorities are required to undertake strategic assessments of facility need. Increasingly governing bodies of sport, particularly those in receipt of Sport England funding are also doing so. The Amateur Swimming Association for example published *From Policy to Pool* in 2009, which establishes their national vision for the planning and development of swimming pools between 2009 and 2013 and provides guidance to stakeholders when they are planning facilities. The Panel has also heard from a range of leisure auditors and consultants who have been tasked with a variety of facility research projects indicating sport specific, independent concerns around the planning of facilities. However as yet, there is no one central portal where all this research and strategic planning information can be held and accessed.

¹⁵ Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 263 respondents across the UK

*'The **strategic planning** of local sport and recreation services is **underdeveloped** with little robust assessment of current private and public leisure provision, community needs and future demand. **Performance management is weak** and this **restricts the ability** of councils to **assess the impact** of services on local and national priorities'* –The National Audit Office, *Public Sports and Recreation Services*, 2006

The Leisure Database Company, who undertake the comprehensive Active Places research for Sport England, has highlighted to the Panel that the fundamental lack of data is a result of many organisations capturing data in different ways. This varied approach to data collection results in differing quality standards and an incomplete dataset, which cannot be shared to its full potential. This ultimately makes investment decisions harder.

The Panel is concerned with the extent to which the need for improved strategic planning and evidence based assessments is still a prevalent issue in facility development. A 2006 report by the National Audit Office touches upon many of the key findings of this inquiry. Recommendations to councils from the National Audit Office made almost four years ago included; *'assessing current and future sports and recreation needs locally and their relationship to regional and national needs'* and, *'improving the collection, analysis and use of performance information in order to demonstrate value for money, for example by including financial performance and social outcomes in all contracts.'*

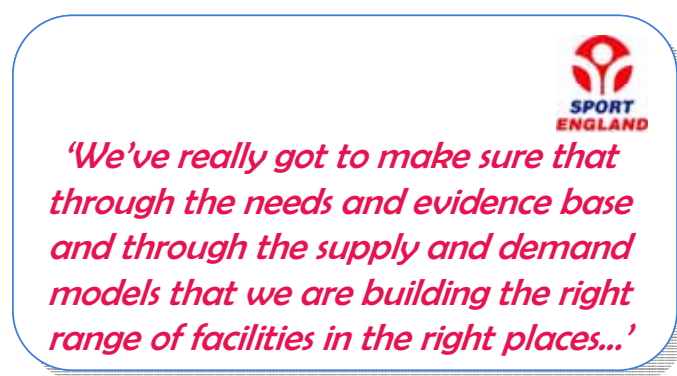
The Panel is concerned with the extent to which the need for improved strategic planning and evidence-based assessments is still a prevalent issue in facility development

Following the 2006 National Audit Office report, in 2007 Sport England launched its Sports Facility Improvement Service aimed at helping local authorities to strengthen their strategic planning capabilities. In addition to this, there are now more tools available for local authorities to utilise when developing facilities. Alongside the Active People and Active Places databases, a tool for continuous improvement when managing leisure facilities and aiming for sports development exists in the shape of Quest. Advocated by Sport England, Quest, *'defines industry standards and good practice and encourages their ongoing development and delivery within a customer focused management framework,'* leading the Panel to believe that more local authorities should utilise such tools, and facility framework documentation when applicable. There is some evidence that lessons have been taken from 'white elephant' style developments, and some local authorities have successfully adopted more strategic, needs based approaches, based on such guidance tools, or in partnership with private sector providers.

The lack of an effective overarching national strategy for sports facility provision, combined with its non-statutory status makes such foresight in facility development heavily dependent on the

priorities and perceptions of individual local authorities, and the opinions of key decision makers within each local authority. Indeed, time and time again throughout the inquiry the Panel has heard that ultimately the majority of decisions with regards to facility investment rest with each local authority. Local authorities are the major investor of public money in sport, and more than 60% of their net expenditure on sport is typically directed towards built sports facilities,¹⁶ so it is not surprising that they are responsible for making key decisions in this field. Charging policies and pricing plans are set by local authorities, as are development decisions with regard to the maintained school estate. Whilst Partnership for Schools (PfS) is responsible for the delivery of capital investment into schools through the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) scheme, the extent to which opportunities within the programme relating to sports facilities and their community use are taken up is ultimately dependent on local authorities.¹⁷

The Panel believes that the primary reason why such an approach has not been as effective as it could be is that community sport and recreation provision does not receive sufficient consideration in decisions regarding the school estate. This problem is further complicated by local authority boundaries and an unwillingness to work across authorities in close geographical proximity. In their provision of strategic facilities planning advice, Sport England is currently moving towards a more needs and evidence-based approach to assist this. This mindset shift needs to become a widely adopted approach, outlined and supported fully by central government.



The 'Total Place' approach now advocated by central Government, the Local Government Association and Sport England can play a key role in making this change. Under the 'Total Place' approach, funding is viewed in terms of the total amount of money being spent by government organisations in a single place. Funding decisions should then be made in a coherent and, where possible, locally determined manner. Findings from the pilot studies for such a scheme are showing that only 5% of what is being spent in a locality is determined at the discretion of a local authority, with the rest being set nationally. The national approach to setting funding is particularly alarming in consideration of the evidence, as already mentioned, which the Panel has received to suggest that development is not adequately planned at national level. Approaching the public services for an area from a 'total' perspective will allow local authorities, through uniting public funding, to utilise public space in the best possible way, attract greater numbers to facilities and increase efficiency, ultimately resulting in better services for communities at less cost.

The England and Wales Cricket Board are also currently piloting a scheme that takes an holistic approach by considering the whole environment. In partnership with Lewisham MBC, the scheme is considering sports development, facility development, unemployment and quality

¹⁶ Sport England, *Facilities Inquiry Submission*, 2010

¹⁷ PfS, *Facilities Inquiry Submission*, 2010

benchmarking. A more joined-up approach, if planned and managed correctly, will result in higher provision in all areas and can also be successful when considering solely sport at the level of a geographical region, such as a county. On an annual basis since 1996, the Kent County Council's Sports Development Unit has consulted with 34 Kent governing bodies of single sports to identify major facility needs, detailing that, *'the analysis has taken a county, rather than local level, perspective, and as such it has identified strategic requirements.'* It is also recognised by the Local Government Association that *'co-ordination between partners at a sub regional level'* is necessary to ensure an efficient distribution of built sport facilities.

However, the Panel recognises that the improvement of built facilities along a strategic approach may not always appear to local communities to be positive, particularly if it leads to the loss of a facility. As cited earlier clear, strong leadership and political courage is required at a local level to implement such approaches successfully. Rationalisation has a role to play in informed and intelligent facility improvements and developments, and is fundamental to ensuring that long term, sustainable facilities are developed in the correct places. However, to residents of a particular area, and in some instances NGBs, a strategic approach may simply appear to be the closure of a facility. This again illustrates the importance of community consultation.



'It would greatly help if sports governing bodies did not encourage that sort of political attack on local authorities which are actually genuinely improving facilities. By all means have a go at those which are not, but local authorities are improving facilities, and rationalisation is very rarely, so far at least, something which leads to a reduction in provision.'

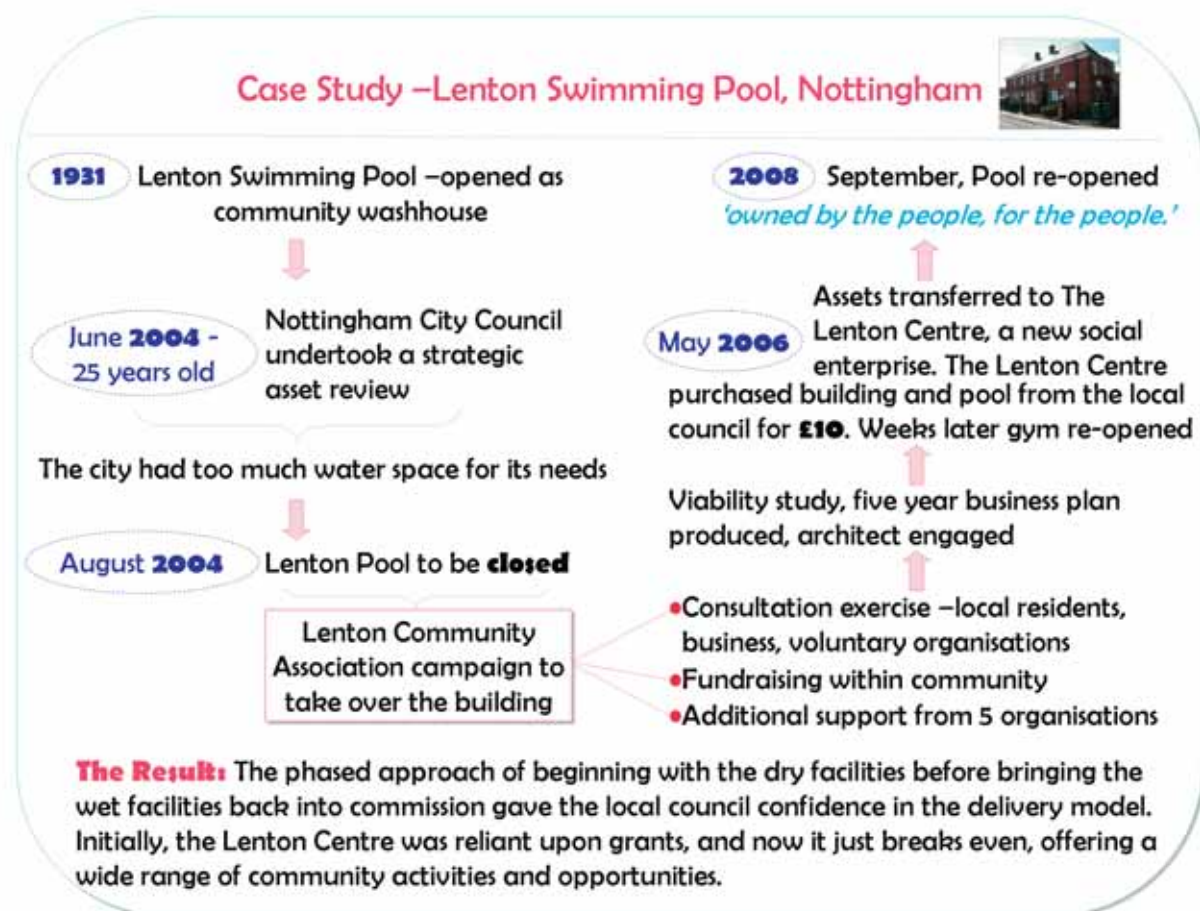
As the report shall explore in section 2, The Outdoor Environment, this issue is also pertinent in some cases of lost playing fields. Communities often feel outraged when they learn that there will be a loss of an established part of their local infrastructure, particularly if there is a high degree of history attached to the venue. However, what may initially appear to be a loss to a community, if correctly planned, should be a gain in terms of the quality and maintenance liability that the new and/or remaining facilities should offer. One such example provided by Sport England focuses on local authority swimming pool provision in Rotherham, where 12 traditional pools have been reduced and upgraded to four modern pools. These modern pools are more efficient and are much better located for the people of Rotherham who want to go swimming, and so do not create longer journey times. Because of this, usage is high at the four pools, and they receive sufficient revenue to sustain them over the long term, thus ensuring high quality swimming facilities in Rotherham for the foreseeable future.

The Panel firmly believes that in order to make local authority facility provision more successful, local authorities need to work in partnership with NGBs, sports clubs and the local community. In some instances, this will mean local authorities being willing to relinquish control, and local clubs developing the capacity to run a facility for community benefit. The Panel has seen a number of models which can successfully facilitate this, ranging from long term agreements

between sports clubs and local authorities, to community enterprise schemes such as asset transfers.

In a not-for-profit community enterprise, democratic principles are adopted and all income generated is re-invested in the enterprise itself, or the wider local community. Such community ownership of assets, when successful, can achieve long term social, economic, and environmental improvements. Engagement and pride from the community will ensure that high quality provision is created and sustained, and in doing so, community members will increase their skills base and their interpersonal relationships. Indeed, in May 2007 the Quirk Review, *Making Assets Work* found that, *'the benefits of community management and ownership of public assets can outweigh the risks and often the opportunity costs in appropriate circumstances.'* Commitment from the community and a realistic business plan will be needed to ensure that this happens, and organisations such as the Development Trusts Association can assist communities hoping to undertake asset transfer schemes by checking that the appropriate support networks are in place, alongside a vision for the future and an enterprise mindset.

Swimming pools in particular can be costly facilities to run. In December 2009, the Asset Transfer Unit, which advises on the transfer of underused land and buildings, and the Amateur Swimming Association, produced guidance on the community ownership and management of swimming pools, which they are urging local authorities to consider as an alternative to closing facilities for which there is still a need. This comprehensive document draws upon other key sources, such as Sport England documentation, and provides direction towards further guidance for more specialised elements of the process. There are also a number of successful case studies highlighted in the document to act as inspirational cases of best practice.

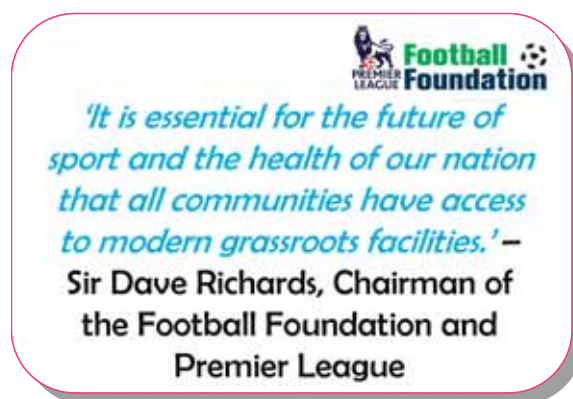


The Panel believes that in certain cases, community ownership or involvement such as that in the Lenton Swimming Pool case study is an excellent way forward; however, they recognise that effective community ownership requires a support infrastructure from the local authority, and thorough management by someone with appropriate skills and business knowledge. It is important that when they do occur, community ownership and asset transfer schemes facilitate the future success of facilities through shared community responsibility, rather than representing a handover of a facility which has been a burden on the local authority, into the hands of a voluntary sector which will also struggle with upkeep. The Rugby Football League and Derbyshire Sport amongst others have expressed such concerns to the Panel.

Additionally, the Panel is concerned that there is a lack of awareness surrounding community asset transfer schemes which may be prohibiting their successful use. Having received a number of evidence submissions with limited or no knowledge in this area, the Panel agrees with Sport England's suggestion that greater advocacy and promotion of this option should be put forward through documents such as that produced by the Asset Transfer Unit and the Amateur Swimming Association. For example, England Basketball had no knowledge of the asset transfer programme, and Craven District Council, which is currently involved in undertaking a number of projects where land is being transferred to be developed for sport, had similarly never heard of the programme and expressed surprise that it had been in existence for four years.

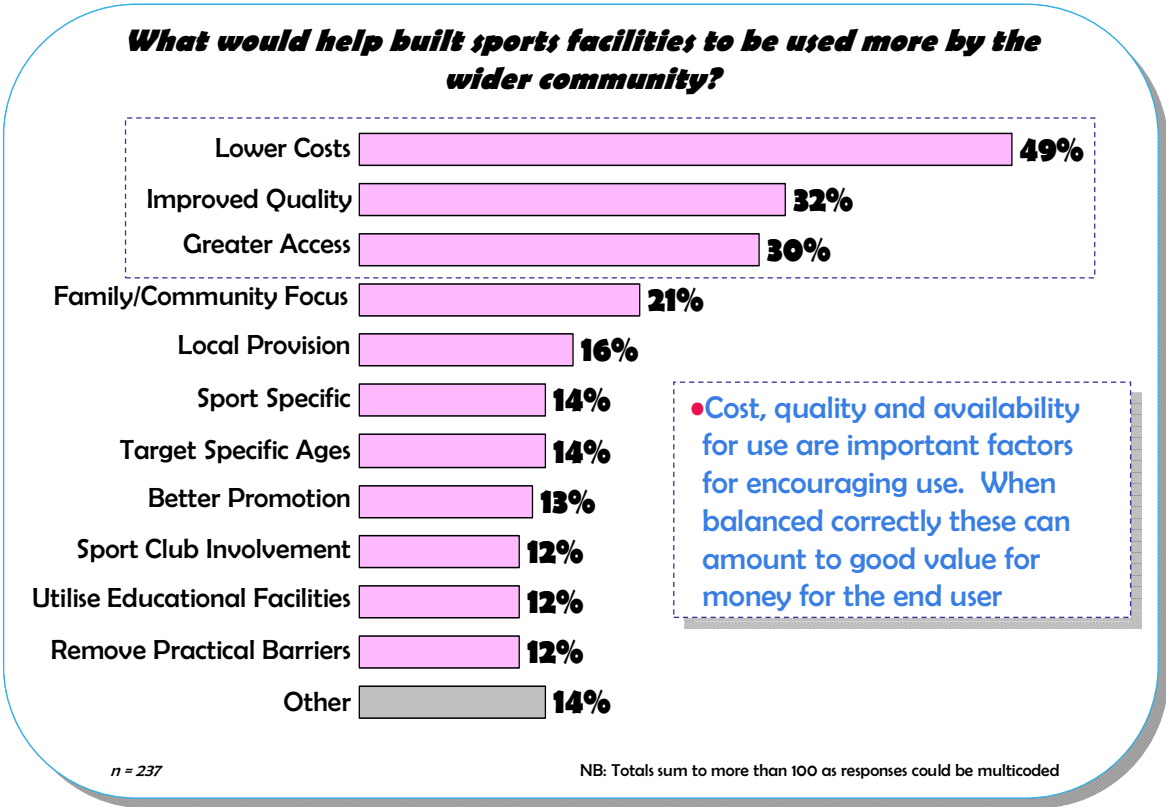
Since finding out about the community asset transfer programme through the Facilities Inquiry, Craven District Council has made contact with the programme regarding its relevant projects, but strongly feels that greater publicity amongst local authorities and sports development services is vital for more effectively utilisation of this scheme, having read over 25 NGB facility strategies without once coming across it. Likewise, Chris Metherell, the Kent Sports Facilities Manager undertook a 'straw poll' of 12 club secretaries, none of whom knew anything about the community asset transfer programme. The submission from Kent County Council's Sport, Leisure and Olympic Service therefore advocates much wider publicity of the programme through all conduits possible, including CCPR, LGA, ISPAL, CSPs and Sport England.

A recurring theme to evidence itself to the Panel can be broadly described as that of access to built facilities. This ranges from somewhat obvious cost barriers, to booking procedures and non-sporting use of sports and leisure facilities. Almost one in three people (30%) identified such access issues as barriers to the usage of built facilities through the online questionnaire,¹⁸ and half (49%) specifically mentioned that lower, or more reasonable costs, would encourage usage of built facilities.¹⁹ The Pricing section of this report will cover the feasibility and considerations around cost issues in greater detail, as it is necessary for facilities to strike the right balance between affordable and sustainable, a harmony which is dependent on a number of varying factors for every facility.



¹⁸ Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 237 respondents across the UK

¹⁹ *Ibid*



Evidence submitted also indicates concern around the usage of indoor sports facilities for commercial activities such as weddings or parties, enthusiast fairs and business events. This observation has come from a wide range of sources, ranging from the general public to sport experts. One contribution to our online questionnaire cites *'too many birthday parties taking up court time'* as part of their worst experiences of using facilities in the UK. The commercial logic behind such decisions is understandable, in that such events tend to generate good income for a facility. However, dedicated sports facilities should not be allowed to prioritise more commercially attractive, non-sporting use over the physical recreation needs of the local community on a regular basis. Such non-sporting use is most valuable when the extra income generated is used to subsidise costs for certain sporting activities or amongst target groups.

In addition to facilities being unavailable for sporting use due to other income-driving ventures, evidence has also indicated that whilst some sports can generate higher profits for a facility provider, other smaller or more niche sports struggle to gain sufficient access to courts for their needs. This is particularly problematic where shared usage takes place; so for example, the same indoor pitch that is used for 5-a-side football also provides the space on which badminton can be played. Again whilst the financial logic behind such decisions is understandable, facilities need to have sufficient business plans to sustain themselves in such a manner that the provision of facilities for all sport and physical recreation, on a balanced scale in accordance with the needs of the local community, is not outweighed by commercial decisions. The desire for



income should not drive access across sports and the Panel has noted widespread concern for the avoidance of competition between sports for increasingly scarce resources. Multi-use sites have been identified as an effective way to strengthen business plans and are also discussed in the Pricing section of this report.

When facilities are run purely from a commercial perspective, sports such as baseball, softball and badminton will often lose out to football, or have to pay incredibly high costs per person involved, which can be prohibitive. High court hire costs are also incredibly prohibitive to junior sports club use, for whom the costs are even less affordable. Baseball Softball UK see themselves, and similar minority sports, as tertiary priority users, coming third to mainstream sports and local space requirements. Through our online survey, members of the public have expressed similar views calling for, *'[facilities to be] available (many publicly owned facilities are operated (a) with a "maximise income" approach, i.e. local authorities hosting non sporting events, (b) with blatant "favouritism" towards individual sports...'* (Male, 50+, Yorkshire).

Greater community involvement or better partnerships between a number of interested parties and stronger links between local authorities and sports clubs should allow for the voices of a number of sports, and people who care about the value of sport in the community to be heard by those in management positions. This should ensure that whilst sufficient funds are raised to sustain the facility, income targets don't drive access across sports.

From a long term perspective, improving the overall quality of facility provision, and establishing sensible pricing structures should reduce overcrowding or overuse in the high quality, affordable facilities –examples of which the Panel has heard about in both the built and outdoor environment. There is however a danger that whilst facility provision is so varied in quality and availability, initially improvements and developments may only serve to exacerbate this problem, once again highlighting the necessity for a true needs-and evidence-based approach.

One way in which the Panel believes facility provision can be utilised in a fair and optimum manner is through the increased usage of user agreements between facilities and local sports clubs

One way in which the Panel believes facility provision can be utilised in a fair and optimum manner is through the increased usage of user agreements between facilities and local sports clubs. These agreements outline the number of hours of facility usage required by the sports club over an extended time period, the fee they will pay for this, and the facility's commitment to provide the stated hours of use. Such agreements benefit both sports clubs and the facilities; facilities will have the certainty of a known number of hours worth of usage occurring and being paid for, and the sports clubs will have the reassurance of a guaranteed facility to use and a facility venue to associate with the identity of their club, alongside an agreed amount of access at a set cost. This security of tenure is financially reassuring for the business model of the facility, and the budgets of the clubs, and furthermore allows the clubs to focus their limited resources on developing their sport rather than securing training facilities.

Having a number of training sites, or having to seek alternative facilities on a regular basis, which is particularly the case when school facilities are being used and, for example, the exam period prevents facility usage for a couple of weeks, has a negative impact on retention rates in the long term and dilutes the identity and social interactivity of a club. Anecdotal evidence received by the Panel suggests that a large proportion of clubs across varying sports are in

situations such as this. For example, The Football Association has 444 Community Clubs in England, with an average of 24 teams per club, and believes the majority of these to play at between three and five different sites. Similarly, England Basketball reports that, *'often clubs must use more than one facility as they are unable to obtain the court time they require at just one venue.'*

Through their Whole Sports Plans for their 46 funded NGBs, Sport England is currently working with sport clubs to address the issue of security of tenure against facilities by helping to generate a strategic view of what the sports believe they need locally, regionally and nationally. Such evidence gathering is advantageous both at the individual sport level, and a national level, as all the data gathered will result in the production of a National Facilities Strategy that will provide better direction as to where to distribute funding. This unfortunately will not extend beyond the funded 46 sports. Furthermore Sport England's Sustainable Facilities Fund fully supports the notion of user agreements. Applications require the provision of tangible evidence from at least two sports outlining their requirements from the facility in the form of user agreements, so for example, volleyball may commit to 500 hours of revenue upfront, and badminton 500 hours, before funding is granted. This requirement ensures a real need for the facility before funding is invested in it and helps remove burdens from sports clubs.

A particular area that has been identified through the inquiry where the quality and provision of built facilities is even more crucial to participation in sport and recreation, is when provision is being targeted specifically at increasing participation amongst under-represented groups within sport, including those from lower socio-economic groups, black and minority ethnic communities, young women and disabled users.

Sport England's Active People surveys have shown that whilst the gap between participation levels amongst the highest and lowest socio-economic groups has narrowed to an extent, there have been consistently lower rates of participation amongst disadvantaged communities. Data from the most recently published Active People 4 indicates that 19% of people from the highest socio-economic groups regularly partake in sport and physical activity, compared to 13% of people from the lowest socio-economic groups.²⁰

According to StreetGames, a national charity dedicated to developing sport in disadvantaged communities, lower levels of participation within disadvantaged communities are largely down to the poor level of facilities encountered in disadvantaged areas which bring about natural levels of under-usage. Sport England's National Benchmarking Service (NBS) draws on data from January 2010 provided by Sheffield Hallam University, which shows that the leisure centres available to the most deprived 20% of the population (those from NS-SEC 6&7) are only attracting half the amount of users that they might be reasonably expected to attract. Research from StreetGames combined with their practical understandings gained through first hand experiences with disadvantaged communities has identified that this under representation, *'is not a demand side problem. It is a supply side problem.'*²¹ In support of this, over 100 projects provided by StreetGames in disadvantaged communities had a combined take up of over 40,000 participants which translated into over 1 million attendances in the years 2006-2009.²² Similarly, projects carried out by Kickz, a Football Foundation supported programme which targets young people (aged 12-18 years) in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the

²⁰ Sport England *Active People Survey 4*, 2009/10, regular participation is defined as at least 30 minutes of sport at moderate intensity at least three times a week.

²¹ StreetGames, *Facilities Inquiry Submission*, 2010

²² *Ibid*

country, have been phenomenally successful. At the last count in 2009, 39 professional football clubs and their partners had engaged over 30,000 young people through 110 football and sports development orientated projects, with three quarters of participants coming from the 30% most deprived locations in England.²³ Further evidence comes from Newcastle City Council's Westgate Centre for Sport which provides activities for 'troublesome' youths on Friday and Saturday evenings, a time when leisure centres are traditionally under utilised. On a Friday night the club attracts over 100 participants from Newcastle's multi-deprived and multi-ethnic West End. Both the Kickz programme and the scheme in Newcastle work in partnership with the local police, recognising that they are beneficial to the community as a whole, and that whilst young people are engaged in sporting activity on a Friday or Saturday evening, they are neither potential perpetrators nor potential victims of anti-social behaviour.

In such instances, as with all built facilities offered by local authorities, provision needs to be of good quality, sustainable and community focused. In addition, they need to ensure that they are entirely relevant to the needs of their particular community, and orientated around engaging that community. This will involve directly targeting groups such as disadvantaged or minority communities. It is also inevitable that in the case of facilities that are specifically targeting disadvantaged communities and lower income groups, some sort of subsidy will be necessary, making it imperative that the right facilities are generated from capital. It is also important that when targeting a specific group with a facility, that the marketing of the facility and the communication of the benefits of sport are delivered in an effective manner for the intended audience. The definition of what is effective will, of course, change with the audience, and this too must be acknowledged. A 'one size fits all' approach is not suitable for successful facility provision.

The Active People survey also shows that regular sporting participation for adults with a limiting disability/illness has decreased by 35,100 from 429,500 (6.7%) in 2007/08 to 394,400 (6.1%) in 2009/10.²⁴ The Panel heard from the English Federation of Disability Sport that the facility needs of disabled users vary dramatically both to non-disabled users, and to users with different disabilities. For example the changing room needs for a wheelchair user will be different to those of someone who is visually impaired, and if these varying needs are worked in to good facility design, everyone will be able to appreciate the end result. As the Amateur Swimming Association has highlighted, swimming pools provide great facilities for those who are disabled and those with a short or long term illness. The Panel is concerned that in a number of instances when improvements have been made to some of the outdated, no longer fit for purpose stock, the refurbishment could only allow for a limited amount of disabled access due to the original design of the building. More frustratingly, some newer builds appear not to have learnt from this and thought only about adapting the facility to be accessible after the initial build. However, adding in such access later on is more expensive and difficult than it is to incorporate it into the original planning of a facility, when it is relatively cheap to build in. The Panel also heard from the English Federation of Disability Sport that disabled people and their carers expect to travel further for sport and recreation facilities than their non-disabled peers, and this is treated as an acceptable fact, which the Panel feels should not be the case.

A further consideration when improving the quality of facilities, or designing new facilities is the need to do so in a manner that is less intimidating for users. Councillor Chris White, chair of the

²³ Kickz, *Progress Report*, 2009

²⁴ Sport England *Active People Survey 4*, 2009/10, regular participation is defined as at least 30 minutes of sport at moderate intensity at least three times a week.

Local Government Association's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, has argued that what may seem like little steps or actions to make facilities less intimidating and more attractive to users, are in fact major steps to those users who are intimidated by them. Appealing to the end users must therefore be at the forefront of decisions around what we deem to be high quality built facilities along with any improvements made to existing facilities. The Panel believes this point bears particular relevance for encouraging new participants into sport, and particularly when attempting to retain young, female participants. The Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation has identified that a big challenge to women who want to participate in sport is not having a sufficiently supportive enough environment in which to do so. For young women, something as seemingly small as poor quality changing rooms without hairdryers may be enough to put them off participating again.

A consumer attitudes poll conducted by the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation indicated that 60% of women would do more sport and physical activity if the facilities available to them were of a better quality, although lifestyle factors were seen to play a larger part in preventing women from participating. It has been suggested that women have higher expectations in terms of quality, and it is already noted that societal expectations of quality are considerably higher than they were a number of years ago - when many facilities were first developed, and which haven't been updated since. Whilst female friendly considerations need to be taken into account in facility designs, accommodating for lifestyle factors is also necessary. For example, providing childcare facilities and extended opening hours to cater for busy working mothers, ensuring there are appropriate showering and changing facilities so that sport and recreation can be easily accommodated into the day, and promoting group activities are more likely to draw women in to participate.

Furthermore, a friendly, welcoming facility where the staff are accommodating will have a greater impact on women's likelihood to use facilities. One online response detailed her best experience of using a sports facility in the UK along these lines; *'I use West Park Leisure Centre in Long Eaton with my child because everyone is so helpful and friendly –it is getting a makeover too and so it will have better family friendly changing rooms.'* The leisure centre mentioned already has family changing facilities which are clearly important to this user, who is also accepting of the fact that whilst they may not be of the highest quality currently, they are about to be improved. By catering for the wider needs of her and her family, the facility whilst in need of a makeover is still providing a fantastic experience for her. On the other side of this equation, when asked about their worst experiences using sports facilities in the UK, one response details, *'What better way is there to put women off sport, than forcing them out of the door as early as 10pm, hot and perspiring. They will not be inclined to have any social life after participating if they are not given time for even a quick shower and change of clothes. This is a London Borough owned facility, who have hired the Sports Hall to the home team from 8pm to 10pm. It is not good for any sports participant to go straight from intense participation out into a cold night. They need to stretch down and shower...Club Email: "Also, please let me apologise in advance, in case we finish our game past 10pm, as you and your team mates, won't be able to have a shower, as staff are quite strict in getting people out of the door past the closing time".'*

Schools should be at the centres of communities, and as such every effort should be taken for their facilities, be they sports, or ICT, or other, to be available to the wider community outside of the traditional school day

The Panel received a large amount of evidence relating to the access and usage of educational built facilities, creating the view amongst the Panel that the levels of community access and usage to school sports facilities varies significantly, across geographical locations and sports. Furthermore, a number of expert witnesses in this field have acknowledged that data on wider community usage of educational facilities is not readily available. Derbyshire Sport informed the Panel that, *'even with our strong links to schools it is still difficult to access this information,'* within their own county. Meanwhile the Association of School and College Leaders did not provide an exact figure as, *'it is difficult to generalise...some schools work hard with local clubs and groups to ensure excellent use of their facilities, in other cases however use is very limited.'*

There is evidence both of excellent utilisation of educational facilities by the wider community, and conversely of little to no access outside of school hours, thus preventing community usage. For example, Partnership for Schools (PFS) has identified Knowsley's Centres for Learning, a BSF Wave 1 project which transformed eleven schools into seven centres of learning, as providing an estimated 8575 total hours per annum for community use beyond the school day.²⁵ Conversely, the Panel has heard a number of anecdotal stories of sports teams and clubs having to drive past shut school sports facilities to reach facilities further away which they are allowed to use. The Association of School and College Leaders has identified a broad division between schools which share their facilities with the local authority or district council, in which case out of school hours use tends to be good, and those who have no links with such providers and tend to have more limited wider use. However the Panel believes the situation to be more complex than this.

Case Study provided by PFS

partnerships for schools

Knowsley's Centres for Learning -BSF Wave 1 project

11 Schools

transformed

7 centres of learning

The Result: an estimated **8575** total hours per annum for community use beyond the school day

'At the heart of everything we do is our commitment to the local community... We want everyone to enjoy the academic, vocational, technological, sporting, artistic and linguistic opportunities we offer. Open outside school hours and during school holidays, we offer something for everyone.' Knowsley Park Centre for Learning

²⁵ PFS, Facilities Inquiry Response, 2010

Schools should be at the centres of communities, and as such every effort should be taken for their facilities, be they sports, music or ICT, to be available to the wider community outside of the traditional school day, including during school holidays. The Panel acknowledges that a number of obstacles interplay to deter wider community use of school sport facilities, including: design barriers, concerns around financial viability, management capacity, and staff mindset from the head teacher through to caretakers. The Panel acknowledges that these obstacles require action to be removed, but do not see them as insurmountable barriers that should legitimately prevent community use of educational sports facilities in the future.

It is therefore recommended that schools, and where possible other educational facilities, open their premises for community sporting usage outside of school hours. Documentation from Sport England entitled, *'Win:Win,'* provides an introductory reference toolkit for, *'the key principles underpinning the successful planning, development and delivery of community sport and arts facilities on school and education sites,'*²⁶ and outlines the wider benefits of doing so. Wider use should be made of this document, which should be particularly targeted at directors of children's services and head teachers.

The Panel also advocates that greater research should be undertaken into the existence of suitable sports facilities at schools, and the extent to which they are made available for community use and at what cost. Further research into perceived and actual barriers around educational facilities opening for wider use would also be valuable. To this end, the Panel believes that work recently commissioned by Derbyshire Sport in this area will be an important resource once complete. The work aims to establish the particular barriers within Derbyshire leading to the perception that schools are an under utilised resource in the area, and what they can do about any issues identified.

²⁶ Sport England, *Win:Win*, 2008

Primary Obstacles Facing Wider Community Use of Educational Facilities

• Design Barriers

School sporting facilities in particular tend not to be designed with community use in mind. For this reason, there are often unsuitable social facilities for sports clubs who wish to use the facilities, no reception area linked to the sports facilities for casual users to go through, changing rooms not suited to shared use of adults and children, and often difficulties opening up sports facilities whilst keeping the rest of the school secure.

In some instances, the planning of school PE facilities is also inadequate for the needs of specific adult sports such as badminton or basketball. Such design barriers need to be tackled at the planning stage of new schools



'...recreational facilities should be the 'front' showpiece of the school/college and permit use out of school hours without compromising the rest of the school campus.'



'...these facilities provide playing areas but very limited social/refreshment/meeting space which are critical features of a community table tennis club.'

• Financial Viability

Increased usage of educational facilities is often immediately associated with extra costs through: increased wear and tear, extra staffing costs, greater energy usage and no room in the budget for e.g. promotional activities. Concerns about cost can mean that community use of educational facilities is costly for the end user, who is not being subsidised. If users are priced out of frequent usage, meaning that uptake is low, opening longer hours will eventually become less financially viable.

It is essential that a member of staff is appointed to ensure a viable business revenue focus is present in establishing community use – guidance for this should be made available by local authorities. There should be flexibility in the education budget for cross subsidisation of community access. User agreements between sports clubs and schools can also help to secure income against any expected costs.

• Management Capacity

Opening facilities beyond the school day requires an internal infrastructure to be in place in order to manage bookings, conduct maintenance and ensure responsibility for health and safety. There is currently a much under used resource in sports clubs and community volunteers to aid with community use management, but it is vital that appropriate training is in place. Involvement of older students in out of hours facility management would be a cost effective way of up-skilling future generations. There is also a need to review the Ofsted safeguarding framework on the legal responsibilities for head teachers regarding activity on their school site

partnerships for schools

'...the appropriateness of using schools as a key base for community sport depends on the school staff being willing and capable to enable the usage of the facilities.'

• Mindset

The attitude of head teachers and caretakers plays an incredibly significant role in determining the extent to which educational facilities are used by the wider community. For those who already place a large amount of value on community sport, often pro-active approaches will be taken to ensuring the facilities are available for wider use, even if this requires an ongoing battle. This approach should be much easier for schools to achieve. Currently, head teachers and caretakers who see longer opening hours and greater community provision as an inconvenient burden are able to push community sports use down the agenda. It should be obligatory that schools open for wider community use, and that head teachers should wholly support this, either through becoming more informed about the advantages, or if necessary, through assessment targets relating to community usage.

Links with sports clubs are currently an under utilised resource for both maximising the use of school facilities after hours, and creating pathways into sports for young people. Where the Panel has received evidence of such links occurring the results have been extremely positive for both parties. Examples include the Bradford Dragons Basketball Club which entered into a partnership with Buttershaw Business and Enterprise College to develop a basketball academy. The Basketball Club gives a reduced rate membership to the pupils of the college, and the college provides the club with prime time evening slots on their brand new court for £12 an hour, which is a third of the 'market rate' £35 that is normally charged. Lane Tennis Club in Widnes was able to secure usage of a school site from 3pm -10pm which was sufficient to provide the club with access to loans and funding.

A barrier to school club links appears to be around the practicality of dual use of school space, so for example, when exams are taking place and the school gymnasium is full of tables, a sports club can't continue to use the facilities in the evening. This can be off-putting for clubs as usage may be difficult to guarantee, and other events such as parent's evenings and school productions can have a similar impact.

Case Study, Basketball and Wilson's School, Sutton



Winter & Spring Terms

- Years 7, 8 & 9 → On school curriculum -6 week block for all pupils covering basic technique & skill
- Years 10-13 → Optional participation—one term, qualified coach
- Lunchtime → Year 7: top 12 players coached on Thursdays
- After School → Years 8, 9 & 10: Mon after school club
Years 10, 11 & 6th Form: Thurs coaching for best players

Summer Term -Qualified coaching for the best eight players in each year

- Years 7 & 8 → Fri after school
- Years 9 & 10 → Mon after school
- 1-1 coaching opportunities → Thurs after school

Includes some school pupils

- Club Links** →
- Weds evenings –Surrey County U17 train
 - Thurs evenings (early) –Surrey County U13 train
 - Thurs evenings (later) –Chadacre Badminton Club train

It has also been noted by the Panel that certain sports repeatedly seem to fare better with regards to using educational sports facilities. For example, England Basketball believe around 75% of their clubs to use educational facilities (schools, colleges and universities) for either games or training although the standard Building Schools for the Future (BSF) hall size isn't large enough to accommodate senior national league competitions, and England Netball reports that netball has been part of a number of successful BSF developments which have resulted in high quality sport specific facilities on the school site. Meanwhile, the Lawn Tennis Association has found the BSF programme relatively difficult to access. A recent workshop attended by the Lawn Tennis Association discovered that in part this was due to, 'a misperception that tennis always needed tennis-only courts, rather than shared facilities with other sports such as netball.'

This is not the case –we would prefer shared facilities rather than no tennis facilities in every instance.’ Encouraging links between sports clubs and schools that facilitate open dialogues about the needs of sports clubs during the design stage, particularly with new builds under the BSF scheme, is one way in which barriers such as this misperception can be addressed.

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) is a long-term programme of investment and change in England that will help transform education for secondary age students by providing 21st century learning environments that engage and inspire young people, their teachers and the wider community. BSF was launched by the Department for Children Schools and Families in February 2003 and local authority funding for it is being managed in a series of 15 waves.²⁷ The delivery of this programme is currently the responsibility of Partnerships for Schools (Pfs).

In line with the ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda, every BSF school will be an extended school, offering additional or dual use facilities, such as sport halls, libraries, nurseries and ICT resources. The scheme also recognises that secondary schools should be a major resource for community use, and therefore, where possible be designed for wider shared use.

Much of the evidence that the Panel has received from NGBs and local authorities has indicated that it is too early to sufficiently gauge the impact of BSF for community use of educational sports facilities as partnerships for dual use seem to be in the early stages. As of 31 December 2009, 129 BSF schools have been opened. There are 3,500 schools planned by the completion of the programme, therefore approximately only 4% of the schools planned through BSF are currently open.²⁸ In light of this, the Panel is not surprised to hear that there is not currently much in the way of evidence from successful schemes. It is nonetheless important that examples of best practice and any lessons from these early builds are acknowledged early on in the programme and utilised to shape future development.



‘We have little evidence to date although we are now working with 2 [BSF] schools ...’

To some extent this is already occurring; initially, schools opened in the early waves didn’t have the PE and Sport Stakeholder Group, which (from wave 5) is now obligatory, to influence the sporting offer in schools. Sport England has played a large role in bringing this about through proactively attempting to maximise the opportunities within BSF. A further result of its engagement has been that an authority is now required to have a Playing Field Strategy before they enter the BSF programme.



‘Sport has a high profile within the programme – particularly in relation to the community objectives...the extent to which the opportunity has been, and is, realised is dependent on the local authority themselves...’

²⁷ <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/ete/schoolsmanagement/buildingschoolsforthefuture/bsf/>

²⁸ Sport England, *Facilities Inquiry Submission*, 2010

Moving forward, Sport England aims to finalise a robust, needs and evidence based offer that works to help sustain both NGBs and schools, and can be replicated country wide. PfS estimates that for the next seven years, 200 schools will open each year. The Panel believes that it is important that wider community use of sports facilities is placed high on the agenda for these schools, right from the design stage so that buildings are suitable for optimum dual use. Similarly, Sport England suggests that the estimated 1400 new schools and their facilities planned to open over the next seven years, *‘present real opportunities for sport and NGBs, in that they offer new supply, facility enhancement possibilities, and realistically can be accessed relatively quickly.’*

The Panel also acknowledges, as suggested by Beauchamp College, that there are many examples of good practice from all sectors of education, and not just from schools that are part of the BSF programme. Further consideration will also be given to the VAT implications for generating income from community use of educational based sports facilities under the section on Pricing.

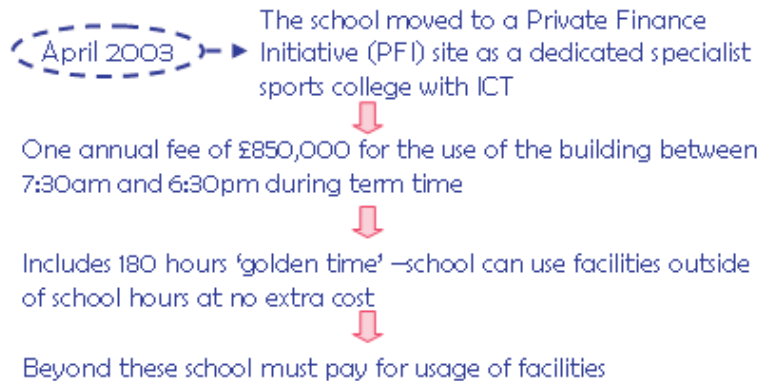
Considerable emphasis has been placed upon local authorities in the evidence submitted to the Panel, and whilst the Panel recognises that there is a fundamental and important role to be played by local authorities in facility provision and management, a wider approach where the community, local sports clubs and NGBs can contribute to discussions and practices is required moving forward.

Whilst the last five years have shown focus on improving built facilities; in the absence of appropriate strategic planning and accessible educational sports facilities, the standard of available, affordable, quality built facilities is still not sufficient. Lessons learnt from misplaced and insufficiently planned facilities with weak business plans, alongside cases of best practice where partnerships between relevant parties have met local needs, must be at the forefront of future improvements and developments to our built facilities. Appropriate evidence must be gathered on a case by case basis to assess local need and priorities within the community, before development or improvement work begins. Alongside this, a thorough, sustainable business plan must exist, incorporating user agreements with local sports clubs.

Case Study, Tupton Hall School, Derbyshire, PFI School

Tupton Hall School
A Specialist Sports College with ICT

The Panel experienced first-hand through a tour of the school, the excellent range of sporting facilities available at Tupton Hall School, and the commitment of the staff there who are crucial to the school's successful community use. Despite the dedication of the staff, and the numerous advantages of the PFI scheme, the school has also encountered a number of obstacles.

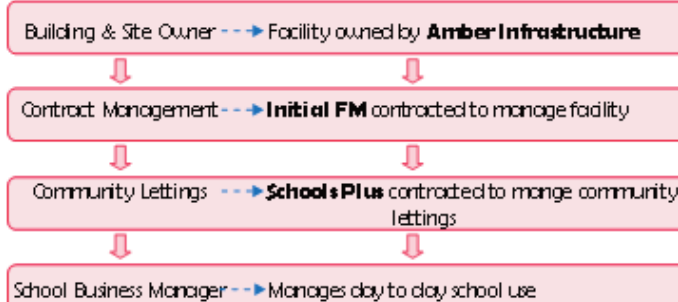


Extensive & Impressive Facilities

- Gymnasium
- Dance Studio
- Spin Lounge
- School Hall
- 400m Tartan Athletics Track
- 6 Netball Courts
- 2 Astro Pitches –1 of which is floodlit
- Football/Rugby Pitches



Management Structure



Advantages:

- Fantastic range of high quality facilities
- Little or no maintenance costs to pay –includes new equipment
- No caretaker or cleaner costs
- Out of hours usage for various activities
- Well presented and maintained site

Disadvantages:

Primarily generated by multi layered management structure resulting from securing financial support through public and private sector partnerships.

- Little control for school over out of hours use (after 6:30pm)
- Potential barriers to delivery of community aspects of Sports College Development Programme
- Multiple layers of red tape and bureaucratic procedure –creates friction
- Conflict of interest between commercial company and public service
- Community not aware of PFI & it's complexity –school unduly criticised for factors beyond control
- Loss of 'small' equipment during out of school usage
- Staff frustrations at day to day experience of PFI

What's the point in having these great facilities if no-one can access them?...it will be a long journey but a worthwhile one!

The Future

Continues:

- Developing good relationships with facilities owner and manager
- Showing investment into school site
- Maximising utilisation within hours under school's 'control'
- Celebrate & promote good work achieved
- Educate partners & share future vision

Aim to:

- Put Tupton Hall back at heart of community
- Develop 'Trust' to take over 3rd party lettings on the site
- Form local partnerships to cater for all community needs –sport/leisure/adult education/training courses



The Outdoor Environment

Just as there is a direct link between the quality and provision of built facilities and levels of participation, the Panel believes from the evidence presented, that access to the outdoor and natural environment has a very real impact on participation in outdoor sport and recreation - both for land-based activities such as orienteering, and those that take place on the water, for example canoeing.

Playing Fields and Outdoor Pitches

When taking into account facilities in the outdoor environment, the Panel considered at length the current situation regarding playing fields in the UK. There is evidence that the number of playing fields has reduced from 26,000 playing fields in 1992, on which there were 78,000 pitches, to 20,000 playing fields offering 68,000 pitches in 2009, yet the Panel has discovered that the 'loss of playing fields' is a multifaceted issue. As a result the Panel feels the matter of 'lost' and 'saved' playing pitches must be considered on a case by case basis, as it is with the assessment of school playing fields.

The London Playing Fields Foundation clearly articulated the view that, *'once a playing field is lost, it's lost forever.'* Nonetheless the evidence received by the Panel with regard to playing fields has led it to conclude that, in some instances, sport may ultimately gain from the loss of a playing field. For example if a field is poorly maintained and under-used, and crucially no interested party has the finances or inclination to 'save' the field, 'losing' it may yield better results. In such cases, money raised from the sale or alternative usage of the field, must be re-invested where possible into outdoor sports provision, and following this, indoor sports provision - as is the case with school playing fields. An example considered by the Panel suggests a run down site with ten pitches, where the sale of two can fund the improvement and maintenance of the remaining eight. However, such an approach requires considering sites for the present and the future, so that the remaining eight pitches are not then sold at a later date until there are no playing fields left. Decisions must be strategic, flexible to the surrounding environment and well timed.

Evidence suggests that often when a playing field has been closed, there has not been a detrimental impact as an alternative or more suitable site is provided, or the field is developed for better sporting use, negating the element of loss. The Kent County Council, Sport, Leisure and Olympics Service believe that, *'in relation to the county of Kent...no playing field has been 'disposed of' without a significant improvement, or increase to the sporting facility asset bank. The provisions of, for example, Sports Centres and Artificial Grass Pitches on previous playing fields has increased sport participation.'*

Sport England is a statutory consultee on planning applications affecting playing fields, and data originating from Sport England and cited to the Panel from the London Playing Fields Foundation shows that of the 126 planning applications which Sport England has objected to, just over half (52%) were either withdrawn by the applicants or refused planning permission.²⁹ This indicates that Sport England, whilst not responsible for 'saving' playing fields, can play a part in advising developments involving playing fields to minimise their detrimental impact on sport.

²⁹ London Playing Fields Foundation, *Facilities Inquiry Submission*, 2010

The Panel believes that legitimate concerns have been raised over loopholes in legislation that will, over time, allow for spaces to no longer be classed as playing fields and so therefore lose their protection. The Rugby Football League and Sport England amongst others have made this observation, with one submission advocating that, *‘the five-year loophole is closed by Statutory Instrument to prevent developers from buying playing fields and closing them off to community use for five years and then developing on them knowing that Sport England can not object.’*

The Panel believes that legitimate concerns have been raised over loopholes in legislation that will, over time, allow for spaces to no longer be classed as playing fields and so therefore lose their protection

By their very nature, playing fields are fixed in their locations, leading to the uneven distribution of outdoor playing fields. For example, according to the London Playing Fields Foundation; Barnet has 97 sites compared to just 12 in Tower Hamlets. Arguments around access to playing fields also echo those for built facilities in terms of educational facilities being able to open up their facilities for wider access. For outdoor pitches the peak usage times tend to be in the evening immediately outside of working hours whilst it is still light, and during the day at the weekends, whilst during the working or school day they may all stand empty. Here again we see the value in school facilities being utilised by the wider community, as at all times during the week there is an audience who can be using them. Yet research in 2005 for the North London Strategic Alliance found that in North London whilst 93 schools had their own outdoor facilities only 39 of them opened up to the wider community at the weekends.

Maximising usage of outdoor facilities does, the Panel acknowledges, raise issues around maintenance and surface protection. The Rugby Football League has outlined that there are often a sufficient number of local authority pitches to support participation, but that, *‘most of them are in a very poor condition and therefore are not used as much as they could be, if at all.’* Whilst artificial grass pitch (AGP) surfaces are more resilient and therefore suited to higher levels of usage, they suit sports such as hockey over rugby and football. Grass pitches, which are more appropriate for these sports, and a requirement for partaking in competitive games, require more maintenance and rest periods in between usage.

Notably there are also certain sports, such as cricket, for which the pitches require more protection, and protection for outdoor facilities needs to come not only in the shape of maintenance, but also in terms of preventing vandalism and ensuring the community looks after and respects outdoor facilities. The Panel recognises the important role which the County Playing Fields Associations play in the maintenance and protection of such outdoor community playing fields.

A further strategy suggested to balance the usage of outdoor pitches is to have state of the art pitches which people can pay to use, surrounded by informal pitches for wider public use. The predicament here is that informal users will also want to use the higher quality, more attractive pitches and a number of pitches need to be made available in any one location for this to occur. A further concern for the Panel is the decline of skilled caretakers to maintain outdoor facilities through a move from in-house ground keepers to contracted services. In particular, Business in Sport and Leisure has informed the Panel of concerns relating to, *‘a current shortage of fine turf ground staff.’*

Another key concern raised repeatedly with regard to outdoor facilities can broadly be described as the presence and quality of ancillary facilities, ranging from changing rooms and pavilions at playing pitches, to cafes or storage facilities in good proximity to sites for outdoor activities such as orienteering and gliding.

One online respondent cited their worst experience of using a sports facility as being the ‘*worst hockey pitches in the country bar none. Changing rooms and facilities are in disrepair and outdated.*’ Another specifies, ‘*no particularly awful experiences but plenty of underinvested sports clubs without toilets, changing etc. which won’t welcome people into sport and need help in raising standards to modern expectations.*’ Similarly, one response makes this link between poor facilities and reducing participation by explaining that, ‘*the changing rooms were dirty, littered and had smelly floor drains, no soap or toilet rolls. Could not wait to get out of the place.*’

Local community volunteer projects to upgrade ancillary facilities would be a cost effective way to improve these dilapidated facilities

Further evidence from one NGB asserted that, ‘*some of the club facilities I have seen have been so poor that I would never under any circumstances get changed in them or indeed even want to stand in them dressed in protective clothing.*’ And, during a site visit to one Outdoor Sports Centre in London which took place in March, the Panel witnessed first hand unappealing changing facilities reminiscent of an industrial warehouse. Broken mirrors or faded rectangles on the walls marking the former presence of a mirror, along with taps which didn’t work and peeling paint, all contribute to the unwelcoming feel. From a practical perspective, the space is not suitable for shared usage of adults and children, and the whole building is serviced by one boiler, making it highly likely that at peak times, there will be no hot water available in the showers. The Panel is clear that such facilities are not conducive to increasing sport participation.

Establishing local community volunteer projects to upgrade ancillary facilities would be a cost effective way to improve these dilapidated facilities. This would also engender greater pride in the local community through the contribution of their time, making it more likely that they will respect and look after the ancillary elements rather than let them succumb to disrepair and vandalism.

Changing Facilities, Outdoor Sports Centre, London



Schemes such as the Barclays Spaces for Sports, which launched in 2004 as a £30 million community investment programme focused on taking a phased approach to the selection, delivery and development of local spaces for sport in deprived and/or rural communities, demonstrate successfully the positive impact that community involvement can have. Other organisations, such as the National County Playing Fields Association Support Committee exist to support local community groups and county playing fields associations to, *‘provide, preserve, improve and adequately maintain local outdoor recreational and children’s play facilities.’*

Astro Turf Pitch, West London



Community ownership of outdoor spaces such as one run down astro turf pitch in West London would be a hugely beneficial, cost effective way to improve outdoor facilities and unite communities without compromising quality. Situated opposite a large council estate, the pitch at this site is in an alarming state of disrepair. Built in the early 1980’s, the site has since lacked maintenance and investment, and is now an open access site. The floodlights turn on and off with no warning and seemingly at random; there is only one goal, ripped up turf, broken equipment on the side lines and holes in the fencing (despite the gates always being open). What was once a changing and toilet block is now closed after being burnt down. The Panel were amazed to hear that despite this state of dilapidation and the accompanying safety concerns, the site is still used by people due to a local demand for open space to play football.

The potential for this site to be developed as a community scheme, perhaps in partnership with a local professional football club, whose stadium is nearby, is huge. The dormant changing block could be re-developed and in part turned into offices to generate income, and an office block for the site manager to be located in. A new pitch would require initial capital, and it would be essential that any community group managing the site should have security of funding and the appropriate skills base. If such requirements are met however, the site could be managed for full occupation and estimating that a 3G pitch turns over £80-90,000 a year, would soon pay for itself.

Social space is vital for sports clubs and can positively influence levels of participation by providing families with somewhere to view from and inspire those viewing to join in

Beyond insufficient or non existent changing facilities, the Panel is concerned with the apparent lack of attached social space to outdoor facilities. Social space is vital for sports clubs and can positively influence levels of participation by providing families with somewhere to view

from and inspire those viewing to join in. As discussed in the section relating to pricing, the presence of a café next to an outdoor facility can help to generate income that will support what are otherwise inherently loss making facilities. During their visit to the Linford Christie Outdoor Sports Centre, the Panel was surprised to discover that the only social site provision was limited to the London Nigerian Rugby Football Club's clubhouse, and that usage is currently not shared with other clubs and teams using the centre. The PHC Chiswick, one of the UK's leading hockey teams, uses a nearby pub for their social site, although they are now in negotiations with the rugby club regarding use of their clubhouse. Whilst the site desires a community space, there is currently no accessible funding with which to develop this, despite the fact that once developed, a community space at the centre would provide a good income stream.

The Natural Environment

The general perception for half (52%) of members of the public is that access to outdoor facilities is good, and a further 9% believe it to be very good.³⁰ The Panel believes that there is a lot to be celebrated by way of access that is now available for general open air recreation. However, expert witnesses and NGB submissions indicate that beyond top level general access, more outdoor sport specific access is somewhat less readily available, and access to water for recreation is at best limited. This is with the exception, as put forward by the Environment Agency, of access to coastal waters which is far less restricted than access to inland waters.

The Panel acknowledges that outdoor facilities are diverse and often inherently complex in nature. By virtue of being a component of the natural environment, outdoor facilities present issues around optimum usage and conservation for both wildlife and future human enjoyment. Unsurprisingly, the Panel has received evidence that usage of natural facilities, and access to natural facilities, varies between inner city urban areas and rural areas. Usage of natural environment facilities in inner city areas (particularly when free) tends to have peak times when due to the volume of people desiring to use the facilities, access can become difficult and the quality of provision can deteriorate rapidly.

Access Legislation



England & Wales

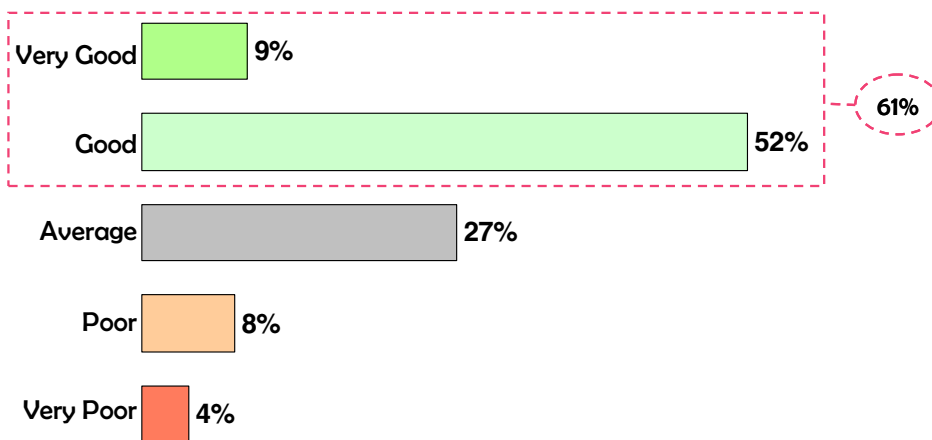
- 140,000 miles of public rights of way
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW)
 - 1.25 million hectares of open access land
- Coastal Access – to be implemented
 - Continuous coastal path around England & Wales with 'spreading room' for exploration of surrounding area



Scotland

- Land Reform Act
 - Grants statutory access rights to most land and inland water
 - Automatic right of access negates need for rights of way and open access legislation

Overall, how would you rate the level of access to the natural environment in the UK?



n = 259

³⁰ Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 259 respondents across the UK

With regards to facilities for water recreation there is unsurprisingly under usage in rural areas, and an over usage in urban areas due to an over population in the cities and a consequential under population in rural areas. The predominantly urbanised population in the UK also means that many people are disconnected from the natural environment, making it vital, as proposed by Natural England, that new relationships with open spaces that are close to where people live are necessary.



'...The development of multi-purpose green space, water and water-side access in urban areas and around the edges of our towns and cities will enable the greatest number of currently unengaged or disengaged people to access high quality natural environments.'

Whilst maximum use of facilities may seem desirable, it brings challenges even in the natural environment, due to wear and tear on footpaths and other infrastructure, which then need maintenance and investment. Conversely, as Cycling Timetrials has highlighted in their submission, for such activities as pony-trekking and off-road cycling, heavier usage of routes naturally prevents them from becoming overcrowded by vegetation and disappearing all together. To an extent, this also applies to walkers, as without usage or continual maintenance many routes can become overgrown, and eventually lost. On the land surrounding the British Mountaineering Council's Horseshoe Quarry site, developments of paths and routes occurs by maintaining naturally occurring routes, rather than through creating arbitrary paths.

The Panel believes that there are a number of underused natural facilities which can help to tackle the issue of overcrowding and aid in the prevention of popular sites becoming 'honey pot' destinations. One example is that of woodland. The Woodland Trust has highlighted to the Panel that, in addition to being suitable for a range of sport and recreation activities from walking to cycling and orienteering, *'woods and trees can screen out noise and absorb large numbers of people without seeming overcrowded'*. A further advantage to woodland is that it is relatively low cost to maintain and can normally be accessed free of charge – although this alone does not guarantee a high quality visitor experience. Nonetheless, access to woodlands can be more limited for non pedestrian users, and some public and private land-owners may restrict access. Thus there is room to improve access to woodland, with only 65% of people currently having access to a wood of at least 20 ha in size within 4km of their homes.³¹

Other facilities for sport and recreation that could be better utilised include dormant quarries. Evidence suggests that whilst lack of public awareness is preventing woodlands from being better utilised, concerns surrounding safety for the public, and liability for the landowner, play a greater part in preventing usage of quarries.

Quarries can provide an excellent opportunity for exciting sporting experiences and exist naturally in a broad range of

Horseshoe Quarry –Peak District National Park



³¹ Woodland Trust, *Space for People: Revised and updated version*, 2010 in press

locations across the UK. The Panel recognises that it is the responsibility of National Representative Organisations to inform their members how to undertake their sport safely and responsibly. Liability cover and a strong participation ethic which emphasises that participants recognise and accept the risks inherent in their activity are very useful in dealings with landowners and land managers.

A primary concern which prevents many private land owners from granting public access to their land or waterways is a fear of responsibility and/or liability for the safety of users. This is particularly the case with sites such as quarries and caves where

Section 16 –CROW Act, 2000

- Applicable to private landowners
- Any land can be dedicated as access land –CROW benefits extended to areas which don't automatically qualify as access land
- Protection is irrevocable –land where access is already granted can be dedicated to protect access for the future
- Dedication removes legal liability for injuries caused by the natural features of the land, or its improper use
- Additionally can be used to extend access rights for other users groups than on foot, e.g. cyclists, horse-riders –To date there have been no cases where this has occurred

the landowner can more clearly envisage accidents for which users might seek to hold them liable. One way in which private land owners can assuage their concerns about liability for the public on their land is through the process of dedicating land under section 16 of the CROW Act, which grants irrevocable access to the land for public use and reduces the liability that a land owner might face. The British Mountaineering Council has dedicated three of its landholdings, including land at Horseshoe Quarry in the Peak District for climbing and walking under this legislation. Currently, they are in the process of dedicating a further four sites in the same manner. However there appears to be little awareness amongst land owners that they can release themselves from liability (except in the case of negligence) through this process. Those who are aware of dedicating land under Section 16, have reported that the process is not a particularly user friendly experience. For example, instructions on where to send the completed Section 16 dedication is neither available on the dedication form nor the Defra website.

The Panel believes that this process should be more widely promoted and more user friendly, and that there should be a greater uptake of dedications for other user groups not on foot. As of 6 April 2010, 10 years after the enactment of the 2000 CROW Act, *'there have been no instances where dedication of land under section 16 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 has had an effect on access to open countryside for equestrians and cyclists.'*³² Wider publicity of best practice case studies would help to remove wider, not necessarily factually accurate, concerns over liability for landowners.

At the more 'natural' end of outdoor facility provision, such as in the Peak District National Park, the issue of wear and tear and balancing optimum usage levels, varying user needs and essential maintenance is even more complex. During a site visit at the Edale Visitor Centre in the Peak District National Park, the Panel heard that heavy visitor use on routes causes erosion, so that paths wash out. This in turn leads people to walk on the verges causing paths to grow in size and thus scar the environment.

³² The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Huw Irranca Davies, Parliamentary Question, 6 April 2010

Another issue that the National Park faces regarding paths is the ferocity at which vegetation grows at the edges, causing paths to expand in width and vegetation to become trampled underfoot. Flagstone paths of a metre in width are often used in popular areas as they not only last forever, but are also wide and clear enough for people to see and stick to. Previously there was a history of using timber pathways which eventually break down and need replacing, leading to continual future management issues. There is still some contention surrounding this, as whilst flagstones are a more practical solution, many members of the public feel that they detract from the aesthetic qualities of the natural environment –the balance between conservation and access is addressed later in this section.

Similarly, the maintenance of waterways and their surrounding corridors is often a complex issue due to uncertainty over whose responsibility the funding for, and implementation of, the maintenance work is. When a waterway is poorly maintained, members of the public cease to use it, and lack of usage allows vegetation to become more overgrown and the land to appear as though it is not available for public access. The Panel believes there is however a much greater factor preventing public access to inland waterways.

The Environment Agency and the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) are in agreement over the role that the private ownership of the majority of our inland waters plays in preventing access to them. The Panel was shocked to hear from the IWA that only 8% of the rivers in England are available for public access. Consent from the land owner is required for public access, and often land owners will choose to grant access not to the population at large, but to a single user organisation, thus restricting access to others. This issue is also prominent with other outdoor recreational resources found on private land, although as it has been noted, there is greater public access to land than there is water. For specific water recreation requirements access to waterways is even lower, with the British Canoe Union citing only 4% of inland waterways (over three metres wide) as having recognised rights of navigation and therefore being appropriate for canoeing use, despite canoeing being the most popular water sport, with increasing levels of participation.³³

The British Canoe Union has highlighted that elements of the Environment Agency Sustainable Access Policy operate as a ‘non-access policy’ for canoeing and other water sports as it does not account for patterns of usage that can change, and therefore access as set out by the Environment Agency is not dynamic enough to adapt to change. The British Canoe Union cite the following Environment Agency Policy Statement as indicative of this:

‘The Environment Agency will promote sustainable increased access where it will not adversely impact on existing uses and users, or the economic and conservation value of the site, and associated area, now or in the future. Subject to resources, we will encourage access where managed solutions can be found to remove adverse impacts.’

This conflict of opinions again highlights the delicate balance which needs to be struck between recreational use and conservation of the environment. The British Canoe Union believes that the Environment Agency should remove the caveats from their policy and simply aim to promote sustainable increased access. It is important to strike the appropriate balance between access and conservation with recreational use of the natural environment.

³³ The British Canoe Union, *Facilities Inquiry Submission*, 2010

The Panel has seen evidence of a number of informal management techniques, based on the least restrictive approach, which operate successfully in the natural environment and benefit both access and conservation. The 'Best of Both Worlds' management approach, for example, is an excellent model aimed at increasing, *'opportunities for the responsible pursuit of adventure activities, outdoor sports and recreation...'* whilst remaining, *'...committed to conservation of the sensitive environments in which they take place...'*³⁴ In order to strike the correct balance for access and conservation to work together, users of the natural environment must be educated on how best to responsibly carry out their recreational activities. These messages should be delivered through a number of agencies including advisory organisations such as Natural England, and National Representative Bodies such as the British Mountaineering Council.

Case Study: The British Mountaineering Council (BMC) & Voluntary Bird Restrictions



- **The BMC has a wealth of knowledge on voluntary bird restrictions**
 - what works –what doesn't –real disturbance –perceived disturbance

2010 18 different Schedule 1 listed species of bird protected from climbing activities

Annually BMC agrees to other restrictions on case-by-case basis

- **Seasonal restrictions in place developed over the last 20-30 years through consensus, partnership, flexibility, site-by-site assessment, and as far as possible, scientific fact and evidence**

The Result: The BMC encourages the ongoing monitoring and reviewing of restrictions & actively encourages climbers to report significant changes in nesting patterns or new nest sites.

The system works because climbers respect restrictions agreed between the BMC and conservation organisations on the basis that they are justified and reasonable.

Sport England also cites the impact that access to outdoor facilities has on participation in sport, stating that in the period between 2007/8 (Active People Survey 2) and the latest results covering the 12 months up to January 2010 (Active People Survey 4, Quarter 1), out of the four sports with a statistically significant increase in participation rates, two of them, cycling and canoeing require access to the natural environment. Cycling participation, not accounting for cycling for travel purposes, has seen an increase of 114,000 participants, growing from 1.767 million adults (4.3% of the total population) to 1.881 million adults (4.5% of the total population). For canoeing and kayaking there has been an increase of 17,000 participants, with participation growing from 43,500 adults to 60,900 adults.³⁵

If greater access is given to our waterways by private land owners, participation levels of water recreation will undoubtedly increase as over 90% of the population live within two miles of a waterway³⁶ and will therefore be able to reach waterways easily. However, waterways and recreational activity outside of walking have not benefited as greatly from changes in access legislation such as the CROW Act.³⁷

³⁴ Best of Both Worlds, available online at <http://www.bobw.co.uk/Default.aspx?page=home> (last accessed 26/04/2010)

³⁵ Sport England, *Active People Survey 4, Once a Week Sport Participation Factsheet: Summary of Results, 2010*

³⁶ British Canoe Union, *Facilities Inquiry Submission, 2010*

³⁷ For further information on the CROW act please see page 43

The Panel heard positive reports from expert witnesses and the general public regarding access legislation in Scotland. Under the Land Reform Act 2003, walkers in Scotland 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. Canoe Wales is currently campaigning for similar legislation in Wales, and has secured some support from the National Assembly for Wales's Petitions Committee in an April 2009 report. The Panel understands that the access regime provided for under the Land Reform Act Scotland 2003 would have benefits in England and Wales, however it must be noted that legal and land ownership models are different to those in Scotland. In addition, access provided to open country and coastal areas under the CROW Act 2000, and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, form a good basis for open air recreation on foot in England and Wales. However, the Panel advocates that access to open spaces for everyone must be more widely achieved and the opportunity to extend these rights must be explored.

Section 60 of the CROW Act introduced a requirement for local highway authorities in England and Wales to prepare a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) by November 2007. The written plans offer the opportunity to enhance the Rights of Way network, but there is no obligation to implement RoWIPs and many local authorities cite funding as a key issue affecting delivery of the proposed improvements. The majority of witnesses feel that there should be mandatory timescales for the improvements to be made in accordance with the plans. Without this requirement it is felt that the benefits of the plans will not be realised.

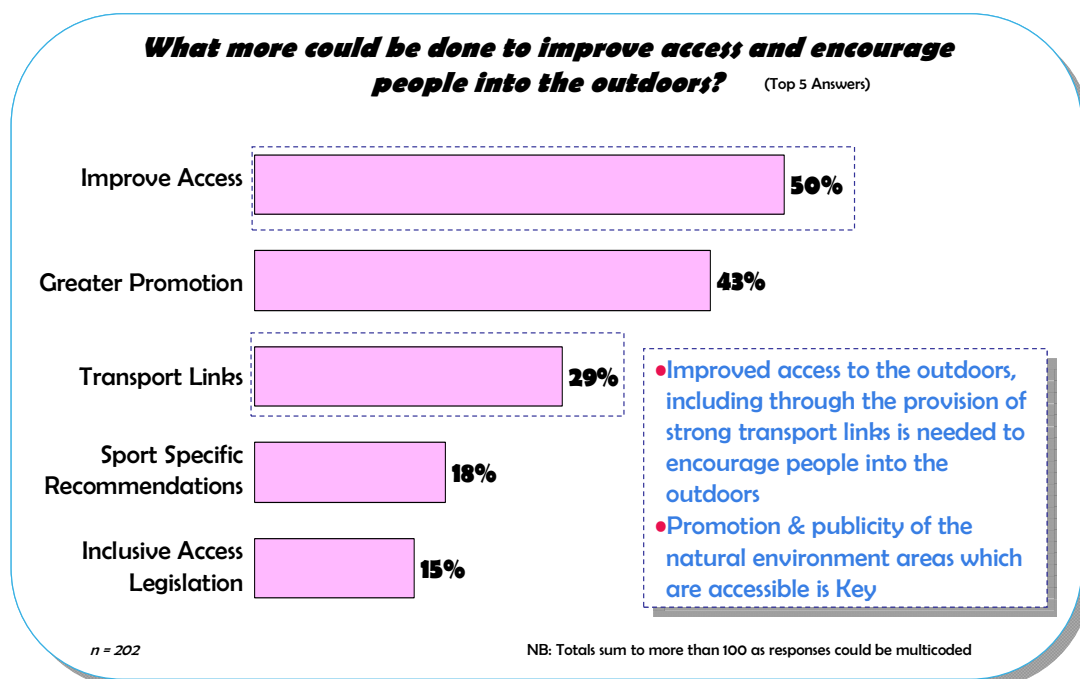
RoWIPs
(Rights of Way Improvement Plans)

- Introduced under Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way act (CROW)
- Creation is obligatory - implementation isn't
- Include (amongst other things)
 - Assessment of local rights of way, if they meet present or future public demands
 - Opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise, recreation and enjoyment
 - Accessibility of local rights of way to blind, partially sighted or those with mobility problems

The Panel has seen evidence of other lessons and cases of good practice that can be taken from practices close to home. Adopting a legislative access code in England and Wales based along the lines of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code being one such example. Good practice messages can also be found in such publications as the BMC's Green Guide to the Uplands and as part of many outdoor sports based NGBs publications.

Half (50%) of those who completed our online questionnaire, viewed access to natural facilities to be crucial for encouraging people into the outdoors. This covers both the need to improve access legislation, and also to provide better transport links to rural areas and facilities. In total, just fewer than one in three people (29%) specifically mentioned improved transport provision as a means by which people could be encouraged to use outdoor facilities more. Although there were some mentions of better links from, and more affordable, car parking provision, in the main these responses were centred on public transport provision. The Panel believes better transport links should be created from urban areas to rural sites, and that the transport provision should be suitable, at least at certain times of the day, for transporting equipment, such as bikes, which belong to passengers. Public transport provision in and around rural sites should also be improved so that circular routes are possible, costs are cheaper, and services are

more frequent. Although European examples are considered at the end of this report, it is worth mentioning in this context the example of Holland, where cycling paths are linked to public transport provision so that exercise can also be part of daily life and transporting people to where they need to be.



An excellent example of improved public transport services to natural facilities is currently being developed in the Peak District National Park and demonstrates a much more considered approach to transport provision. The Moorlands Connect bus service is planned to launch in September 2010. Same day

telephone bookings will structure the route of the bus each day, taking people to where they want to go and connecting with existing bus services. Advanced tracking systems will allow for the public to be provided with accurate timings and the buses have space for up to four bicycles as well as wheelchair users.

An independent body **Cycling England**, funded by the Department of Transport, has pledged **£2.25 million** to improve the existing **58 miles** of dedicated off-road trails in the **Peak District National Park** for leisure and commuting cyclists through linking trials to towns and cities

The legislation governing outdoor access is poorly understood, this is not helped by the nuances and differences in where people can go and what they can do across England, Wales and Scotland

A number of witnesses have informed the Panel that better promotion and publicity of the natural environment areas which are accessible, and the activities which can be undertaken there are crucial to encouraging people to use them. This view is held by a diverse range of witnesses from members of the public who completed the online survey, two in five (43%) of

whom spontaneously mentioned this when asked what could be done to encourage people to use outdoor areas,³⁸ to evidence submitted by more expert witnesses. The Panel reached a consensus that the legislation governing outdoor access is poorly understood. This situation is not helped by the nuances and differences in where people can go and what they can do across England, Wales and Scotland. Better knowledge amongst the public in this area would also aid in the prevention or reduction of over usage of more well known sites.

The Woodland Trust identified a lack of information and inspiration as core barriers preventing the public from accessing woodland for sport and recreation through their research. In an attempt to tackle this, autumn 2010 will see the Woodland Trust launch a partnership project called Visitwoods, which will promote the value of woodland for health, recreation and enjoyment. A high profile communications campaign will be included in this and information about accessible woods and their facilities will be made available online. County councils and NGBs also shared the view that the promotion of outdoor facilities is greatly needed, and that information regarding access to and availability of outdoor facilities needs to be more widely publicised.

Effective promotional campaigns do not need to be excessively costly. For example, the Hub at Regent's Park in London has created an attractive, free, credit card sized guide which unfolds into an A4 sheet detailing light, intermediate and advanced running routes in Regent's Park. On one side these routes are mapped out along with useful facilities such as drinking fountains and toilets, and on the other side there is information about the value of running, how to use the map, and where to find further related details. The scheme is currently being piloted with Regent's Park, and if successful will be rolled out to all of the London Royal Parks. The Panel believes such similar guides should be produced for a wide range of outdoor activities in a range of parks and outdoor locations. User friendly, aesthetically pleasing, and highly portable, such guides can provide information about activities, promote the outdoor space available, and encourage use of natural facilities across the country for a wide range of activities.

Promotional Material –The Hub at Regent's Park, London

- **Beginner, intermediate & advanced running routes mapped out with facilities**
- **Available free online and as a fold out leaflet**
- **Currently being piloted, possibility to roll out to all the London Royal Parks**



- User friendly
- Aesthetically appealing
- Highly portable
- Model should be widely adopted to promote outdoor space

The Panel believes that whilst much good promotional material exists, it is targeted at current users and fails to reach the wider public amongst whom participation levels can be raised. For example, the Peak District National Park 2005 visitor survey results showed that of those who completed the questionnaire, less than 1 in 10 had never been to the area before, and most people visited regularly, with half coming at least every three months and around half

³⁸ Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 202 respondents across the UK

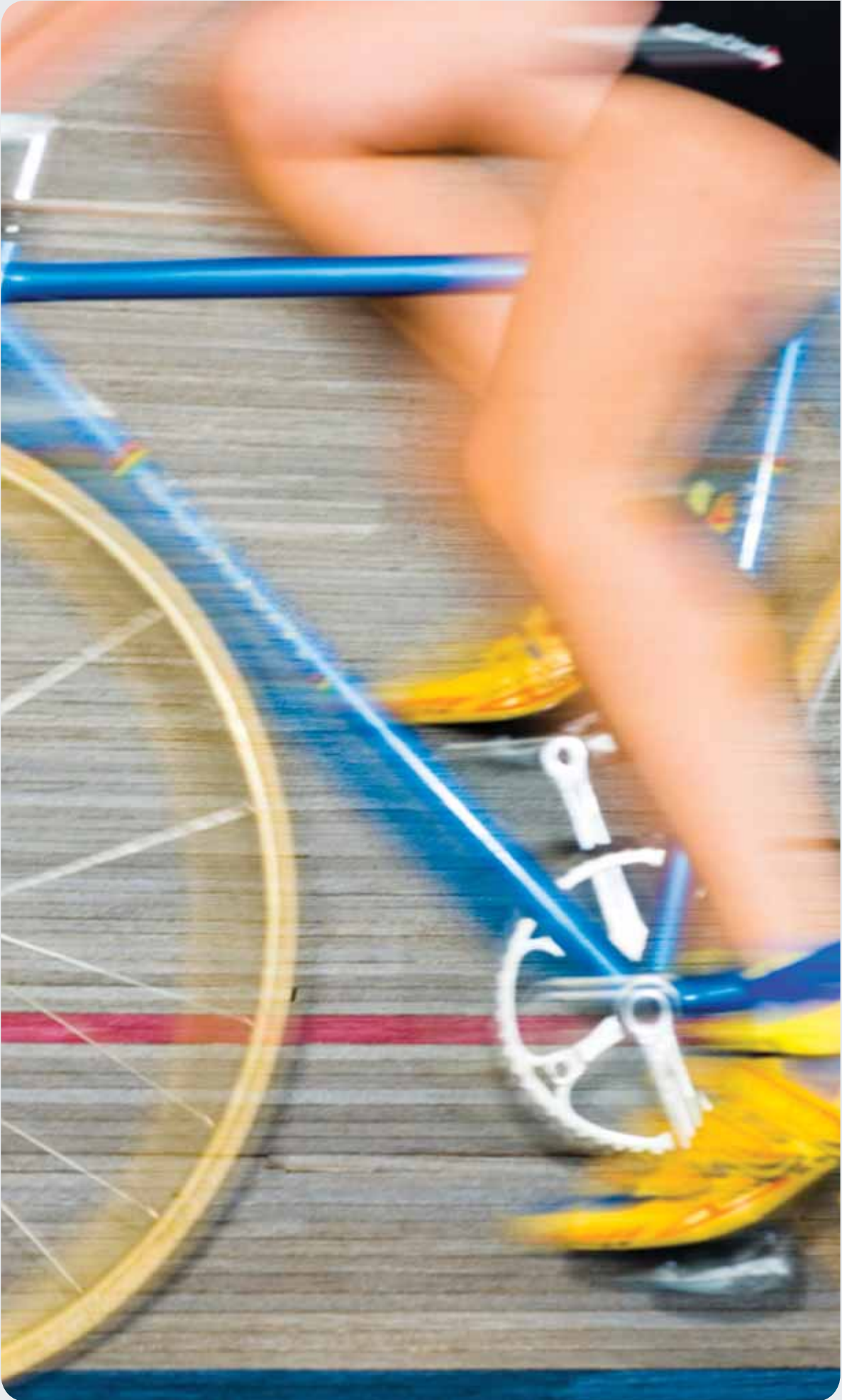
citing having visited before as the reason for their visit.³⁹ This demonstrates that there is huge potential for increasing the visitor market to the National Park, and excellent publications such as *'Welcome to the Peak District National Park'* need to reach a wider audience. In particular, great efforts need to be taken to reach those who live in reasonable proximity to the National Park, yet would not consider the Peak District as somewhere they would normally visit.

Displaying material in visitor centres that require a presence in the park and an awareness of the facilities available to come across is clearly effective for engaging current users, but is far too passive an approach to bring in new users. The *'Ride and Ramble'* guide which details 20 linear walks through the Peak District, all linked to buses or trains, aims to provide a greener way to explore the area. This guide is available from national park visitor centres and online, but may easily attract new visitors who do not have access to private transport and are unaware that it is so easy for them to get to the National Park; the guide even includes bus timetables and so would be incredibly useful from this perspective. The prevalence of return visitors suggests that such publications have a positive impact in generating visits and the Panel believes that a wider promotion through libraries, at train and bus stations, through letterboxes and in local community venues would have a positive impact and be a relatively simple way to utilise existing promotional materials.

Likewise, the Inland Waterways Association promotes the value of England's waterways through a leaflet, talks and free events, but there is a concern that their messages are primarily reaching only their members. What almost seems to be needed is a more commercial marketing approach to 'sell' publicly available outdoor facilities. There is also an emergent desire for the wider public provision of information to give clarity regarding access to sites, whether this be through websites, signs, campaigns or publications.

³⁹ The Peak District National Park, *Peak District Visitors, Who, what, where, when?* 2005





Pricing

Evidence has shown the Panel that an overall strategy for local authority charges for facility use is essential. Whilst accepting that authorities must be able to make end pricing decisions in accordance with the circumstances of each facility at a local level, the Panel nonetheless believes that these can be placed within an overarching strategy which balances affordability to the user, and viability of the facility.

The Local Government Association states that *'council investment cannot be prescribed nationally'* and instead what is required is *'flexible sub regional discussion between councils, NGBs, CSPAPs and Sport England to establish where particular facilities are needed and how funding packages can be developed to meet those needs.'* As it currently stands, Sport England proposes that few local authorities have clear and coherent frameworks for decisions relating to the pricing of public sports facilities, including those within schools. NGBs such as UK Athletics similarly support the need for an overall strategy on some level, in order to tackle the considerable variation of costs and policies for sports facilities usage. Research published in 2008 by the Audit Commission found that, *'nearly half of all councils have no agreed policy to guide their decisions on the use of charges,'* and furthermore, *'decisions on levels of charging are most often driven by corporate income targets, historic charges and by levels in neighbouring councils rather than knowledge of the likely impact on use of services.'*⁴⁰

pmp genesis

'In line with basic economic principles, where organisations have the flexibility to adapt and reflect local circumstances, prices will generally adapt over time to reflect local supply and demand.'



'Nearly half of all councils have no agreed policy to guide their decisions on the use of charges.'

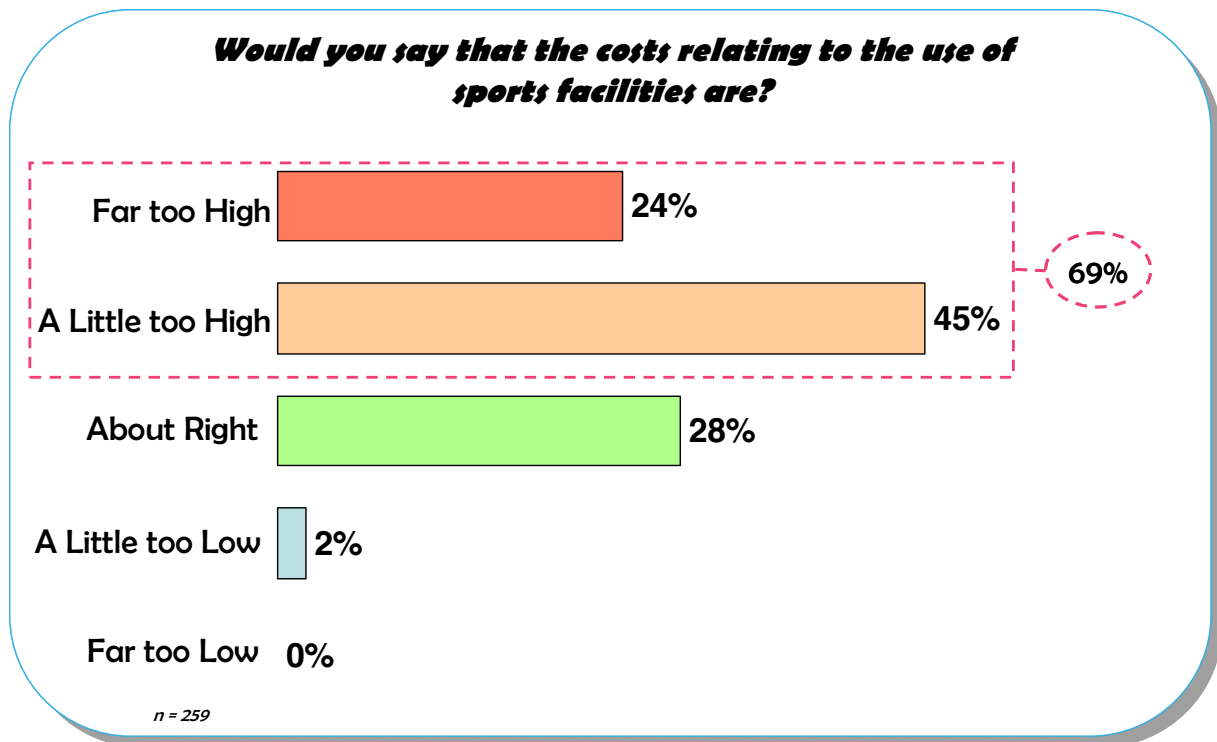
Evidence has shown that cost can be a barrier to facility usage, and that excessive variations exist across the country in terms of the prices charged, for what are often very similar facilities. More than two in three members of the general public (69%) feel that the costs relating to the use of sports facilities are too high. Of these, 45% think that the costs are a little too high, and 24% far too high. Just over one in four (28%) believe the costs to be about right, whilst 2% thought that they were a little too low.⁴¹ In addition to this, half (49%) of suggestions put forward by the general public for encouraging the use of built facilities mentioned more affordable costs for use.⁴² However, the Panel recognises that there is a balance to be struck between offering reasonably priced facilities to the community, and generating enough revenue to not only successfully keep the facility running, but to fund the maintenance of the facility so

⁴⁰ The Audit Commission, *Positively Charged*, 2008, available online at <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/localgov/Pages/positivelycharged.aspx> (last accessed 27/04/2010)

⁴¹ Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 259 respondents across the UK

⁴² Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 237 respondents across the UK

that it remains at a high quality. In best case scenarios, the revenue structure would allow for income generated from particular user groups to subsidise costs for target groups such as disadvantaged communities or young people, or for inherently loss making facilities such as playing fields.



The Football Association has noted the disparity across the country with respect to pitch hire fees, which can range from around £200 per season, to over £1000 per season for a single pitch. Similarly, drawing on data provided by the Leisure Database Company, the London Federation of Sport and Recreation (LFoSR) has shown that even within London boroughs there is significant variation in the average price charged for grass pitch use. The cost for a grass pitch in Harrow at £114, is two and a half times more than that for a pitch in Lambeth, which is £45, and a grade A pitch in Richmond is £130, compared to £56 in Hillingdon.

The extreme variation in prices for using facilities has been shown to compound capacity problems, as affordable facilities are placed under pressure for use far greater than that which they can sustain. This leads to issues with access, higher costs to find alternative facilities, and longer travel times. Again, a flexible national pricing structure outlining prices by user group, sporting need, business revenue requirements and facility quality can address this issue.

Essential to getting the pricing right is ensuring the facilities have appropriate and sustainable business plans in place so that affordable costs to public are not detrimental to the future of the facility. One way in which business plans can work to strengthen the financial stability of facilities which may have difficulty generating sufficient income at low user prices is through basing them on multi-use or multi-purpose community sites. Local authorities exist to provide a range of local government services from libraries to sports facilities, and by sharing the sites which these are on, and inviting in commercial partners such as sporting shops or a café, better asset management schemes can be put in place so that the assets of all the facilities and services involved on a single site work harder. From a business perspective such a model also allows for the opportunity of cross fertilisation. An additional advantage to multi-purpose sites is the sense of community that they may be able to engender. The Amateur Swimming Association also believes that such an approach can make environments such as the swimming

pool, more enticing. Referring to the concept as that of a 'destination plan,' they suggest that the pool might have, '*a catering franchise on site, preferably with a view, related shops, pharmacy, treatment rooms, a library, a poly clinic or a 'soft entrance' health centre as the first point in the building.*'⁴³

Multi-purpose community sites however should not be mistaken for the only approach that can be taken, and nor should it be seen as the answer to all the existing problems, as Councillor Chris White from the LGA has aptly remarked, '*is going to be the mitigation to a crisis not the solution to a crisis*'. In addition to this, multi-purpose sites require a large amount of financial investment to plan and develop; this will be discussed in more detail in the section on funding.

Under the current economic climate, non-statutory local authority functions such as swimming pools and sports facilities are in danger of having their local authority subsidies reduced; this will then increase the costs for members of the public and sports clubs, and Sport England fear that too much pressure on pricing could therefore lead local authorities to close facilities which are desired and needed. Support and guidance for local authorities on charging for sports facilities can go some way to alleviating this scenario. The Audit Commission's '*Better Information, Better Decisions, Better Services*' guide for sports services is one useful example which the Panel believes should be wider utilised by local authorities when considering pricing structures, particularly the final section covering examples and providing a case study.

Public perception of the impact of the recession on both prices and participation has been varied, with some sports faring better than others, and junior members of sports clubs being identified as a group whose participation in sport and recreation is being more affected by the recession. Almost three in five (59%) believe that the recession has brought about general affordability issues for sport and recreational activities, compared to one in three (33%) who feel that there has been no, or little impact.⁴⁴ Some witnesses, including Sport England and the England and Wales Cricket Board, feel that it is too early to accurately gauge the economic picture, yet the Panel has received evidence from England Hockey, England Basketball and the wider public indicating that facilities are not perceived to have adjusted their costs to account for the reduction in people's disposable income. Instead, facilities are allowing for income generation and the impact of tighter local authority budgets to dominate pricing strategies so that they can cover their costs. This has resulted in sports clubs and wider participants in some instances experiencing increased facility prices which are having a negative impact on participation levels. England Hockey, for example, report that, '*a steady rise in facility hire costs means a fee for an individual could have risen 20% or more since last season.*'

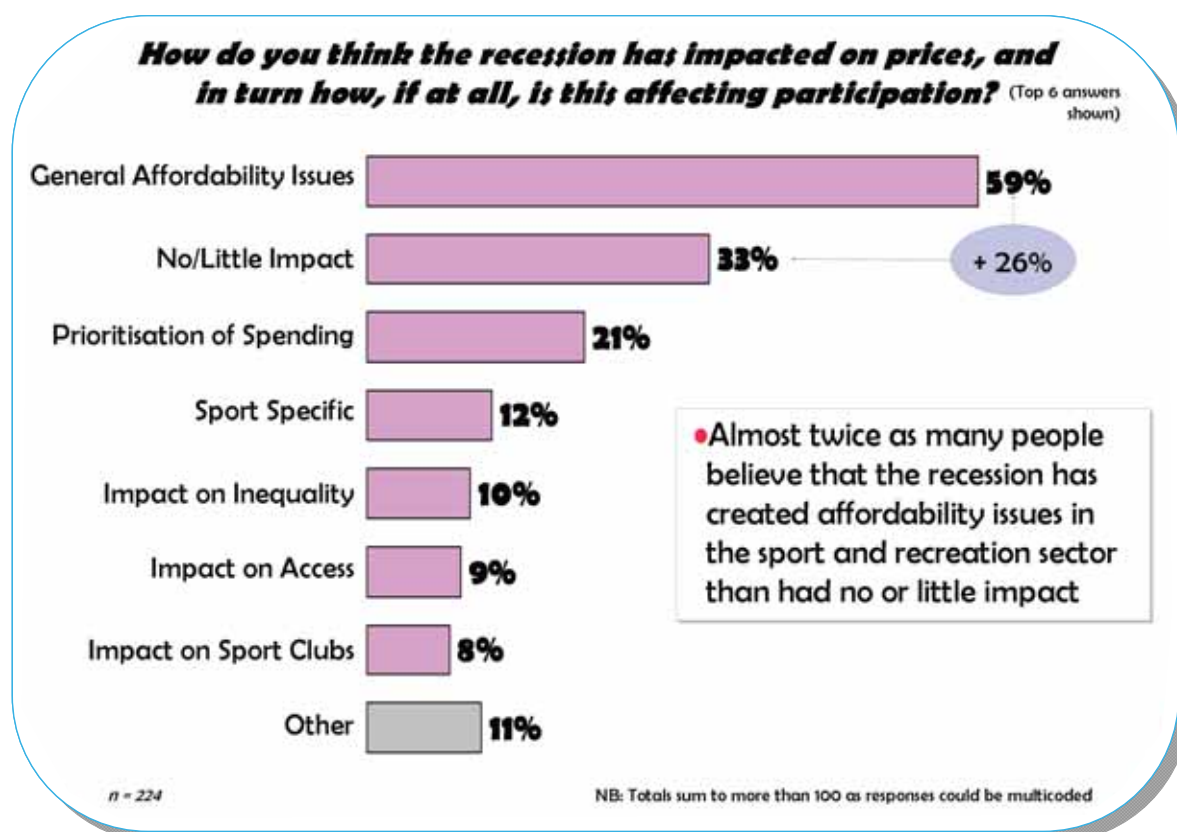
One local authority that has managed to prevent increasing facility hire costs for the second year running is Torbay Council. Freezing the pitches at the same price as they were last year for rugby and football, the council is perceived locally to be both helping out sports clubs and encouraging young people to utilise some of their spare time valuably by playing sport. Cited in The Herald Newspaper, Councillor Dave Butt, Torquay Council; cabinet member for community services explained that, '*the council is always looking at ways to encourage sporting activities across the Bay, particularly during what is a very difficult economic climate.*'⁴⁵ This decision

⁴³ Amateur Swimming Association, *From Policy to Pool*, 2009

⁴⁴ Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 224 respondents across the UK

⁴⁵ The Herald Newspaper, *Sports Club Welcome Pitch Fee Freeze*, March 10, 2010, available online at <http://www.thisisplymouth.co.uk/news/Sports-clubs-welcome-pitch-fee-freeze/article-1899645-detail/article.html> (last accessed 25/04/2010)

seems to reflect the attitudes within Torbay Council, where sport is clearly a priority, and the Panel is hopeful that other councils will seek inspiration from such examples.



One in five (21%)⁴⁶ feel that people having less money to spend as a result of the recession has meant a greater need for prioritisation of where they spend their money. Often in the rational prioritisation process, leisure activities including sport and recreation fall into the category of 'luxuries' and so are one of the first places that people look to make savings, sometimes without necessarily considering the value for money which they provide. Anecdotal evidence suggests to the Panel that junior members of clubs, more casual users and those with lower incomes are more susceptible to making prioritisation decisions which reduce participation in sport and recreation activities. Current pricing structures may therefore be enhancing inequality in sporting participation.

As a knock-on effect of price increases for facility usage sports clubs are having to increase their membership fees, and many parents, when faced with tighter budgets are either not able, or not prepared to pay the membership fees for their children; *'I have noticed that, as the prices for the club my children attend have had to go up, more people have both complained as money is tight or have had to leave as they cannot afford the monthly cost. I know this cost they pay barely covers the court hire cost so the club is in a no win situation!'* (Female, 31-40, East Suffolk). For the casual user who needs to make spending cut backs and prioritise their luxuries and needs, informal use of a sports facility tends to drop down the list, and for those on lower incomes, sporting costs simply become an indulgence which they can't afford.

Recent research by Investec Bank has similarly found that the public will be reducing club and society memberships in order to save money. When 2,000 people were asked about their memberships, 7% intended to cancel all of them this year, with a further 6% planning to reduce

⁴⁶ Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 224 respondents across the UK,

their outgoings by either downgrading from full to part time membership, or reducing the number of clubs/societies which they belong to.⁴⁷

Such affordability issues categorise members of the public into those who can afford to use sports facilities in their leisure time, and those who can't, with lower income families suffering more and those working long hours unable to utilise the facilities on offer. In addition facilities which are experiencing financial difficulty are prioritising higher-margin sports and activities over more costly ones:

'Local authorities and other facility providers have to work even harder to balance budgets, so they cut hours and increase prices way above inflation, withdraw from less profitable areas of operation, leading to reduced opportunities, exclusion of children, women, low-income groups, ethnic minorities and disabled people, and increased targeting at young white adults who have disposable income. Swimming pools and sports hall close in favour of keeping open the income-generating fitness suite' -Male, 50+, Merseyside

The difficult position of setting local authority pricing structures is further complicated by the impact of the recession on private sector facility provision. The apparent downturn in private sector health and fitness has resulted in greater competition between private sector offers, resulting in reduced prices and membership deals. This narrowing of the price margin between private facilities and local authority facilities puts local authority facilities into a position where it may become difficult for them to generate sufficient revenue. With an increase in costs to account for less subsidisation, usage numbers may reduce either all together, or in favour of the now more competitively priced private facilities. A sustained period of fewer users without extra subsidy will result in the facility needing to charge higher cost per user in order to sustain the facility, continuing the cycle of pushing users towards private facilities if they are prepared to pay, or closing the facility all together. The Panel believes from the evidence which they have received, that when the public can perceive value for money in the charges, they will pay higher costs for facility usage. It is when high costs are being paid for what are perceived to be average, or low quality services and facilities, that other offers become increasingly attractive.



'There is evidence that competitors are voting with their feet, seeking value for money events...'

Cost cutting tactics amongst the general public have, however, resulted in an increase in recreational activities which are free or of very low cost to the user. Running, walking and cycling in the natural environment for example appear to be unaffected by the recession, and in some instances participation is increasing as people opt for them over costly transport or gym membership. Additionally, sport and recreational activity which is perceived to offer good 'value for money' is faring well.

Sports such as football, gymnastics and tennis all believe there to be little impact on their levels of participation although interestingly for a range of reasons. The Football Association believes

⁴⁷ Hilary Osborne, 'Clubs Hit by Membership Cancellations' in *The Guardian*, 15/04/2010, available online at http://www.m.guardian.co.uk/ms/p/gmg/op/sPzDrtsfKiZeCN7UW24NA7A/view.m?id=385100&tid=120787&chk_my-text=t,1;c,1&cat=Consumer_affairs (last accessed 27/04/2010)

that the inherent low cost to playing their sport is behind this, stating that, *‘currently, the recession appears to have had little impact on grassroots participation...football remains a relatively inexpensive sport to participate in.’* Whilst British Gymnastics acknowledge that their sport is expensive, but feel that the value is apparent and prioritisation decisions treat their sport accordingly, *‘It [the recession] has not affected gymnastics. Gymnastics is a foundation for all physical activity and parents know this and will continue to pay for a high quality programme that gives the best possible platform for lifelong physical and sporting activity.’*

For the Lawn Tennis Association, a redistribution of participation appears to be responsible for maintaining participation levels, *‘Many clubs kept their pricing stats in 2009; very few clubs at the LTA’s Club forums in October 2009 reported a decline of membership as a result of the economic downturn. In fact, emerging data (as at March 2010) suggests an overall increase in club membership. Anecdotal feedback suggests some commercial clubs have been negatively affected, whereas some “traditional” clubs have picked up members due to average lower pricing.’*

The implementation of national guidelines outlining charges bands for various users, of which sports clubs and CASC clubs should be categories, and accounting for block and individual bookings could help to balance out variations in facility pricing

The Panel have also observed, as touched upon by the Lawn Tennis Association and noted by British Orienteering, that forms of participation have changed, with ‘pay and play’ activity taking preference over membership to clubs and block bookings. Baseball Softball UK additionally suggests that whilst VAT discounts for block bookings remain inconsistent, the additional costs can be prohibitive to use. This reinforces to the Panel the need to establish consistent and coherent pricing and VAT structures around block and single bookings so that spontaneous use of facilities is not penalised.



‘The removal of these things [onerous booking requirements] –and in particular the additional VAT being charged on bookings –would have a significant impact on the appeal of using educational facilities.’

Whilst pricing inequalities exist across facilities for both hire and VAT charges, England Hockey have highlighted that those who manage to establish block bookings or long standing agreements will tend to repeatedly benefit from cheaper hire due to the exemption of VAT when block bookings of ten or more sessions are made. This is of course beneficial for those clubs. However as pricing structures follow no standardised guide lines, clubs who do not have such agreements may often end up paying for more expensive facilities, and/or more expensive ad hoc fees. The implementation of national guidelines outlining charges bands for various users, of which sports clubs and CASC clubs should be categories, and accounting for block and individual bookings could help to balance out such variations in facility pricing.

It is important to note that the VAT exemption for block bookings exists because HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) view longer terms agreements as Right Over Land rather than the hire of use/hire of sports facilities. Even for these block bookings there are seven strict conditions that must be met before the exemption can apply. They relate to session-frequency and eligibility of organisations, and include a requirement for an up-front payment in full. While this exemption is welcome for those clubs who can meet the requirements, it betrays a fundamental weakness in the way HMRC approaches the tax status of sports clubs.

VAT is a European Tax, and while Member States do have some flexibility in how it is applied, VAT treatment is guided by European Council Directives. Whilst the choice over whether to implement Directives covering the VAT treatment for sports facilities ultimately lies with the individual Member States, the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty provides the greatest emphasis in policy terms that has ever existed in Europe and the European White Paper on Sport explicitly advocates a more sympathetic approach to VAT in relation to sports clubs.

With this in mind, the Panel suggests that Council Directive 2006/112/EC is introduced, which would allow all community sports clubs to access the lower rate of VAT (5% in the UK) on facility hire, without the burdensome financial and administrative requirements that accompany the block bookings exemption. This would reflect the way the majority of EU Members States approach the VAT treatment of sports clubs.

VAT in relation to the construction of community and educational sports facilities also merits consideration. As the European White Paper on Sport formalises the EU's commitment to ensuring that sports facilities receive more sympathetic VAT treatment, it is inconsistent to charge CASCs and other not-for-profit community sports clubs standard-rate VAT on construction costs, while charities – whose definition in tax terms captures all not-for-profit groups operating with community benefit in mind, not just those organisations registered under the Charities Act – are able to benefit from zero rating. In addition, although an improvement to sports facilities under Building Schools for the Future would be eligible for zero-rating, as soon as the school in question opens their facilities for community use it becomes liable for the original VAT on construction. This acts as a huge disincentive to improve facilities in the community, and to allow community clubs to access state-of-the-art school facilities. The Panel believes that HMRC should adopt a more sympathetic approach to the VAT treatment of sports clubs, in line with the key European VAT Directives which govern the use, hire and construction of sports facilities.

With the impending squeeze on public finances, the Panel, and sports clubs themselves know that their funding is at greater risk than ever. Some are already feeling the effects, as some Local Authorities are removing the discretionary Business Rate relief that clubs have traditionally enjoyed. Added to this is the fact that the 2010 Business Rate revaluation, which came into operation on 1 April, has led to huge increases in rateable value for many clubs. A number of these clubs (around 5000) now have a higher rateable value because of improvements made to their facilities using Sport England Lottery or Exchequer grants. This essentially amounts to a tax on investment. The difficulties many clubs are facing in relation to their rates is set against the backdrop of rising financial and administrative burdens, particularly increased music and alcohol licensing requirements, and rising utilities costs. Given that CCPR's 2009 sports club survey found that clubs are operating at an average margin of £1,986 a year, which when golf is

removed falls to £1,316,⁴⁸ clubs' ability to absorb these increasing burdens is limited to say the least.

Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC) Scheme

- Beneficial to facility and non facility owning clubs
- Distinguishes between clubs and businesses for rates and tax purposes
- Ensures money is kept in sports clubs

Benefits:

- **80%** Mandatory rate relief
- Gift Aid can be utilised when fund raising
- Exemption from Corporation Tax on profits derived from property income when under £20,000 pa
- Exemption from Corporation Tax on trading activities when under £30,000 pa

A major protection that exists for clubs facing these increasing financial, regulatory and administrative responsibilities is the Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) scheme, which was created by HM Treasury in 2002 following pressure from CCPR. It is a light-touch scheme designed to give community clubs parity with charity while avoiding the burdensome administration that can accompany charitable status. Facility-owning CASCs can access 80% mandatory rate relief, which is often topped up to 100% by local authorities who see the CASC scheme as a level of quality accreditation. All CASCs, whether they own their own facilities or not, are eligible to claim Gift Aid and a new partnership forged between CCPR, Sport England and Just Giving will make the Gift Aid process quicker, easier and cheaper than ever for clubs. There are additional benefits around Corporation Tax, which can benefit those clubs with a high turnover. The CASC scheme can equip clubs to adapt to increasing financial, administrative and regulatory burdens and ensure a sustainable future. The Panel strongly believes that it needs to be promoted more widely, throughout the country.

⁴⁸ CCPR, *Sports Club Survey 2009*, 2009, available online at <http://www.ccpr.org.uk/ourcampaigning/uk/Research/Sports+Club+Survey+2009.htm> (last accessed 27/04/2010)





Funding

The Panel has made a number of recommendations that do not require significant amounts of funding behind them to bring about improvements in the current UK facilities stock. In light of the current economic climate, they feel that these will help to provide viable options in the more immediate future. Given increased availability of access to funding there is of course much that could be achieved.

Whilst funding for built facilities has been substantial, albeit not maximised; funding for facilities in the natural environment is severely lacking

Whilst funding for built facilities has been substantial, albeit not maximised; funding for facilities in the natural environment is severely lacking. Since 2000, Sport England has invested over £1.5 billion in capital projects, and local authorities have spent in addition between £415 million and £653 million per year on capital investment, resulting in surpassing Lord Carter's target of investing £550 million per year since 2003.⁴⁹ A potential explanation for the misdirection of some of the funding already invested in built facilities could be, as Sport England suggest, due to the fact that initially, Lottery funding was not distributed strategically. Whilst good projects received funding, funding decisions were not considered in light of the significance that the investments would have on delivering outcomes such as increasing participation. This is therefore likely to have played a part in the creation of the 'white-elephant' style developments discussed in the built environment section that, whilst impressive, do not meet the needs of the local community.



'If the strategic approach to development is right, funding will flow to the right places'

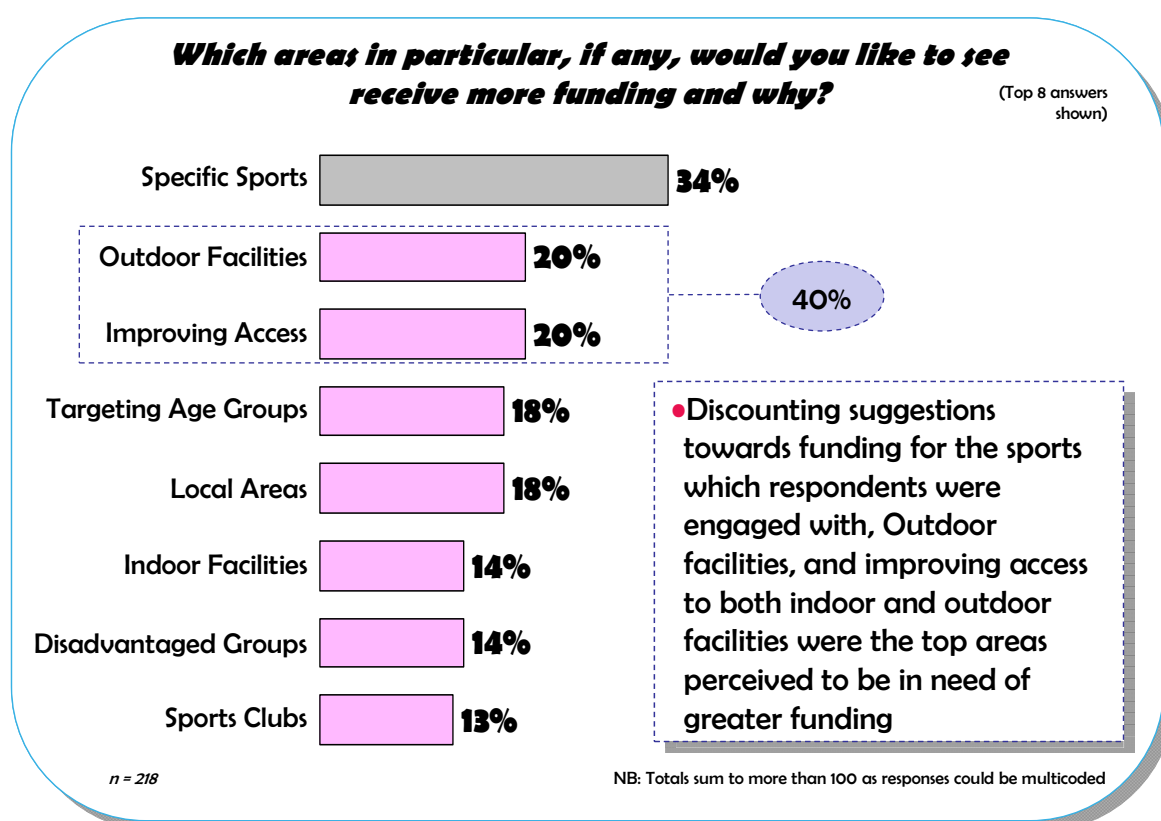
Future funding therefore needs to be thoroughly thought through and given out only when need has been established and sufficiently evidenced, and thorough business plans have been formulated. Partnerships should be established between a variety of funding bodies with expert witness suggestions for the success of joined up provision echoed by members of the public through our online survey; *'I would like to see more co-ordination and collaboration between schools/education and local authorities. Sports Facilities should be built in partnership'* (Male, 50+, Lincolnshire). NGBs such as The Football Association, the Lawn Tennis Association additionally share this sentiment, and the Amateur Swimming Association wisely highlights the need for agreements between partners to be well constructed in order for them to be successful. Particularly with facilities such as swimming pools where high levels of capital are required, well designed funding partnerships between local authorities and commercial management companies can ensure a dual source of funding for facility development. Crucial to

⁴⁹ Sport England, *Facilities Inquiry Submission*, 2010

such approaches is the need to have long term vision regarding facility funding and development. Funding regimes should therefore encourage developments involving partnerships wherever possible.

The Panel recognises from evidence submitted that Sport England's National Facility Strategy work with the 46 funded NGBs is providing, and will continue to provide, a strong basis for identifying the sporting and geographical areas that are most in need of funding. With almost £100 million of Sport England funding allocated to help NGBs deliver this strategy, it should go some way to helping develop the right facilities in the right places.

In stark contrast to the funding invested in built facilities, a KPMG review has estimated that in relation to the costs necessary to keep its waterways in good condition, British Waterways is currently underfunded by approximately £30 million per annum and as a result there is a backlog of around £200 million in maintenance requirements. Despite British Waterways hoping to be able to devote an additional £10 million to maintenance through restructuring, the funding deficit does not look likely to improve as for 2010/11, British Waterways will receive almost 17% less grant from the Government than they did in 2009/2010; this is a reduction from £57.4 million last year, to £47.8 million this year. The Environment Agency is also experiencing a maintenance backlog, estimated at about £30 million, with a funding gap of £9.6 million that when calculated per kilometre, is worse than that of British Waterways. Expert witnesses and the general public have consistently given the outdoors as the top answer (20%) for where people would like to see more funding (after specific mentions of individual's own sports).⁵⁰ The same amount of people, one in five (20%) also requested that more funding be directed towards improving access, predominantly to the outdoors.⁵¹



⁵⁰ The top answer has been discounted as specific sport recommendations have come primarily from those involved with the sports which they are suggesting receive more funding, and therefore are suffering from a degree of bias

⁵¹ Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 218 respondents across the UK

The Panel notes there are however organisations such as The Football Foundation which invest in outdoor facilities, often encouraging community involvement to raise the remaining funding. Since 2000, The Football Foundation has taken the £373 million provided by the Premier League, The Football Association and the Government, and the £57 million provided by corporate partners like Barclays, and doubled this through matched funding from local and national partners. These funds have then been spent on over 600 community projects, free football kits for over 250,000 young girls, boys or people with a disability and sports facilities. The Football Foundation has invested in 310 artificial grass pitches, all with floodlights, 374 grass pitch projects, and 624 changing rooms, providing facilities for almost 600,000 people to use each week.⁵²

Funding cuts, which are an inevitable part of the current difficult financial situation, may have a negative impact on asset owning sports clubs. As it stands, the decision to withdraw rate relief for community sports clubs is at the discretion of each individual local authority. With the need to make less money go further in the new financial year, there is a real danger that even local authorities with a sympathetic understanding of the financial impact of withdrawing rate relief from community sports clubs will take this course of action. As already touched upon within the pricing section, an overarching national guidance framework for local authorities would be helpful in protecting the financial health of asset owning community sports clubs. The Panel has heard from a range of witnesses both at the grassroot level and a structural level that for many asset owning clubs the need to raise funds to cover facility costs such as bills and repairs repeatedly dominates use of limited volunteer hours available over other activities which are fundamental to the sport, such as club development or coaching. The Rugby Football League have experienced that even their financially successful clubs are now starting to suffer and that, *'the volunteers running the clubs often spend considerably more time trying to raise money to repair the roof or pay the electrical bill etc than they do running or growing their sport.'*

The Panel has received a number of suggestions identifying scope within the NHS budget stream to contribute to the funding and development of facilities. Any recreational facility exists to improve the health and wellbeing of the nation, and a healthy population will require fewer visits to the doctor and the hospital, and will therefore cost its health service less. It is estimated that treatment for ailments caused by physical inactivity and mental health issues that sport and recreation would help address costs the NHS £85 billion per year. At a time when local authority budgets are becoming increasingly pressurised, seeking funding contributions from the NHS budget of £80 billion to direct towards sport are more necessary than ever, and would be an effective use of funding due to the positive impact that increased participation will have on the health of the public. Such action is once again best utilised through a holistic approach which considers the whole community and their needs in a locality.

Seeking funding contributions from the NHS budget of £80 billion to direct towards sport would be an effective use of funding due to the positive impact that increased participation will have on the health of the public

Support for this idea came from a range of witnesses showing the Panel that vested interests were not a factor in a somewhat politically contentious idea. Business in Sport and Leisure propose that, *'the target must be to shift to a real public health service from a sickness health*

⁵² The Football Foundation, *Annual Review 2009*, 2009

service,’. Along similar lines the LGA states, *‘the sports sector must reach out to health and education practitioners in particular with a clear offer of how it can deliver their objectives’* and Natural England advocates *‘a resources shift from health treatment to health prevention.’*

Jeff Neslen, Development Manager at the London Playing Fields Foundation also sits on the Board for Pro-Active West London and cites a National Health Service representative whose budget for one local authority is £15million. The NHS are already giving each of the Pro-Active Partnerships within London £60,000, which is a positive step in the right direction but only a drop in the ocean when compared to a budget of £15 million for one local authority.

Focusing more specifically on outdoor facilities, the Panel received evidence illustrating the need for greater funding to sustain high quality playing fields. This can be most effectively achieved, as suggested by the London Playing Field Foundation, through partnerships between the public sector and the commercial sector so that there is a key driver cross subsidising the playing field. It is possible that this could even function through a range of secondary income generators, for example, hosting telephone masts on the premises, which can be used to subsidise the general public or disadvantaged groups to come and use the facility.

One way in which the funding of outdoor facilities can exist in such partnership is through multi sport hub sites. In London alone research from the London Playing Fields Foundation and the Greater London Authority has revealed that an investment of around £173million is needed to bring such sites to fruition in 42 locations across the city. Currently there is only £3million earmarked by the London Development Agency for these developments. This leads on to a core concept in the development of facilities; that those who ultimately benefit should contribute to the costs.

An example of how sufficient funding for a multi-sport hub site can be generated has been demonstrated with the Peter May Centre in Waltham Forest, London, taken over by the London Playing Fields Foundation in 1991. The centre is a 34 acre site operating as a cricket hub and also offering a floodlit artificial pitch for hockey, football pitches, an indoor sports hall and a health and fitness centre which operates as an income driver. Funding for the centre came from an award of £3.8million in 1995 from the National Lottery, £475,000 through a local authority planning obligation, and a fundraising appeal in the memory of Peter May, giving them a total of £5million to develop the ground. Such an accomplishment required not only partnerships but also perseverance and commitment, with the centre opening in June 2000, almost ten years after the site was taken over. During this four year period regular communication was maintained with interested parties, such as Crostyx hockey club which kept partners ‘on-side’ as the development progressed.

The Panel has seen that pulling together partnerships for regeneration and development, as exemplified above is an incredibly complex procedure, but one that can successfully harness capital from a wide range of sources. This has been the case at Orford Park in Warrington.⁵³

⁵³ The Football Association, *Facilities Inquiry Submission*, 2010



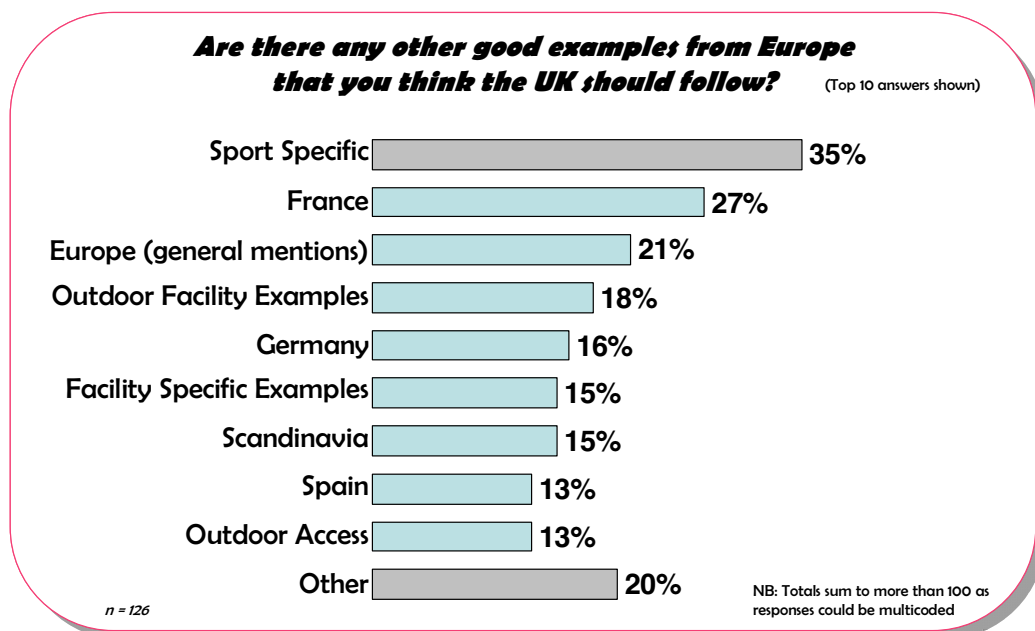
Negotiating funding input from interested parties, and the priorities and facilities which they will receive as a result is an intricate and time consuming process, as the various needs of local user groups need to be covered, whilst raising sufficient funds. The publication of comprehensive guidance on how to facilitate such partnerships and key considerations to cover off would be beneficial to helping future joint funding venture developments. The Panel heard from one club which had made a significant funding contribution to the development of a facility yet still found they were paying far more for the use of the facilities than it had anticipated. This demonstrates the importance of clear communication about costs and expectations at the planning stage. In addition to combining sources of financial investment, greater community involvement during the development of facilities can both reduce the total amount needed, and maximise the investment of funding given, through the valuable contributions of the time and expertise of volunteers, be this in painting a changing room or helping to manage a facility.

Evolving from the concept of more cohesive approaches to facility funding is the need to reduce bureaucracy within funding processes and to make it easier for facilities to get to funding, and subsequently the public to get to facilities. With different parties offering funding schemes and assessing them at length, the money that could be saved with an approach such as that of 'Total Place' to funding will help in the streamlining process, and generate additional money to be channelled into funding.



European Models

Evidence submitted to the Panel has suggested that some European models have beneficial approaches towards both the provision of facilities, and access to the natural environment. There is certainly potential for future research to share best practice and lessons from other European countries.



Just over one in four people (27%) drew on examples of good practice from France, with one in five (21%) informing the Panel that generally the rest of Europe could provide good examples for the UK to follow. Germany, various countries within Scandinavia, and Spain were also mentioned a number of times. Understandably, over one in three people (35%) gave answers which focused on the specific sport(s) which they were involved in.⁵⁴ Suggestions which the Panel received relating to good practice elsewhere ranged from being broad in their scope, to extremely specific. So examples from France ranged from overall facility management and provision being of an excellent standard, to respect for cyclist on the roads.

Are there any other good examples from Europe that you think the UK should follow?

'France where councils build suitable facilities to be managed and run by the relevant club' Male, 31-40, Kent

'In France, clubs are a source of municipal pride and are funded directly by the councils on an ongoing consistent basis, recognising the facility that is being provided to the town by the volunteers.' Male, 41-50, Bedfordshire

'Yes - more facilities. Most small towns in France, for example, have a large sports hall/ leisure centre.' Male, 41-50, Somerset

'Local swimming pool provision in France' Female, 50+, Surrey

The Panel believes that the underlying theme here is that the mindset and cultural approach of our European counterparts towards sports provision through accessible, good quality facilities,

⁵⁴ Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 126 respondents across the UK

is something which we should be looking to follow. This is applicable both at a general level, and also with regard to specific sporting examples.



Are there any other good examples from Europe that you think the UK should follow?



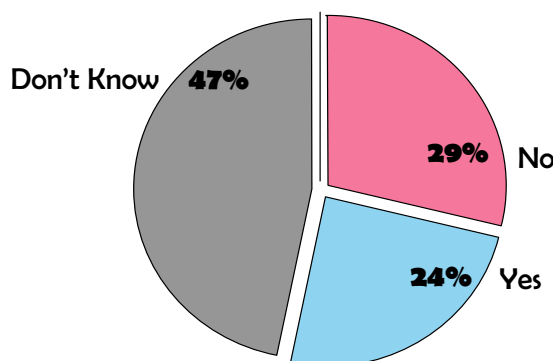
'Wherever you go around Europe you can see thousands of tennis courts, sports complexes and swimming pools. It is no surprise that their communities are generally healthier, fitter and do better in amateur and professional competitions' Male, 41-50, Hertfordshire

'The hire facility costs in Europe reflect the sport and age of those taking part. £45.00 per hour for a court for e.g. Under 11s is far too expensive' Female, 21-30, Tyne and Wear

'There are far more facilities in Europe e.g. when they build new housing estates they build parks/tennis courts/ pitches to cater for the population' Female, 41-50, Oxfordshire

A particular area of interest for the Panel is that of multi-sports clubs with high levels of community involvement, as evidenced frequently across Europe as a successful model of facility provision. There are currently not many of these in the UK however, and public awareness regarding their potential as a model appears to be low as a result, with almost half (47%) answering that they didn't know when asked if multi-sport clubs were working well in the UK. For those who had some knowledge of the model, opinion is fairly divided with just over one in four (29%) believing them not to be working well, and just under one in four (24%) believing that they are.⁵⁵

Do you think that multi sport clubs are working well in the UK?



The Panel has found from the evidence they have received that a cultural barrier first needs to be addressed if such models are to succeed in the UK. This barrier exists around the history and accompanying pride that surrounds a large number of the estimated 150,000 sports clubs in the UK, which may lead to resistance to the idea of merging with other sports. Most of those who gave evidence to the Panel advocate multi-sports club models as positive and viable options moving forward recognising the multitude of benefits they bring. Endorsement of multi-sport sites isn't limited to sport and recreation on land either, with The Environment Agency already factoring water sport hubs into their development plans. These would be single location sites from which a number of recreational activities can be undertaken thus creating more focus for people on what is available to them, with easier funding due to the sharing of facilities.

⁵⁵ Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 259 respondents across the UK

Multi-sport clubs may be a good way to tie together asset and non-asset owning clubs. However when creating such partnerships it is important that planning considerations do not match sports which will end up having usage conflicts, particularly when larger or more main stream sports may end up dominating. In order to succeed multi-sport sites require the appropriate planning, partnerships and management in accordance with the needs of the community and a genuine will to work together. If for example, sporting facility requirements are particularly specific, a number of sport specific sites can be joined together under an overarching infrastructure. England Netball has informed the Panel that this approach has tended to be the most successful multi sport club model for netball.



'Everton Football Club have been a model of good practice where the football club and basketball club, Everton Tigers have worked together well since the basketball club formed inception in 2007. Local authorities and sports clubs with strong infrastructures would be key to implementation.'

Witnesses are generally in agreement about the virtues of multi-sport clubs, with the main advantages identified as economies of scale through critical mass, cross-fertilisation of sports leading to increased participation, wider access opportunities and a social hub for the community. One example of the success which can occur through bringing a number of sports together in the same site was provided to the Panel by British Gymnastics, citing the case of Zoe Smith, a former gymnast who is now a Commonwealth weight lifter, resulting from both sports existing under one roof in a multi-sport club.

The Hub at Regent's Park is an example of a multi-sport and community centre in the UK that provides a number of services to the public through partnerships with local interested parties. Staff at the Hub work with nearby young people and community groups to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the local community. Due to the initial capital investment required to create such a facility, and the finances involved in maintaining it, the site currently requires subsidisation. The presence of an on-site café does generate some income though, as do the flexible inside spaces which can be hired out for corporate events and training sessions –this only occurs when it will not affect sporting provision.

Multi Sport Site –The Hub at Regent's Park, London (UK)

- Focal point for sport & physical activity in central London
- Used by members of the public
- Used for community sports sessions by QPR, Camden local authority, and Westminster local authority

Facilities:

- 10 Football Pitches
- 13 Mini Football Pitches
- 1 Junior Football Pitch
- 2 Rugby Pitches
- Indoor Exercise Space
- 15 Separate Changing Room Facilities
- Lockers
- Café



Funding:

- Total Hub cost = £3.3 million (majority from Sport England and Big Lottery)
- Total sports pitch renovation cost = £2.2 million (£908k from The Football Foundation)

Sport and Physical Activity Programmes

- Aimed at 6 hard-to-reach groups
 - Under 16's
 - Over 45's
 - Black and minority ethnic groups
 - People with disabilities
 - People on low incomes
 - Women
- Delivered by Active Sport Officers or in partnership with local authorities, NGBs, local businesses, PCT's or community groups

Almost one in five examples (18%)⁵⁶ presented to the Panel have drawn on outdoor facilities in Europe. For example, in Holland cycling paths are linked excellently to public transport and incorporate facility provision with community health and the transport infrastructure, demonstrating the success of a holistic approach. Roger Squires, Chairman of the Navigation and Amenity Committee at the Inland Waterways Association gives the example of Friesland, again in the Netherlands, as a community that has adapted a pro-active approach to delivering a quality service regarding the recreational facilities of the water. Their approach takes a holistic view providing not only employment and infrastructure in the area, but also showing the environmental value of the water and increasing the ecological value of the area.

The Panel also recommends that the UK adopts a more European approach to VAT on sport, as covered in the pricing section. The European White Paper on Sport formalises the EU's commitment to ensuring that sports facilities receive more sympathetic VAT treatment, yet the extent of this can be interpreted differently by the member countries, and indeed, has been. Holland for example offers a 6% VAT rate for attending sporting events and the usage of sports facilities compared to the full rate, of currently 17.5%, in the UK (with under certain circumstances VAT exemptions for block facility bookings of ten or more).⁵⁷

Scandinavia as a whole, and specific mentions of countries within Scandinavia have also been noted as providing good models from which the UK can learn. The Finnish state sports policy has been to, '*support the construction of sports and exercise facilities that serve the broadest possible range of citizens*'⁵⁸ earning Finland's sports facilities the reputation as being amongst the best in the world for the density of the facilities and the variety of physical activities which they allow for. There are around 30,000 sports facilities in Finland that are available for all to use at moderate expense, 75% of which are built and maintained by municipalities - local level, self-governing administrative units⁵⁹. Funding for these facilities primarily comes from the municipalities with support from project grants that represents 10-20 per cent of the costs and is capped at €500,000 (with the exception of swimming halls, for which the maximum is €750,000).⁶⁰

In offering such a high level of sports facilities, the Finnish state has reacted to the wants and needs of the sports and exercise field, waiting for the popularity of a sport or exercise to become established before building to meet its needs. Despite such an excellent track record to date, Finland has not become complacent, turning their focus for the future to making sports construction and sustainable development compatible and attempting to meet the longer term needs of its population.

Dedication to the value of sporting provision appears to influence much of the provision in the rest of Europe. Whilst the Panel acknowledges that the UK is not directly comparable to other European countries with differing population sizes and budget infrastructures, fundamentally, the central role which facility provision appears to play within other European communities is worthy of incorporation into future UK facility developments.

⁵⁶ Data from Facilities Inquiry online survey completed by 259 respondents across the UK

⁵⁷ For further detail please see the section on Pricing

⁵⁸ Jouko Kokkonen, 'The Finnish Dream, Places for Everyone to Exercise' (2009), in *Motion, Sport in Finland* Vol 2, 2009

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

⁶⁰ *Ibid*





The recommendations of the Panel

- 1) **Local authorities must not be afraid to rationalise facilities where they are no longer fit for purpose or located in the wrong place.**
Evidence shows that closing two poor facilities in order to create one good one can lead to increased sporting participation.
- 2) **Schools must be obliged to open the premises for out of hours sporting usage.**
Evidence shows that the availability of school sports facilities varies according to the attitude of the individual school. Yet opening up all school facilities could enable many more people to participate.
- 3) **Greater research is required to understand the current location, condition and usage of facilities.**
Only then can investment be directed to where it will have the most impact.
- 4) **All new facilities, whether on school or community sites must include social space for players, spectators and others.**
This contributes both to the quality of experience, and crucially, may generate income to sustain the venue.
- 5) **Voluntary and community groups must be more fully involved in facility provision.**
This would reduce costs and generate greater community ownership of the facility. Examples are as follows:
 - A school providing access and giving responsibility to a badminton club one evening, and a basketball club the next; the security of venue would incentivise responsible stewardship
 - A sports centre and local clubs creating formal user agreements, thus providing secure income for the centre and guaranteeing facility time for sport as opposed to other non-sporting uses;
 - A local authority transferring a pavilion or changing rooms to local sports clubs, thus reducing costs for the local authority and providing an asset for the club from which to create a firm base and identity
- 6) **Freely available outdoor space must appear more accessible.**
Whilst there is now increased access to open space, people do not understand how to get there, nor where to go upon arrival. Improved transport links to natural areas, and improved information on paths and routes would encourage greater usage among non-participants.
- 7) **Access to and maintenance of waterways must be improved.**
At present access to the UK's waterways is highly restricted, and maintenance is dramatically under funded. Opening up high quality water and waterside recreation would hugely increase the facility stock.

Glossary and definition of key terms

AGP: Artificial Grass Pitch

BSF: Buildings Schools for the Future (a government programme which aims to rebuild or remodel every secondary school in England)

Built Facility: Any facility capable of hosting indoor sport and recreation. Changing rooms and pavilions attached to playing fields are addressed under outdoor facilities

CASC: Community Amateur Sports Club (clubs that meet specific criteria can register with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs as CASCs, thus receiving a number of tax and business rate concessions)

CCPR: Central Council of Physical Recreation (national alliance of governing and representative bodies of sport and recreation)

CROW Act: Countryside and Right of Way Act 2000

CSPAPS / CSPs: County Sport (and Physical Activity) Partnership. Each county in England has a CSP bringing together local authorities, sports governing bodies, and others with an interest in increasing sports participation and improving provision in the county.

Facilities: Any built, maintained or naturally occurring space capable of hosting sport and recreation activity

ICT: Information and Communication Technologies

ISPAL: Institute for Sports, Parks and Leisure (professional body representing those working in sport)

IWA: Inland Waterways Association (voluntary organisation campaigning for the use, maintenance and restoration of waterways)

LGA: Local Government Association (voluntary membership body representing local authorities in England and Wales)

Multi-Sport Club: A club providing access to two or more sporting activities via shared resources, in order to meet the needs of local communities

Natural Facility: Land, water and air space which may be wild or managed and that is capable of hosting sport and recreational activity

NBS: National Benchmarking Service (a performance management tool for sports halls and pools commissioned by Sport England)

NGBs: National governing bodies of sport. Organisations with responsibility for the governance and development of a particular sport. Many are mentioned in this document, and so are not listed individually in this glossary.

PFI: Private Finance Initiative. A means of securing private investment into the development of public buildings.

PfS: Partnerships for Schools. The organisation responsible for managing the Government's capital investment into schools.

Playing Field: Land in the open air which is provided for the purposes of physical education or recreation, other than any prescribed description of land⁶¹

PPG(17): A Planning Policy Guidance Note sets out the issues to which a local planning authority must have due regard when making planning decisions. PPG17 particularly sets out requirements regarding sport and recreation. The Government is currently rationalising planning guidance.

Quest: A planning tool providing a customer focused management framework for leisure facilities and sport development which operates alongside Sport England's National Benchmarking Service)

RoWIP's: Rights of Way Improvement Plans. Highways authorities have a statutory duty to prepare plans which outline how the rights of way in their area can be improved. There is however no duty to implement the plans.

Sport England: A non-departmental public body of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport which aims to build a strong community sport system through working with national governing bodies and other funded partners. Sport England is a statutory consultee on planning matters affecting sport and recreation, and a distributor of lottery funding.

⁶¹ Definition taken from Section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act (1998)

Acknowledgements

A great number of people and organisations provided vital contributions to this inquiry, for which the Panel are extremely grateful. Many thanks to all those who took the time to share their thoughts and knowledge, from online submissions to full papers and evidence sessions, and to those who organised and facilitated the site visits.

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Henry Folkard, BMC Access Volunteer

The Football Association

Dylan Evans, Regional Facilities Manager – London

The Football Foundation

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Methodology

This inquiry utilised a number of research techniques to ensure that robust evidence was gathered across what the Panel acknowledges as a broad area for investigation. Four main approaches were taken;

1. 'Witness sessions' with core groups coming before the Panel to share their expert views
2. Site visits covering both indoor and outdoor facilities, conducted by the Panel who were accompanied by relevant experts to provide further evidence
3. A short online survey for any member of the public to provide their views to the Panel, consisting of quantitative and qualitative questions
4. Papers and full length responses to a briefing document were welcomed from NGBs and interested parties

The research period ran from 10 December 2009 until 10 April 2010, during which time over 350 individuals and organisations provided evidence to the Panel in one or more of the forms above. Witnesses ranged from facility development officers in NGBs, to members of the public as end users of facilities, and experts from core organisations. The Panel was extremely pleased with the overall response rate, deeming it to be a wide representation of relevant knowledge and expertise. Submissions were received from larger or more mainstream sports such as football and rugby, to smaller or more niche sports whose facilities needs were more specific, such as gliding and motor sports. Alongside this, evidence was given from a diverse range of organisations from those involved in sports provision, to planning, school facilities and offering sport to disadvantaged communities. A full list of witnesses can be found in the acknowledgements.

All the evidence gathered was considered by the Panel, alongside existing secondary data, and the resulting analysis has informed this final report. Contradictions in data were explored and cross-cutting themes examined. The Panel believes that the findings in this report are therefore based on sound research and evidence and so hold legitimate weight.

Witness Sessions

In total, four themed witness sessions were held, with a number of witnesses typically attending each one. The sessions were informally structured in a question and answer format, with both specific questions directed at witnesses, and also questions put out for open discussions between witnesses and the Panel. The length of the sessions varied depending on the number of witnesses and the complexity of the topics covered in each one, but typically ranged from one hour to two hours. These sessions offered an excellent opportunity for the Panel to hear from key witnesses in a structured way, with many key witnesses also submitting papers after verbally giving their evidence.

Witness Session Themes

- **Community and education facilities**
- **The natural environment**
- **Leisure auditors and consultants**
- **Under represented groups in sport**

Site Visits

In total, the Panel visited and toured seven individual sites, ranging in quality of facility provision and the focus of the facility. At each site the Panel were accompanied by facility staff and relevant experts who could address any pertinent questions that the Panel had. This approach allowed for the Panel to see and comprehensively understand first-hand the variety and quality of current facility provision.

The site visits consisted of: three natural environment outdoor areas, all located within the Peak District National Park, Tupton Hall School; a school with dual use sports facilities in Derbyshire, and three urban outdoor facilities of a range of standards, organised by the Football Foundation.

Online Questionnaire

A simple online questionnaire was designed for this research with the aim of gathering the opinions of the wider public, the end users of facilities at a grass roots level. The questionnaire was placed on the dedicated inquiry website and comprised of five quantitative, and five qualitative questions. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2. The qualitative questions were coded along the key themes emerging, to allow for a quantitative approach to some of the data.

In total, 263 questionnaires were submitted, which the Panel believes to be a good response rate. Responses came from a mixture of geographical locations, ages, and genders which the Panel feels is sufficiently representative. The respondents were incentivised with a prize draw to win an ipod nano and posters advertising the questionnaire were displayed in leisure centres to aid the response rate. In addition, typically under-represented groups in sport such as young people and women were targeted with the posters so as to avoid a biased demographic completing the questionnaire. Not every question however was answered by every respondent, typically due to a lack of relevance or sufficient knowledge. Throughout the report base sizes are provided in the footnote when data collected through the online questionnaire is stated to place it in context.

Additionally, online feedback allowed people to submit their best and worst facility experiences to the Panel and gave the research an excellent, well rounded picture of public perceptions regarding our facilities.

Written Papers

The Panel received written papers, or completed briefing documents from 55 witnesses. These were primarily NGBs, local councils and leisure auditors. A number of witnesses felt that by writing their own papers focused on the key areas of investigation as outlined in the briefing document, their relevant facility opinions and needs could be conveyed. The Panel received a rich source of data from these papers and believes them to have made an invaluable contribution to the inquiry, acting somewhere as the voice between the end grass roots user, and the expert witnesses, often those submitting these responses had a greater involvement in administering sport at a grass roots level, either as part of a council or a sports club.

Appendix 2: Copy of Online Questionnaire

Name *	
?Your gender	☐ Male ☐ Female
?Age	or
?County	or
?Email address	
1. How would you rate the quality of the built sport facilities in the UK?	☐ Very Good ☐ Good ☐ Average ☐ Poor ☐ Very Poor
2. What would help built sports facilities to be used more by the wider community?	
3. Overall, how would you rate the level of access to the natural environment in the UK?	☐ Very Good ☐ Good ☐ Average ☐ Poor ☐ Very Poor
4. What more could be done to improve access and encourage people into the outdoors?	
5. Would you say that the costs relating to the use of sports facilities are?	☐ Far too high ☐ A little too high ☐ About right ☐ A little too low ☐ Far too low
6. How do you think the recession has impacted on prices, and in turn how, if at all, is this affecting participation?	
7. Do you think that development is adequately planned at a national level?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know
8. Which areas in particular, if any, would you like to see receive more funding and why?	
9. Do you think that multi-sport clubs are working well in the UK?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know
10. Are there any good examples from Europe that you think the UK should follow?	
Submit	



Notes

The Facilities Inquiry is an independent inquiry into sport and recreation facilities in the UK. Its purpose is to look into the world of these facilities, take views from the public and from experts and come up with a range of recommendations designed to improve the provision of and access to our sport and leisure facilities.

The inquiry panel is drawn from a wide range of sporting backgrounds, from private leisure to elite performance.

This report is intended to provide policy and decision-makers with a guide to the 'big picture' issues affecting the provision of sport and recreation facilities across the UK. It also provides seven key recommendations to address these issues.

The Inquiry's secretariat was provided by CCPR, the alliance of the governing bodies of sport and recreation.

For further details about the inquiry, the panel or its work please contact Syann Cox on 020 7976 3922 or info@facilitiesinquiry.org.uk.
