

Scottish Disability Sport

Public Petitions Committee - PE1508 Written Response

Background

Scottish Disability Sport (SDS) is the Scottish governing body of all sports for people of all ages and abilities with a physical, sensory or learning disability. SDS has the vision of leading the development of sport and physical recreation for disabled people in Scotland and contributing to UK and international initiatives. SDS lists its major partners as **sportscotland**, Scotland's Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Authorities plus Voluntary Organisations concerned with disability.

Through the current strategic plan "Inspiring Through Inclusion", SDS is implementing and developing numerous initiatives aimed at making a direct impact on the interest generated by both the London 2012 Paralympic Games and the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Twenty seven Scottish athletes and players competed as part of the ParalympicsGB team at the London 2012 Summer Paralympic Games. These Games inspired a nation and our athletes, coaches and support staff contributed significantly to the performance of the GB team and the Games as a whole. Scottish athletes competed across 11 sports, made up 9% of the ParalympicsGB team and returned home with an impressive haul of 3 gold, 6 silver and 2 bronze medals. The London Paralympic Games undoubtedly inspired the nation and change perceptions of disability and disability sport forever. SDS was delighted that the Scottish Wheelchair Curlers selected to represent ParalympicsGB at the Sochi 2014 Winter Paralympic Games returned home with a magnificent bronze medal.

Inclusion is at the heart of all of SDS's work and the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games will be the most inclusive sporting event ever with 22 medal events across the five sports of Athletics, Cycling, Swimming, Lawn Bowls and Powerlifting. Scottish athletes with a disability are in contention for selection within each of the five sports which will include the largest number of disabled athletes ever selected for Team Scotland, and it is anticipated that there will be more Scottish medallists than ever before. The para events within the sports at the Glasgow Games are diverse from visually impaired track cyclists who will compete with a pilot on a tandem bike at the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, to physically disabled bowlers competing in the triples competition at the iconic Kelvingrove Lawn Bowls facility. All of the events will be completely integrated within their sports ensuring that athletes with a disability will be performing in front of the thousands in the stadiums, millions watching on TV and online, showcasing disability sport to a worldwide audience.

Responses to Questions Arising from Committee Meetings

“What your organisation’s views are on the terms of the petition and the comments of the petitioners during the evidence session on 18 March?”

SDS is committed to the full inclusion of all athletes with a disability when appropriate for the individual athlete in question. SDS works in partnership with a wide variety of sports and strives to ensure an inclusive approach to the participation, competition and training programmes for each athlete. For many this is easily achievable, for many others it will be a gradual process and for some a separate environment will remain most appropriate. This process of inclusion will depend on the physical, social, intellectual development of the individual and their confidence and desire to be included. In short it is about athlete choice and not inclusion at all costs.

SDS has worked closely with Glasgow 2014 Ltd, Commonwealth Games Scotland, Scotland’s Governing Bodies of Sport and **sportscotland** in support of an inclusive and quality experience for the Scottish Paraspport athletes competing at the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. SDS is responsible for the preparation and nomination of the Para Bowls Team and has supported the training, nomination and effective inclusion within the appropriate mainstream sports. However, SDS has not played any part in the commercial aspects of the Glasgow 2014 Games and has not been approached by Glasgow 2014 to comment on individual sponsors.

SDS attracts funding from a wide variety of sources with **sportscotland** being the largest contributor. Other sources include partnership agreements, sponsors, donations and fees and charges. Unlike most mainstream governing bodies of sport, SDS does not operate an individual membership system due to the functional and social circumstances of many athletes. As a result, SDS has always requested financial contributions from athletes competing at a representative level or from those attending national championships.

SDS is currently actively seeking commercial sponsorship to supplement existing funding sources and to support the development of sport and physical activity for athletes and players with a disability across Scotland. The Association has a sponsorship procedure, which ensures that the SDS Board consider all sponsorship opportunities fully, including the appropriateness and fit of potential sponsors with the culture and ethos of SDS’s work. The SDS Board has the authority to reject any inappropriate sponsor.

The running of a successful major event such as the Glasgow Commonwealth Games is reliant on sponsorship and funding from the commercial sector and without such investment these events simply would not happen. The judgement call on the suitability of such sponsors and commercial investments is a matter for the individual

organising committee, in this case Glasgow 2014, and does not fall within the remit of SDS.

The recent welfare reforms have undoubtedly had an impact on those with a disability in Scotland and recently, SDS has noticed that some athletes and players have been adversely affected by the outcome of work capacity assessments. The knock on effect for SDS has been a lack of ability for some athletes and players to contribute to the costs of participating, training or competing in their chosen sport. SDS has no empirical evidence to substantiate this theory, but this is the anecdotal picture that is being fed back to us by our staff, volunteers and key partners.

Conclusion

Public attitudes towards disability and disability sport were undoubtedly enhanced following the London 2012 Paralympic Games and SDS feels that these attitudes and perceptions will be additionally enhanced with the staging of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. Para athletes will compete alongside their mainstream peers and will be fully included within sport specific teams. SDS feels that it is vitally important that every effort is made to promote and celebrate the efforts and successes of Scotland's Para athletes competing in Glasgow and that steps are taken to ensure that the Games are conducted in an inclusive and positive light.

There is no doubt that commercial sponsors are fundamentally important to the successful staging of the Glasgow 2014 Games and whilst it is not the role of SDS to make judgements on the suitability of such sponsors, we trust that appropriate standards and internal procedures are in place to ensure that any Games sponsor will not detract from the successful staging of these fully inclusive Games.