

PE1848/C

Scottish Snooker submission of 8 January 2021

We begin by stating that we agree, suppressing the spread of the virus is key. Saving lives and not overwhelming the NHS is the priority of the nation.

We would simply like equity for our sport as an indoor non-contact sport and parity of opportunity to be accessed, as other indoor non-contact sports, currently tier 0-3 inclusive and require the snooker halls to be open for this to happen.

We have requested the reasons leading to the decisions within the Strategic Framework where Snooker was placed into tier 1. We have still not received this information but are informed it is difficult & challenging times or a legislative decision which requires government input to change. Recent enquiries to Government Ministers – specifically Secretary for Health and Sport and also Minister for Older people and Equalities - were very patronising replies using a template letter which were identical (word for word), showing no thought or attempt to understand our position or address our valid points. The same paragraph exists in the government's response to this petition with the section, *'based on clinical evidence, expert advice, and a balanced assessment of the risks'*. We refute this and attempt to inform, based on **actual** evidence and current procedures including control measures within risk assessments to mitigate any risks.

We believe to have discovered these 'reasons' for ourselves due to this petition. A key document advising the government and the basis of the briefing paper from SPICe regarding this petition, is the [Strategic Framework: Business Closures: Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment \(BRIA\)](#).

This document has **never been shared with Scottish Snooker NGB nor consulted with** – very disappointing since on page 120 of the BRIA it states, *'we continue to explore and assess alternatives with the sport's governing body.'*

Also, since on page 119 of the BRIA it states, *'that these measures **do not apply to facilities associated with the sport** of indoor bowling which takes place under the auspices of the Scottish Indoor Bowling Association. The measures in the **Sport and Exercise section of the Strategic Framework** apply to these facilities.'*

There exists no recommendation for Snooker – yet **Snooker** is a **sport** and has a recognised governing body for sport in Scotland. Our **associated facilities** are indeed the **snooker halls** within Scotland.

In the BRIA, it states that Snooker is within the Leisure and Entertainment Activity Measures. We ask that snooker, as a non-contact sport with a recognised governing body, be within the Sport & Exercise / Physical Activity Guidance within the Strategic Framework.

We were the first indoor sport in Scotland who reopened in August 2020. Venues had multiple visits from Local Authorities ensuring compliance with the guidelines and these visits were overwhelmingly positive. Why has Snooker changed from first to last – from least to highest risk? Snooker venues have excellent ventilation,

physical distancing, measures to control flow and numbers as appropriate, enhanced hygiene procedures, PPE equipment and track and trace procedures – yet higher risk? We believe this is discrimination against the sport, a complete lack of equity for snooker - an indoor non-contact sport. We believe this may be worth further probing via the Human Rights Act, Article 14 – Prohibition of Discrimination or within other such relevant legislation. Bingo halls were changed from tier 1 to tier 2 within 2 weeks of this document being published, a precedent has been set for change.

The **BRIA** states, *'High-risk factors associated with transmission of the virus include indoor spaces such as a snooker/pool hall or indoor bowling alley, where good ventilation and physical distancing may be less easy to maintain.*'

This is simply **not true, ill-informed, indeed entirely misleading** to those who, based on this information, went on to make the decision regarding the most appropriate tier level which this sport should be and was safe to operate within. Good ventilation exists, (mechanical systems required by premises licences) and physical distancing is actually difficult to avoid– due to the 12ft x 6ft table in the middle of only 2 people. We believe the report repeats this inaccurate message several times – why?

Page 119 of the BRIA mentions the benefits of snooker to the economy, within deprived communities and also to improving mental health and feelings of isolation or loneliness. We agree with these statements and have written to government officials regarding how snooker is a multi-generational sport. We have been working to increase the number of juniors, females and opportunities for those with disabilities to take part. The Health & Wellbeing benefits from taking part in this sport are huge. Snooker, by its ease of physical distancing was a lifeline to some regarding mental health and feelings of isolation in August / Sept when permitted to open.

No point within the BRIA impact assessment should have adversely impacted on the reopening of the sport.

I would urge you to encourage the government to remove snooker as being named within the strategic framework and unable to open until tier 1 and to ensure that it is treated the same as any other indoor non-contact sport. Venues would therefore open from tier 0-3 inclusive with the additional measures already in place within venue risk assessments and with full compliance with the safe reopening of the sport guidelines, in addition to any hospitality measures applicable within the appropriate tier for the venue.