

## Cross Party Group on Sport – Sport & the Media

Tuesday 17th March 2015 17.30 – 19.30

Committee Room 2, Scottish Parliament

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### Present

Liz Smith MSP, Alison Johnstone MSP, Fiona Hyslop MSP, Kim Atkinson, Victoria Barby, Oliver Barsby, Claire Caffrey, Amanda Cobb, Gillian Cooke, Lee Cousins, Jeannie Cranfield, Marjory Crooks, David Ferguson, Jamie Forsyth, Stew Fowlie, Alistair Gordon, Hugh Hall, Derek Grieve, Jane Harvey, Professor Richard Haynes, Grant Jarvie, Jay Lee, Liza Linton, Alexander Mack, Charles Mackenzie, Sharon Mair, Maggie Mallon, Rebecca Marek, Karen McCall, Stuart McFarlane, Jim McIntosh, Catriona Morrison, Anastasia Nevyakina, Peter Nicolson, Jennifer Pearson, Maggie Ritchie, Catherine Ronald, Ronnie Sloan, Susan Swarbrick, Tim Watkin, James Wilson, Mark Woods

### Apologies

Jane Campbell-Morrison, John Clayton, Sharon Clough, Cllr Bob Ellis, Jim Fleeting, Rhoda Grant MSP, Duncan Hamilton, Nigel Holl, James Kelly MSP, Richard Kenney, David Laing, Cllr Ron McKail, Nanette Mutrie, Keith Oliver, Charlie Raeburn, Richard Simpson MSP, Jim Gunn, Diane Cameron, Douglas Bryce, Katriona Bush, Margaret Ann Fleming, Neil Champion, Chris Sellar, Ron Sutherland, Hayley Wotherspoon, Alan Miller.

### Previous Minutes

Proposed by: Jim McIntosh

Seconded by: David Ferguson

### Next Meeting Date

26<sup>th</sup> May 2015, 17.30 – 19.30

### Opening

Liz Smith MSP (Co-convenor) welcomed attendees and speakers. In particular, she welcomed Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop MSP. She briefly introduced the speakers for the evening – Fiona Hyslop MSP, Professor Richard Haynes of Stirling University, Sharon Mair of the BBC and freelance journalist and media consultant, Maggie Ritchie. Liz also explained that Susan Swarbrick - writer for the Scottish Herald - would be part of the panel for the Q&A session later in the meeting. The topic for the meeting would be *Sport and the Media*.

### Keynote Speaker

#### ***Fiona Hyslop MSP – Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs***

Fiona began by talking of the success of 2014 – both the coverage of the Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup were huge successes and they focused the eyes of the world on Scotland. She noted the marketing of both these events as excellent and of great benefit to Scotland's profile to the rest of the world.

She pointed to the success of the media Modern Apprenticeship with Sunset and Vine, which allowed a number of young people to be part of the Games broadcasting initiative, giving them experience of what's involved in broadcast at an International sports event, upskilling them for the future.

The Cabinet Secretary highlighted too, that broadcasting/media has a huge role to play in participation. She asked the group to consider if there is demand for more coverage of sport at both youth and the lower levels of sport?

She continued, suggesting that there may be more opportunities for sport with the growth of local TV – it is likely that what is currently just Edinburgh and Glasgow coverage with STV, will extend to Aberdeen and Inverness. More local coverage in the future could have the potential to more directly inspire participation in local communities. The opportunity for broadcasting to promote both role models and sporting opportunities is key.

The Minister drew the group's attention to the [BBC Charter Renewal](#) consultation – she suggested that attendees may wish to influence the Charter. It will give people the opportunity for people to have a say in Scottish content; what is public service broadcasting? What are its responsibilities?

She also highlighted an opportunity via [Ofcom's strategic review](#) – an opportunity to look at the strategic role of Ofcom in Scotland. The Scottish Government will be able to appoint a member to Ofcom's board.

Fiona then turned to the topic of equality, explaining that tackling inequalities is a big issue for this Scottish Government – this applies especially in this context, to coverage of women's sport. In this case – improving broadcasting and press coverage is key.

She summarised by re-iterating where she saw the greatest opportunity for sports' media and broadcasting: through increasing local TV coverage, getting involved in the BBC Charter renewal and Ofcom's review. She also noted 3 areas of potentially greatest impact: focusing on a few things to make a difference, utilising the power of public opinion and the appetite of young people to embrace sport.

### **Speaker**

#### ***Richard Haynes – Professor of Communications, Media and Culture, University of Stirling***

Richard began by discussing historical trends. He explained that for most people, most of the time, sport means TV sport.

He continued, noting that the BBC has a long history of sport coverage – when they began covering sport, they saw their role as the promotor of sport. It was based around a basic pyramid model with experts (commentators) at the top, fans in the middle (those engaged in sport), and at the bottom, the general viewer (the family audience). The focus for commentators was the bottom of the pyramid – the family audience – as they moved up the pyramid through participating in sport and increasing their knowledge. The aim was engaging the bottom tier of the pyramid so that in the end, some of them would move up the pyramid. He noted that nowadays this is largely no longer the case and the target audience is the committed fan who is already engaged.

Richard highlighted that television increasingly brings lots of money to sport, especially football. This has had the knock-on effect of reducing coverage of a wider range of sports. Sport brings a ready-made audience to TV.

As a result of this he questioned how sport can find a place within modern day media, particularly women's sport. He drew on a few examples eg 46% of Daily Record readership is female but its sports coverage is targeted at the male audience. Even despite the recent success of Scottish women's

football, there was no coverage of women's football. Netball coverage was also very poor. In a recent Herald weekend supplement only one article related to women's sport. From another angle, he highlighted that just 10% of sports journalists in the UK are women – it's perceived to be a difficult place for women to work. Richard gave the example too of the Sky Sport News team - they have a 70:30 ratio split of male to female presenters. He did note however, that women fair better in sport broadcasting in Scotland.

Investment-wise, Richard drew on the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation research that just 0.4% of sport investment goes towards women's sport.

Richard talked of how the visibility of female sports stars in Scotland is very low. Eg Jen McIntosh is Scotland's all time highest female medal winner at the Commonwealth Games but is she as well-known as she should be? Our women sport stars should be celebrated more widely but they're not.

In terms of impact, he explained that there is no robust evidence that suggests a link between the impact of role models and participation; at most they can help in creating a 'halo' effect but this is generally not sustainable. A bigger question is, how can we better sustain this?

Richard noted that the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow resulted in a marked surge in cycling, especially since London 2012 and Glasgow 2014. This was largely inspired by the visibility of cycling and shows that increased visibility of a sport may help to inspire increased interest and participation.

Richard talked about the massive opportunity that the internet presents for sports coverage through networked media. With traditional media in chronic decline (the average age of a newspaper reader is 50), young people are getting the majority of their news online.

What network media has done is transform relationships between sports, its stars, participants and fans. It's a platform that allows instant communication from few to many and has seen the rise of several online communities. It's allowed for technological developments, like apps, to be a common means of how people train and get tips on being active, eg 'Map my Run'. The role of the sports audience as producers of content is now also huge. It does have its pitfalls, but largely, there are more opportunities than challenges. In particular it's a great platform for sport stars to engage with their audience and may present new opportunities for these "sports mentors" to encourage, inspire and support new participants.

Richard suggested that key to growing the use of internet sport would be financial support and training. At the moment eg livestreaming is quite an expensive option for many and to deliver it, specialist skills need to be in place.

### **Speaker**

#### ***Sharon Mair – Editor Radio Music, Events and Partnerships, BBC.***

Sharon began by giving a brief background about herself – she's a programme maker and has worked for most networks at the BBC. Prior to London 2012 and Glasgow 2014 she took on a role which planned how these two events would be covered on the network. Her role at the Olympics was planning delivery across TV, radio and online, this was then carried into Glasgow 2014.

Key to the success of the BBC's coverage was that, as well as covering sports, they covered the stories behind the sports and the sports stars. Additionally, there was a lot of cultural content to support Games' coverage. The BBC's partnership with Scottish Governing Bodies and other partners was critical in the lead up to 2012 and 2014 and Sharon is keen that these partnerships are maintained and developed.

The Commonwealth Torch – Sharon explained that this presented a great opportunity to engage across all local authorities and to show-case Scotland to the rest of the UK. The Torch journey allowed them to develop lots of partnerships which helped going forward to the Games.

What was clear in the build up to Glasgow 2014, was that the audience wanted the same level of coverage as they had had for London 2012 – content *when* they wanted in the *form* they wanted it. So for this reason the BBC had Olympic-style ambition for its coverage of Glasgow 2014.

Sharon highlighted culture as a big part of the overall coverage – this was largely based around ‘BBC at the Quay’ which hosted many events and they brought as many big shows there as possible. This culture coverage alongside the Games really set-up Glasgow well to attract bigger UK events eg SPOTY (BBC Sports Personality Of The Year), Radio 1’s Big Weekend etc.

Apprenticeship Scheme – Sharon explained that the BBC currently has an apprenticeship scheme in place which engages young people to learn the skills and upskill them for the skills required for the future in sport. As such, the BBC is always looking for new events opportunities to link to this.

Briefly she picked up on the issue of the BBC Charter and like Fiona Hyslop MSP, encouraged attendees to engage with this process.

In summarising lessons learned from the Games, Sharon talked of how it brought out the best in all partners – working together with great energy to bring out the best in one another with a common purpose and deliver a great event. Crucially it enabled sport to work well with culture and other departments within the BBC, which made for great story-telling. She suggested that it is integrated working like this which works best and that sports and the media should continue to be very clever about how they engage the audience and seeking new opportunities to engage new audiences.

Sharon highlighted to attendees too, that radio is a great platform which is hungry for content and they should not always focus on getting things to TV. She is also keen to further explore: individual stories, profiling stories and broadcasters speaking to/engaging with individuals.

Concluding, she noted the Games as a great lesson in how to effectively cover Para sport. It was also a great lesson in how to effectively create smaller but connected events eg Active Academy at the Emirates Arena, which due to Games buzz, generated high levels of engagement from young people. Sharon also proposed that perhaps there should be 2 Active Academies per year in Scotland as a key strand of the BBC’s outreach work and to inspire more people to participate in sport.

## **Speaker**

### ***Maggie Ritchie – Freelance Journalist and Media Consultant.***

Maggie began with a Billy Jean King quote: “If you can’t see it, you can’t be it”.

In essence, if you have no visibility then you have no opportunity to inspire or encourage participation – there is no point in keeping your sport a secret!

She explained that she began working with Netball Scotland in the build up to Glasgow 2014. In talking to sports journalists it was clear that they welcomed the stories of the full-time working women’s team – the women behind the athletes - she knew she could get netball into the feature/lifestyle columns (weekly/daily papers and radio).

Maggie talked of how inspirational stories are key to getting page space and air time. She drew on a number of examples: BBC Sport 15 featured the story of a player who had come from Australia to be

part of Team Scotland; a fashion make-over for one of the athletes; a 'looking good while working out' feature (including training tips and modelling new sports kit); BBC Women's Hour and a number of human interest stories.

The feature stories about netball were engaging women who often shied away from sport columns. Additionally, she explained that Netball Scotland had 'played the celeb card' through using Carol Smillie as an ambassador, especially for their 'Bounce Back to Netball' participation campaign which saw Netball Scotland increase its membership by 58%. Key to this was creating stories that ordinary women could connect with.

In summarising, Maggie highlighted that the increased PR both before, during and after Glasgow 2014, has resulted in a growth in Netball Scotland membership and participation. She highlighted that above all else, good content is key – stories and images. Social media is a vital tool too. Local media outlets are also helpful. Netball Scotland has benefitted from having this dedicated PR time and expertise.

Maggie closed with another Billy King quote: "You've got to win in sports - that's talent - but you've also got to learn to remind them you did and how".

## **Q&A**

Liz thanked the speakers and briefly introduced Susan Swarbrick – Herald Writer – who'd be part of the panel for the discussion session. Susan has a particular interest in women in sport and increasing coverage of the breadth of sport following the Commonwealth Games.

- 1) Rebecca Marek (Scottish Youth Parliament) asked Sharon Mair whether there is a Young Sports Person of the Year.
  - a) Sharon Mair replied, explaining that SPOTY includes a young person's section.
  
- 2) Catriona Morrison (Winning Scotland) asked the panel if Scottish sport could piggy back on Sport England's "This Girl Can" campaign
  - a) Richard Haynes replied, saying that any campaign like this is a positive thing. The media are facilitators in spreading them. He suggested that if ideas from this English campaign can be applied in Scotland then they should.
  - a) Related to this, Sharon Mair again mentioned the Active Academy which had taken place at Games time – here she saw the success of marketing effectively to girls and providing opportunities they are seeking e.g. street dance was the most popular activity for girls aged 9-11.
  
- 3) Jay Lee (University of Edinburgh) asked the panel – how do you choose what content goes where?
  - a) Sharon Mair explained that content is categorised by news, sports news, sport output and sport entertainment. Her advice to attendees, was, if seeking coverage, try to find out who the planning producers are as they are useful contacts to have. She made the point again to attendees not to dismiss non-TV media – social and online media are great platforms.
  
- 4) Liz Smith MSP asked the panel if they believed the standard of sports journalism to be as high as it once was.

- a) Richard Haynes talked of how people like Bill McLaren were synonymous with sport. He suggested that now, the question often is, are you an expert in the sport or are you a sports broadcaster? He suggested that the skill of relaying sport knowledge to a wider audience is not an easy one.  
Liz queried whether sports journalists still have the time to do research.
- a) Richard said they do, as information is now so readily available. He explained that key for sports is understanding what journalists are looking for in terms of content. The journalists also of course, need to have had good training.
- 5) David Ferguson (Sporta Scotland) asked the panel – did Glasgow 2014 open Scotland’s eyes to the fact that there is sport beyond football?
- a) Susan Swarbrick replied, suggesting that it did open eyes but whether this will be long-lasting is uncertain. She thinks there is an appetite for more sports.
- a) Maggie Ritchie said that from Netball’s point of view, despite concerns that journalists would lose interest in netball after the Games, this has not been the case. She said that the wave of interest has continued and key to sustaining this is continuing good relationships with journalists.
- a) Sharon Mair replied saying that she thinks the Games opened up a lot of people’s eyes, particularly for example, thanks to Judo’s great start. She re-iterated that the stories behind the sport stars are key as this is what engages people.
- 6) Stew Fowlie (Scottish Student Sport) asked the panel if a multi-sport collaborative approach was the best way forward.
- a) Sharon Mair explained that the BBC met with multiple sports both pre-London 2012 and pre-Glasgow 2014. From this she learnt that as people who work in and love sport, they want to see the success of all sports and not just their own.
- a) Richard Haynes again highlighted the importance of having an impact on editorial content – a common challenge for many sports is to be seen more.
- 7) Claire Caffrey (RYA Scotland) asked the panel – how do Scottish Governing Bodies of sport (SGBs) get funding for communications/media roles (like her own). She suggested that they are not seen as a funding priority.
- a) Maggie Ritchie explained that Netball Scotland had been working for a long time to get funding to cover her work – **sportscotland** agreed to fund this initially and they’ve found money from elsewhere to cover payment up until September 2015. She explained that from experience, SGBs need this expertise in their organisations and it should get more recognition.
- 8) Jen Pearson (Scottish Cycling) asked the panel – do you think the dominance of bigger sports is partly due to lack of investment in communications roles? Would more investment in roles like this get the right stories out there?
- a) Susan Swarbrick said that it definitely helps to have roles like this in place.
- a) Sharon Mair suggested that a contact within SGBs does really help for a more collaborative way of working.

- 9) Grant Jarvie (University of Edinburgh) asked – how do we get more money to achieve media ambitions in sport? He suggested that dedicated, qualified journalists are what we need, so how do we get that? He noted that he is concerned about the decline of the likes of BBC Alba.
- a) Richard Haynes replied, explaining that there are now more media outlets than ever before. He saw an opportunity for Scottish broadcasters to open up to coverage of lots of different sports. It's important to remember that increasingly viewers are watching via the internet.
- 10) Marjory Crooks (Edinburgh College) noted the huge shift in media coverage to online platforms. As a college they are inundated with people who want students to cover their events. She highlighted that a lot of media staff (around 83%) for the Games came from outside Scotland.
- a) Richard Haynes replied saying that there was huge potential for well-trained young people to work with organisations – if the resources are available to create quality output then this is definitely an opportunity.
- 11) James Wilson (Glasgow College) explained that Glasgow College was lucky to have 40 students work for the host broadcaster. He believes that the technical education that college provides makes for great workers. He asked the panel – how can we make better use of our student and college resources to assist in covering sports events?
- a) Sharon Mair replied, asking what the reaction is like when you encourage students to engage with sports bodies.
- a) David Ferguson (Sporta Scotland) explained that there are sponsors out there – e.g. companies like Strathmore - who want to engage in sport and may be able to help fund projects like this.

In conclusion, Liz Smith MSP asked all panel members - if there was one thing that'd make the biggest improvement to Scottish sport media coverage, what would it be?

- a) Richard Haynes said it would be sports having a greater say in editorial decision making, in order to broaden the coverage of sport
- a) Sharon Mair said it would be to hold more events like the Active Academy as this was very effective in engaging the 16-18 age bracket
- a) Maggie Ritchie said it would be for every SGB to have a PR staff member
- a) Susan Swarbrick said it would be to increase diversity and female coverage in sport media.

Liz Smith MSP thanked all speakers and attendees for their contributions. She indicated the date of the next meeting as **Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May** – the topic being “Realising the Benefits of Sport/Being Active for Health”.

*The Cross Party Group on Sport is co-convened by Alison Johnstone MSP & Liz Smith MSP.  
It is jointly administered by the offices of these MSPs and the Scottish Sports Association.*