

Nicola Sturgeon
First Minister
Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Sent via email to: firstminister@gov.scot

30 July 2020

Dear First Minister,

Safely Making Scotland Active Again

We are writing to you as the forum for the Chief Executive Officers of Scotland's Governing Bodies of Sport. We recognise the exceptional and challenging situation that Scotland collectively finds itself in, due to the global health pandemic (COVID-19), and the difficult decisions that you have the responsibility to take.

We wish to work in partnership with you and your ministers to collectively and positively overcome the challenges confronting us as a result of the current public health emergency. Since day one Scottish Governing Bodies of Sport (SGB), along with our wider partners - including leisure trusts - have been committed to playing our part, to suppress the spread of the virus, to actively support the national guidance on staying physically active, and above all to protect and save lives.

sportscotland

We are indebted to **sportscotland** - the national agency for sport - for their consistent support to SGBs, since the very start of the current crisis, within the finite resources available to them.

Thanks to their continued support, including accelerated investment at the start of the financial year, our SGB member Clubs are collectively ready to start delivering again in local communities across the country.

The reality is that 'sport-in-Scotland' is more than just 'sport' (or even physical activity) and effectively contributes significantly to the nation through (although not exclusively):

- Contributing to effective learners;
- Equality and inclusion;
- Mental health and wellbeing;
- Social inclusion;
- Tackling obesity;
- The health and wellbeing of the Scottish Nation and;
- Women and Girls in Sport.

Sport and Leisure Facilities

But for all of Scotland's sporting community - which in terms of the membership of all our clubs extends to around one million of our fellow citizens - none of this contribution can be achieved without access to sporting/leisure facilities, the vast majority of these within Scotland being Local Authority managed.

Without access to facilities – both indoor and outdoor, wet and dry – our member Clubs cannot function and cannot contribute to the recovery that the whole of Scotland so desperately wants and needs. Indeed the harsh reality is that without access to facilities soon, many clubs across many sports may not return at all. If this were to happen it would represent a great loss to the fabric of Scottish society.

Facility operators across the spectrum (public, private and education) have lost significant revenue in recent months and with physical distancing here for the foreseeable future, there is a growing concern that even if facilities are able to open, our clubs will not be able to access sufficient facilities to be operationally or financially viable.

The SGBs are committed to ensuring that sport is delivered in a safe environment in line with the latest public health guidance. We want to continue playing our part in this recovery but with no route map in place for the re-opening of venues there is a risk that:

- Clubs will close - as a result, jobs will be lost;
- People will disengage from sport and physical activity;
- The health of the nation – whether physical or mental – will be negatively impacted;
- The leadership in sport will be affected as the work of SGBs and our strategic partners will no longer be viable – thereby undoing all the positive societal impact made over the last few years;
- The community support element of these facilities and the role clubs play in achieving the Active Scotland outcomes will cease.

Performance Sport

There is also a symbiotic relationship between grassroots sport and our performance athletes. Our performance athletes are the role models to inspire young people to participate in sport and showcase Scotland internationally. They in turn have all been nurtured in a flourishing grassroots sports environment here in Scotland. Local Authority/Trust facilities represent the bedrock on which the majority of Scotland's competitive performances on the Commonwealth, European, World and Olympic/Paralympic stage have been built.

The majority of Scottish athletes with aspirations to compete successfully at the re-scheduled Tokyo 2020 Olympic & Paralympic Games and also the forthcoming Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games will be reliant on the early and sustained access to facilities under Local Authority/Trust management.

Request for Support

We would therefore request that the Scottish Government gives serious consideration to the early public announcement of:

- An indicative date for the return of Local Authority sport/leisure provision and;
- Confirmation of additional financial support - ring-fenced - and directly to leisure trusts, to ensure facilities are able to operate in a socially distanced environment and deliver the sporting and physical opportunities critical to the continued social and economic recovery from the virus within Scotland.

- A commitment to working with SGBs in identifying solutions to accessing alternative training and competition space for Clubs where significant barriers continue to be faced (e.g. as a result of venue closures, re-purposing of space for other activities, loss of access to school facilities).

We are committed to continuing to work with the Scottish Government, **sportscotland**, Leisure Trusts and facility operators to progress plans to open venues and restart sport at the earliest and safest opportunity.

However we need clarity on timescales, operational constraints and additional funding support for the venues to be able to mobilise our member Clubs to provide sport and physical activity opportunities in every community in Scotland.

For and on behalf of the SGB CEO Forum and the undernoted individual SGB CEO's.

Vincent Bryson

Interim Chair, SGB CEO Forum

Cc: Jeane Freeman MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport

Joe FitzPatrick MSP, Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing

Andrew Sinclair, Head of Active Scotland

Professor Jason Leitch, National Clinical Director - Healthcare Quality & Strategy

Mel Young MBE, Chair, **sportscotland**

Stewart Harris, CEO, **sportscotland**

Individual SGB CEO's:

Badminton Scotland; Basketball Scotland; Bowls Scotland; Canoe Scotland; Cricket Scotland; Handball Scotland; JudoScotland; Mountaineering Scotland; Netball Scotland; Royal Yachting Association Scotland; Scotland Rugby League, Scottish Archery; Scottish Athletics; Scottish Curling, Scottish Cycling; Scottish Disability Sport; Scottish Fencing; Scottish Gymnastics; Scottish Hockey; Scottish Orienteering; Scottish Pentathlon; Scottish Rowing; Scottish Squash; Scottish Student Sport; Scottish Swimming; Scottish Target Shooting; Scottish Volleyball; Snowsport Scotland; Tennis Scotland; The Camanachd Association; Triathlon Scotland; Waterskiing & Wakeboard Scotland;