

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 06 January 2008 20:31
To: DCAL Sport
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: NI STRATEGY FOR SPORT & PHYSICAL RECREATION 2007 - 2017: RESPONSE

6 Jan 08

To: DCAL (from: D CALvert!)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on subject draft strategy. I shall stray a little from the specific questions (1 to 7) that you invite answers to, and endeavour to keep my comments brief! I have 3 points to mention at the outset:

I comment from the perspective of a 'mature' but still active athlete, who continues to enjoy participation and competition (having represented NI in the past 8 Commonwealth Games) and who has also tasted and enjoyed success in team and individual events (e.g. 4 gold medals for NI in the past 4 Commonwealth Games).

You will therefore perhaps forgive me for expressing some disappointment that the draft strategy includes no mention or reference to one of our most successful sports - that of target shooting and its various disciplines. I do fully support the encouragement and development of physical exercise and competition, but would emphasise that the mental aspects of the less physical sports have a significant role to play in the general health of the individual and their involvement with, and contribution to, the wider community. In particular, such less physical disciplines may encourage some of the less well represented groups we wish to attract; e.g. the disabled, elderly and all those, male & female of all ages, who for reasons of genetics or circumstance, do not fit easily into the standard PR & competition stereotype.

Let us by all means use the 2012 Olympics to inspire an enhanced awareness of sport but beware it distracting from developing and encouraging sport in NI. We are NI and, whilst part of UK, are also part of the island of Ireland. Politically sensitive I know, but all the more reason, perhaps, to keep a closer emphasis on sport and PR in NI and to emphasise NI representation as a major aspiration. Remember that to many, London is seen as somewhat remote.

Having said the above, let me say that I find the draft strategy comprehensive and exciting and the concept has my full support. I would highlight its vision of "a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport" as something I can particularly identify with and support.

The paper talks of "increased participation leading to enhanced performance". For this link to work it needs culture or ethos as the enabler. I appreciate that this is alluded to in the paper but needs to be kept at the forefront. In particular, this ethos or culture change has to be introduced most importantly, at school, or more correctly to children of school age both at school and/or in the local community; I think the paper could be even more ambitious in the aims of children's involvement in sport & recreation (in both hours per week and timescales). Such involvement, and the associated cultural change, will bring parents, family and the wider community along with it. Incidentally, the aim to increase participation in groups such as the elderly is particularly ambitious in an ageing population - but will be helped by a cultural change at the grass roots (children!).

I thought the "cost of doing nothing" was an inspired statistic! £1 per head for sport as opposed to £886 per head for health care (if I correctly interpreted the data) argues for the financial balance to be addressed. The problem is that the benefits of investment in the strategy will not be seen immediately -but politicians and enablers must have confidence and belief. Good luck!

I hope the above will be of some interest and use.

David Calvert.