

# **EXTENDING OPPORTUNITIES: A CONSERVATIVE POLICY PAPER ON SPORT**



# Contents

A Conservative approach to sport	4
Labour's record	5
Finance & Structure	6
Elite and High Performance Sport	7
The London 2012 Olympics	8
Community Sport	9
School Sport	10
Conclusions	11



## Foreword

The Conservative Party believes in sport as a means to improve lives. All the evidence suggests that people who play sport perform better at work or at school and are happier, healthier and more socially cohesive. So the sports mission of a future Conservative Government is simple. We want to extend the opportunities available through sport to the maximum number of people – and are prepared to be judged on that basis.

This report is an important indicator of our direction of travel, and follows on from previous work done by the Carter Report, the Moynihan/Hoey Independent Sports Review and Sport Think Tank’s ‘Towards a Better Future for Youth Sport’. It is also the result of over a thousand visits done by the Shadow Sport and Olympics team to sports bodies and organisations in this country and abroad – most particularly in Canada and Australia.

Our policies have moved on from the 2005 General Election not least because Conservative proposals on the reform of Sport England and the creation of an independent anti doping agency have been adopted by the Government. We have also, necessarily, been influenced by the current economic conditions and the realisation that the next Parliament will be dominated, in sports terms, by London 2012 and the 2018 Football World Cup bid.

If you have any views on how to help us achieve our goals, please get in contact with Nicola Sheldon on [sheldonn@parliament.uk](mailto:sheldonn@parliament.uk) or write to us at House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

**Hugh Robertson MP**  
Shadow Sports and Olympics Minister

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Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

# 1: A Conservative approach to sport

The Conservative party believes in sport both as an end in itself and a means to achieve a better society. In particular, young people who play sport tend to be happier, healthier, more socially cohesive and perform better academically<sup>1</sup>. **Extending the opportunities available through sport to the maximum number of people** will be the key policy objective of future Conservative sports policy.

As a result, the Shadow sports team has spent the past three years scouring the country, and the world, looking for new ideas and policies.

Research carried out by the Shadow sports team has identified four key themes that inform a successful sports policy:

- 1. Efficient delivery mechanisms.** In order to achieve desired outcomes, sports policy needs efficient delivery mechanisms. Conservatives would use Sport National Governing Bodies to drive improvements in sport.
- 2. Empowering Local Communities.** Unless local sports networks are nurtured and expanded, central government initiatives, however worthy, will always flounder. Rather than drive policy by centrally imposed, top down targets, Conservatives will encourage local communities to develop their own sports offer.
- 3. Cutting Bureaucracy.** Volunteers are crucial to the delivery of community sport in this country but have been deterred by the vast increase in bureaucracy affecting sport over the past decade, which has strangled innovation and enterprise. Conservatives would put light touch regulation at the heart of sports policy and use streamlined structures to cut the administrative overload.
- 4. Reducing the Dependency Culture** Conservatives believe that the private sector has a key role to play in developing sport, in partnership with exchequer and lottery funding. We will take the necessary action to stimulate private sector investment rather than leaving sport to wait for public sector handouts.

We also favour initiatives rewarding individual enterprise and endeavour such as the Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC) scheme. We will look to build on this as soon as economic conditions allow.

## 2: Labour's record

Labour's record on sport has been mixed. While the period since 1997 has seen the successful bid for London 2012, the development of a new strategy for elite sport and a reorganisation of school sport, there have also been significant areas of failure:

- National Lottery funding for sport has been cut from £397 million in 1997 to £209 million in 2006<sup>2</sup>. Sport would have received significantly greater amounts of money if the National Lottery had been kept to the original remit laid out by John Major's government and not raided for ministerial pet projects.
- Over one third of eleven year olds are now either overweight or obese<sup>3</sup>.
- According to the School Sport survey 2007/08, 10 per cent of children are still not getting the basic two hours of sport and PE – and these figures are only compiled from schools in a school sport partnership who responded to the survey.
- Compared with our European counterparts, participation rates, club membership and post school drop out rates are amongst the worst in Europe<sup>4</sup>.
- In his March 2006 Budget, Gordon Brown promised £600m for elite athlete funding over the London 2012 cycle and UK Sport, correctly, planned on that basis. However, the full funding never materialised leaving many of the smaller sports facing vastly reduced funding settlements in front of a home Olympics.
- The Government has yet to deliver any coherent plans on delivering the community sports legacy promised during the bid for the 2012 Games. Labour's one proposal is to offer free swimming for over-60 year olds and an "aspiration" to offer free swimming to under-16s. Conservative research has revealed funding gaps in both these plans with many councils declining to be involved<sup>5</sup>.
- Bureaucracy has increased dramatically – deterring volunteers and strangling innovation. The DCMS Select Committee has estimated that The Licensing Act 2003 alone lost sports clubs over £2.6 million in its first year of operation<sup>6</sup>.
- Sport has become more party politicised with Labour party members favoured for key Chairmanships and both too many politicians, and a severe party political imbalance, on the 2018 World Cup bid board.

## **3: Finance and Structure**

### **1) National Lottery**

Conservatives will:

- a) Return the National Lottery to its four original pillars – sport, the arts, heritage and charities/voluntary bodies (now represented by the Big Lottery Fund).
- b) Look to drive down the administrative costs of the lottery distributors by reducing bureaucracy.
- c) Consider moving to a gross profits tax system, subject to an agreement with Camelot that would protect Treasury revenues against any downside. Camelot and PWC have estimated that this new regime would result in an average increased return to the good causes of £45.4m per year.

### **2) Structure**

Sport is unique in its ability to reach across a number of government departments. The DCMS, DCSF, DoH, DCLG and Home Office all administer major sports or exercise programmes. The MOD, FCO and DfID also have sports interests.

Conservatives would create a cross-departmental Cabinet Office Committee on sport, based on the Australian Sports Commission, to streamline the delivery of sport and act as a champion for sport in government.

### **3) World leading ‘one stop shop’ for sport**

Conservatives endorse the work done by UK Sport and the Youth Sport Trust in elite sport and school sport respectively and support the recent change of strategy at Sport England, which we have previously advocated. While we would not want to disrupt preparations for London 2012, the logical next step is to bring the three organisations together under one roof, with three separate divisions covering elite/high performance sport, community sport and school sport.

This ‘one stop shop’ for sport would encourage the pursuit of excellence and develop a fully integrated sports system from grass roots to elite level. A single body would encourage greater dialogue between the different areas of sport and ensure an efficient delivery mechanism across the sporting spectrum.

## **4: Elite and High Performance Sport**

### **1) Attracting World Class Events**

We congratulate Team GB on their outstanding performance in Beijing and want to build on these successes by driving a decade of world class events including London 2012, Glasgow 2014, Cricket Rugby and Rugby League World Cups and the 20/20 World Cup. Conservatives fully support the 2018 Football World Cup bid although we have serious concerns about the political bias, and absolute number, of politicians on the bid board.

All these events require broadly similar cross departmental action. Conservatives would introduce a cross government compact that would deliver permanent commitments on security, taxation, visas, bans on ticket touting, betting and broadcasting rights for major sports events.

We believe that this would help attract world class sports tournaments to this country with all the revenue and enjoyment that they provide.

### **2) Sport Dispute Resolution**

Too many sports disputes currently involve costly and lengthy litigation. Conservatives would put an independent dispute service, based on Sports Resolution UK, onto a statutory basis - making it credible and effective in helping to tackle anti doping and child protection cases.

### **3) Anti Doping**

Conservatives have always supported the creation of a fully independent anti doping agency.

We therefore, fully endorse the creation of the National Anti Doping Organisation (NADO) in April 2009 and want to see the UK become a world leader in the fight against drugs. If it proves necessary, we are prepared to make drug taking in sport a criminal offence.

## 5. The London 2012 Olympics

Conservatives have always supported London 2012 and Hugh Robertson accompanied the Bid team to Singapore, took the resulting legislation through Parliament and has been closely involved in the project at every stage.

In government, we would:-

- Deliver the Games on time and within budget.
- Work with The Mayor to deliver a proper legacy for the Olympic Park. We will also support the initiatives taken by his Commissioner for Sport, Kate Hoey MP, to drive a genuine grassroots legacy for sport in London on the back of the 2012 Games. We will encourage other local authorities to develop similar schemes.
- Work with the British Olympic Association to ensure that each Olympic sport sees a tangible benefit from London 2012 and that, commensurate with their training commitments, Olympic athletes are available to go out into schools to inspire young people about the Olympic Games.
- Work with the National Lottery distributors to establish a community sports fund as a key part of the London 2012 legacy. This will enable local people and community sports clubs to match money raised locally to improve their sports facilities.
- Amend firearms legislation to ensure the UK target pistol shooters can train and compete in this country. This will end the absurd situation where we use public money to support athletes to train abroad in an activity banned in this country.

## **6: Community Sport**

### **1) The National Lottery**

Conservatives will return The National Lottery to its four original pillars and use the extra money to drive increases in sport participation.

### **2) Sport England**

Sport England has had a miserable experience over the past ten years with constant political interference and changes of direction. Conservatives support the new NGB-centred, Sport England strategy, which we advocated three years ago, and want to use it to drive increases in the number of people playing sport.

We particularly favour the new emphasis on delivery through sport national governing bodies, the resurrection of Sportsmatch, the new concentration on leveraging money from the private sector and the ability to support community groups active in grassroots sport.

### **3) Volunteers**

Volunteers are key to the delivery of sport but are deterred by the increases in bureaucracy seen in recent years.

Conservatives would use the new Cabinet Office Committee on sport to seek derogations from the unintended consequences of new regulations imposed by other departments.

We would also introduce the principle of 'portability' to Criminal Records Bureau checks, thus reducing the need for constant reapplications.

### **4) Coaches**

Conservatives recognise that coaches are key to the improvement of grassroots sport provision.

We will work with Sports Coach UK and the national governing bodies to deliver a world class coaching system.

### **5) Enhancing the CASC Scheme**

Once economic conditions allow, Conservatives will work with the Treasury and seek to enhance the CASC Scheme. We aspire to incentivise clubs by introducing gift aid relief on junior sports club subscriptions.

We will also consider granting corporation tax relief to sport national governing bodies on the condition that they reinvest the proceeds into grassroots sports development.

### **6) Community sport**

Conservatives endorse the work done by the Football Foundation in recent years to develop grassroots facilities. We will work with the National Lottery bodies to deliver a community sports fund as part of the London 2012 legacy.

Conservatives will also take steps to open up school sports facilities after school hours to develop club/school links and help local communities.

## 7: School Sport

The school environment provides the majority of children with their first experiences of sport. This experience is likely to govern their approach to sport for the rest of their lives.

Conservatives support the work done by the Youth Sport Trust in encouraging young people to become active but recognise there are still weaknesses. For example:

- Nearly one million school children do not receive the basic two hours of sport and PE each week<sup>7</sup>.
- Obesity rates have spiralled over the last decade with one third of ten year olds either overweight or obese<sup>8</sup>.
- Post school drop off rates, particularly amongst girls, are some of the worst in Europe<sup>9</sup>.
- Many school sports facilities remain unused after school hours.

Conservatives would seek to move school sport forward by prioritising the following areas:

- Conservatives would reform the UK School Games with a new inter-school competition based around individual schools. The current competition is based around children who are already elite athletes.
- Place competition at the forefront of school sport by encouraging all schools to develop inter-school fixtures. We would follow through existing proposals to create a National School Sports website that would host school sport league tables. This would allow children to compare and track performances, results and encourage healthy competition amongst young people<sup>10</sup>.
- Emphasise primary school provision on the basis that habits adopted by 7-11 year olds remain with them for the rest of their lives.
- As part of a wider review of teacher training, we will examine the inadequate amount of physical education training undertaken. The Association for Physical Education estimate that at least 40% of primary trainee teachers have six hours or less preparation to teach physical education in schools.
- Concentrate on improving the links between schools and sports clubs to improve the sports offered in the extended school day and beyond.
- Open up school sports facilities to the local community.
- Re-examine Building Schools for the Future to see how sports provision can be enhanced.

## 8: Conclusions

Conservatives will:

- Return The National Lottery to its four original pillars and consider moving to a gross profits tax system releasing more money for sport.
- Create a new Cabinet Office cross departmental sports body to reduce bureaucracy and act as a champion for sport in government.
- Draw up a cross departmental compact to attract world class sports events to the UK and support World Cup bids such as 2018.
- Examine options to bring together UK Sport, Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust under one roof to create a world leading ‘one stop shop’ for sport.
- Deliver the 2012 Olympics on time and within budget – with a proper legacy for community sport.
- Support the creation of an independent anti-doping agency and put sport dispute resolution on a statutory basis.
- Drive increases in mass participation through the reformed Sport England and national governing bodies using the extra money released by reform of the National Lottery.
- Prioritise primary school sport provision and competition, links between schools and clubs and opening up school sports facilities after hours.

<sup>1</sup> For example, see research such as: Carter, P. (2005) *The Carter Report: Review of national sport effort and resources*, Sturm, R. & Wells, K.B. (2001) Does obesity contribute as much to morbidity as poverty or smoking? *Public Health*, 115: 229-235 and Sabo, D.F., Miller, K.E., Farrell, M.P., Melnick, M.J. & Barnes, G.M. (1999) High school athletic participation, sexual behaviour and adolescent pregnancy: a regional study, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 25(3): 173.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 25 June 2007, Col.49 WA.

<sup>3</sup> *National Child Measurement Programme: 2006/07 school year, headline results*, DoH and DCSF, June 2008.

<sup>4</sup> *EU Sports Office Survey*, September 2007.

<sup>5</sup> See press releases: *Hunt: Labour's big swimming splash is belly-flopping* (29, October 2008) and *Government Olympic legacy plans unravel as councils warn of funding shortfall* (15 September 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Central Council for Physical Recreation, July 2006.

<sup>7</sup> *Hansard*, 29 January 2008, Col 254W.

<sup>8</sup> *National Child Measurement Programme: 2006/07 school year, headline results*, DoH and DCSF, June 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Sport England, *Active People Survey 16-85*, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference\\_library/minister\\_speeches/5184.aspx](http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/minister_speeches/5184.aspx)





