OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

Tuesday 18 April 2023

Session 6

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Tuesday 18 April 2023

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HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

13th Meeting 2023, Session 6

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
*Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con)
*Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP)
*Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green)
*Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab)
*David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
*Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP)
*Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Priyanaz Chatterji
Lee Craigie (The Adventure Syndicate)
Eilidh Doyle (Scottish Athletics)
Gemma Fay
Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP) (Committee Substitute)
Connie Ramsay

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Alex Bruce

LOCATION

The Sir Alexander Fleming Room (CR3)

Scottish Parliament

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

Tuesday 18 April 2023

[The Deputy Convener opened the meeting at 09:00]

Interests

The Deputy Convener (Paul O'Kane): Good morning, and welcome to the 13th meeting in 2023 of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee. I have not received any apologies for today's meeting.

You will notice that the former convener is not here. She has been appointed to a ministerial role, so she can no longer convene the committee. I am sure that colleagues will join me in wishing Gillian Martin well in her ministerial role and thanking her for her service to the committee. I will convene the committee until we have a new convener in place.

We are joined by Clare Haughey as a substitute member, and our first agenda item today is to ask her to declare any interests that are relevant to the committee's remit.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): I declare that I am a mental health nurse and am currently registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

The Deputy Convener: Thank you.

Decision on Taking Business in Private

09:01

The Deputy Convener: The second item on the agenda is for the committee to decide whether to take item 5 in private. Do members agree to do so?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Female Participation in Sport and Physical Activity

09:01

The Deputy Convener: The third item on our agenda is the fourth evidence session in our inquiry into female participation in sport and physical activity. This session will focus on elite sport.

I am delighted to welcome to the committee Eilidh Doyle, retired track and field athlete and member of the board of directors of Scottish Athletics; Gemma Fay, retired international footballer; and Connie Ramsay, retired Commonwealth judo champion. Joining us remotely, and also very welcome, are Priyanaz Chatterji, international cricketer, and Lee Craigie, retired professional mountain bike racer and director of the Adventure Syndicate.

We move straight to questions. I will start by asking about an issue that is fundamental to a lot of what we will be discussing: money and the finances that are involved in support for elite sport. My question is for every witness. Is there sufficient funding in your sport for professional and aspiring female athletes to train and compete, and, if not, what can be done about that?

Eilidh Doyle (Scottish Athletics): People in my sport are quite fortunate in that, when they reach a certain level, they get United Kingdom funding. Throughout my career, which spanned 12 years, I received funding from UK Sport. That amounted to a basic salary, as it were, which allowed me to be a full-time athlete. It is also possible for athletes to access sponsorship deals and so on, which can help.

In athletics, the situation is fairly set in stone: people know what they have to achieve to get a certain level of funding, and that is the same for men and women, so there is no disparity in that regard. The same goes for events. I would say that I come from a luckier sport than others, as everything is pretty straightforward.

Gemma Fay: Football is an interesting sport. The professionalisation of the men's game took place in the late 1800s and women's football was, in effect, banned in Scotland from after the first world war until 1972. Looking comparatively—I am trying to do the maths—women's football is probably about 80 years behind the male professional game, and, within that time, there was a build-up of several things that have resulted in the male professional game that we see today.

On the professionalisation of the women's game, there are two parts to the issue. You mentioned money, deputy convener—that is one part. There is a bit before that, however, which involves infrastructure, the building of the product, the training opportunities that enable someone to become a professional athlete, access to training infrastructure and good-quality coaches who know how to progress people, and the ability to have enough time to rest and recover properly.

In my experience—I can speak only from my experience—when I started playing international football, I first got into the senior team when I was 15. I retired when I was 35. It probably took 15 or 16 of those years to get to a point at which people started to take women's football seriously. That is not just a challenge for sport—it is a societal challenge. It is naive to think that sport can, in any way, shape or form, supersede society's attitudes to women and women in sport. When we see a change in attitudes to women in society, we will see a change in attitudes to women in sport.

When I retired, I was a professional athlete—not in this country, but in Iceland. In order for me to do that, I had to take a sabbatical from my full-time job. Prior to that, in Scotland, I dropped my hours down to part time to allow me to be as professional as I could be.

If you were to ask me now whether it is possible for a woman to be a professional footballer in Scotland and to be recompensed for being a professional footballer to a level that allows them to not work, the answer would be yes, but there is not enough of it. There are still clubs out there that operate in the top league that I would deem to be semi-professional because they earn more than it costs them to train, but there are definitely clubs that invest in their women's teams, which allows the women to be professional footballers.

That being said, I would argue that most business models still rely on the men's game to bring in money to seed fund the women's game, as one would a start-up. We are not yet in a place in which women's sport pays for women's sport. That is not where we want to be, but it is the reality of where we are because of how long it has taken to get women's sport to where it should be.

Connie Ramsay: Judo is funded at the UK level, and we are also supported by the sportscotland institute of sport. As Eilidh Doyle said, funding also depends on how well you are doing. If someone is achieving a certain level, they will get more funding.

There is not really a sponsorship side to judo. If someone receives a medal at the Olympics or the worlds, they might get something but, apart from that, there is no sponsorship in judo. We do not ever hear about it or see it, which is quite scary when you consider the success of judo at the Rio Olympic games, where we got a bronze medal, and in London, where we won a bronze and a

gold. Two of the athletes who won in Rio and London trained in Scotland.

To get funding, you have to go to the national training centre in Walsall. It was difficult for someone like me, who comes from Tain in the north of Scotland, to travel all the way down to Walsall and change my whole lifestyle, when I had already moved to Edinburgh to train, in order to get funding. However, the funding is there. UK Sport is very good at funding people, but I do not know whether it is enough to keep pushing people and to allow them to decide what they want to do with their career. They still have to decide whether to head down that line or whether to self-fund to win medals before they then get funding. It is a bit of a mixed bag.

The Deputy Convener: Priyanaz Chatterji, you can go next, if you can hear us.

Priyanaz Chatterji: I was just waiting to be unmuted.

Cricket has largely been amateur for a long time. Things are slowly starting to change but, from what I have heard from other witnesses, I would say that we are probably still quite far behind. This month is the first time that any of the women have received contracts, which are part time—most of them are for one day a week. We obviously have to work in other jobs to support ourselves.

To echo what Gemma Fay said, I went part time at work to fit in my training, but that was at a cost to myself. A lot of players go elsewhere for playing opportunities, and more payment sometimes comes with those opportunities. Players have gone and played in England, New Zealand and other places around the world. That is not just about the payment; it is about getting access to the infrastructures that enable you to develop as a player. I am echoing things that have already been said, but there is a need for access to training facilities, training opportunities, good-quality coaches and match opportunities.

Match opportunities are a massive factor for us. Our international fixture schedule is not great. It is far behind a lot of other countries that are of similar ranking to us. When you look at where Scotland's women are ranked in the world, you find that we are the only country within the top 15 or so countries that did not have contracts in place. There are a lot of challenges that we are trying to overcome.

Lee Craigie (The Adventure Syndicate): Like many of the other sports, cycling is publicly funded. Scottish Cycling sits neatly under British Cycling.

When I was racing professionally, there was always money around and there was a real opportunity to operate full time in the run-up to the Commonwealth games that were being hosted in Scotland. There was a real drive to put money and resource behind Scottish sport in particular, so we drew a little bit more money up from the south than we would normally have had. However, in the preparation years to get to that point, it was very similar to what the other witnesses have said.

I lived in the Highlands of Scotland, too, and did an awful lot of travel to the south, which, fortunately, Scottish Cycling was able to help me with. However, it was only in the year before the Commonwealth games that I was able to go full time and that was only as a result of commercial sponsorship. That is a really different story in mountain biking in particular. There is money in the bike industry to pay people to ride bikes. There is a lot of sponsorship available but, if you are a woman, the rules are different for attracting that kind of commercial sponsorship—or they were when I was racing.

I was very lucky, but I speak from a place of privilege. I had a partner who would travel with me and who supported me financially. That was the only way that I could do it. When I was at events, especially when I was travelling down south to try to qualify for the Commonwealth games and travelling abroad, it was obvious that I looked like everybody else. Everybody else who was there doing the sort of stuff that I was doing looked like me. People who could not afford to do it were simply not there. Therefore, although the sport was funded, it was still people like me who had those opportunities.

The Deputy Convener: Thank you very much for those contributions. That was an interesting insight into the challenges and opportunities in funding.

A number of you touched on your journeys into professional and elite sport. I will explore that a wee bit. What challenges do young women and girls experience in trying to access those pathways and being sustained on them? What further action could be taken to support them?

Gemma Fay, do you want to comment? You spoke a bit about your pathway.

Gemma Fay: The information that I will give about my journey does not necessarily play into where we are today in football.

I will speak about a number of things. The first point is geographical. I grew up in Perth. I was fortunate that there was a girls football team there, but the local league that we played in had teams from Dunfermline up to Stonehaven.

I grew up in a single-parent family with my mum and five kids, so it was a financial challenge. It was a challenge to afford for me to go and play in

matches or to afford football boots. Affording football boots is more of a challenge today than it was then because the price that you pay for such things is extortionate.

When I graduated out of age-graded play, the challenge was to find a senior team at my level and one that I was able to afford to play for, because travel expenses were not a thing back then. When I was 15, I used to get the train to play up in Aberdeen. I also played for Ayr United while living in Perth. I would get back at 1 o'clock in the morning on a Friday and then go to school.

09:15

That was my experience of trying to access the sport that I loved at a level at which I would be given an opportunity to progress. I do not think that those challenges are as apparent today, but there definitely will be challenges. One of those is the same as that in the male game. As you professionalise the sport, the challenge for people in getting into academy teams and so on is in terms of those who are good enough to access the opportunity versus those who are not.

One issue is the cost of equipment. Another issue is the cost to access a facility, if you are in a club that will not pay for your training or the facilities and so on.

If I was to equate somebody with how I grew up, they would be from a single-parent family, with more than two or three siblings, who all want to do a sporting activity, all require equipment and are all growing. There is also peer-group pressure to look and be a certain way in that environment. Then, all of a sudden, you need to access different facilities all over the place and the ability to do so might depend on where you are. If you are lucky enough to live in the central belt, you might have more opportunities than those who live in rural communities and a greater ability to access them. If you are a talented athlete, you will perhaps rely on others to support you on that journey, to give you the opportunity.

As far as the Scottish sporting system is concerned, it is interesting, because we have people who are from the north of Scotland. From a football perspective—as someone who currently works for Scottish Rugby, I know that this is the case in rugby as well—many of the challenges lie in finding suitably qualified and experienced individuals in areas outwith the central belt who can provide the same services and opportunities.

Some fantastic partnerships and opportunities exist—for example, in Inverness, through the University of the Highlands and Islands—but it is a challenge to provide opportunities to individuals in a relatively accessible locale that will support them on the journey to becoming a professional or international athlete.

Those are some of the challenges that I faced that youngsters might not face now, depending on their socioeconomic background or on accessibility not just to the right level of coaching, but to the right facilities that will support them in their development.

The Deputy Convener: Thank you. I will bring in my colleague Paul Sweeney, who has some questions on this theme.

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): Thank you for your insights into the quite different economics behind each of the sports. As a follow-up to your points about income and precarity in different sports, what would good look like for you in your particular sport? What would that perfect balance look like? What business model would the sport need to use to achieve that? Do you have any insights as to where it needs to move to? I ask Gemma Fay to kick us off.

Gemma Fay: That is a challenging one. Let us take football as an example. Each club has its own unique business model. I do not think that we should compare ourselves with England, which I know is a popular thing to do, especially in women's football when we see the success of the Lionesses and the Women's Super League down south. However, in England, there is an ability to dive into the pockets of the Football Association, which struck a deal with broadcasters more than 40 or 50 years ago. That it is one of the richest FAs, and the Professional Footballers' Association is one of the richest such associations in the world—if not the richest. The same deals do not exist in Scotland. The broadcasting rights that come into the male game do not touch the sides.

You cannot necessarily marry the model of investment that is used down south to women's football here. By the way, it has taken 25 years for that to materialise into what we see now. Therefore, you must do what is right for Scottish football and what is right for women's football in Scotland.

What we do in the women's game does not have to be what we do in the men's game—in any sport, whether it is team based or for individuals. I have always been and continue to be an advocate for that position. It must be what is right for the sport at this moment in time, given the context in which we are working.

You could go down the line of arguing that, historically, we have underfunded women's sport for 80 years, so we should level everything up. However, you cannot ignore the fact that most of the funding that comes into sport, such as rugby or football, comes through the male avenue.

Boards and leaders must make conscious decisions about two things. First, we have underinvested in 50 per cent of the population. Secondly, there is a business opportunity to develop an untapped market. I would not use the word “ideologies”, but those two things should play into people’s thoughts about the situation. There is a massive opportunity for sport and business. We should not forget that many sports are businesses and that that is how they have to operate. There are also moral and social reasons to do this.

The current business models rely on sports actively deciding to use money that comes into the sport, primarily through the male route, to invest in providing opportunities in the women’s and girls’ games. Diversity within our games, our clubs and in any committee or board is a positive thing for society and for sport.

The challenge is to find that money without affecting the thing that brings the money in. That is the balance that we have to strike. I would like us to get to a place where the women’s side of the game can pay for itself. It does not have to make a profit, as long as it can pay for itself, so that it is not under threat if anything happens on the male side of the game.

We have seen in the past, in many countries, that a challenge on the male side of the game leads to youth sport and women’s sport being cut first, because those are seen as costs. I like to see them as investments that are made for the right reasons, but there is still a lot of work to do to build the business case. I have not figured that out yet, but it cannot be done alone. The male game is paid for by broadcasting, sponsorship and investors. We need to get broadcasters, sponsors and investors on the same page for the women’s game.

In England, the Women’s Sport Trust has done a lot of work on the potential for growth in women’s sport, and we have seen women’s sport growing in England. We do not have an independent body that does that sort of work in Scotland or that supports us in telling our story. That would be another good thing to have.

Paul Sweeney: That was really powerful. I know that there is a contrast with Olympic and Commonwealth events, which are quite well resourced. Priyanaz Chatterji, do you have a view on what is happening in cricket? We can bring in other witnesses afterwards.

Priyanaz Chatterji: Cricket was not part of the Olympic or Commonwealth games until the most recent round of Commonwealth games, which included women’s cricket. That brought the opportunity for Scotland to go to the Commonwealth qualifiers in January last year and play some more games, which we are desperate to do. It added another four or five fixtures to our schedule for the year, which probably doubled our number of fixtures.

As I said, funding is a massive challenge for our sport. Having more opportunities to play and more funding to enable us to play are key. Cricket has not been part of either of those events until very recently and it does not have the same history in Scotland as some other sports, particularly in the women’s game, but its popularity is growing.

To go back to an earlier question about what it was like growing up and playing cricket as a girl, I am from Dundee and was the only girl at my club when I was growing up, so I played with the boys. I did not mind that or see it as an issue at the time, but I can definitely see that it could be a barrier for girls if there are no other girls in a club. I know that that is changing, but the picture will be different depending on where someone is in the country. I know that there are quite a few girls’ clubs in Edinburgh, but I am not sure whether that is the case across the rest of the country.

Similarly, pathways and opportunities for girls were very limited when I was growing up. I attended regional under-15s training with the boys and was the only girl there. There are now some regional pathways in place, but there is still a lot of work to do.

White clothing is a feature of many sports. It is synonymous with cricket but was not ideal when I was growing up. A girl who is on her period is super nervous that that might show on her cricket whites. Generally, there has been a movement away from wearing whites, and that has been positive.

Again, access to facilities and good coaching was not really there growing up, and I still think that there are lots of improvements to be made in that space.

I am not sure whether you will want to follow that response up with any additional questions—I do not know exactly what you are looking for with your query about the Commonwealth games and the Olympics.

The Deputy Convener: Paul, I know that Sandesh Gulhane has a particular supplementary on this point, so I will bring him now and then come back to you to follow up some of the issues that have been raised.

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): I have a question for Gemma Fay and Priyanaz Chatterji. Gemma, you have talked about business opportunities and money with regard to the male avenue, but I was interested to see that the Indian Premier League has created and is building a women’s game and, as a result, will get sponsorship and other things for it. Is that the type

of model that you were talking about? I would also be interested to hear a cricketer's view of such an approach.

Gemma Fay: Priyanaz Chatterji is probably better placed to talk about that, first of all, although I can jump in with my own perceptions.

Priyanaz Chatterji: The first ever women's IPL has been a massive success, with huge engagement not just across India but globally. That has not come as a surprise to me; after all, we have seen the massive interest in the Hundred in England.

It is reasonable to point out that, in the cricketing context, England and India are massive countries with massive access to money and investment. It is just not the same in Scotland; the numbers of people in Scotland who can engage with the sport are completely different when compared with, say, India.

It is clear that, in India and England, when the women's game has actually been invested in and marketed, there is a massive appetite in people to watch it and in commercial organisations to invest in and sponsor it. However, it is exactly as you have said; you need the governing body or someone to drive that and to put the commercial investment in up front, as that will bring in other commercial opportunities.

I do not know the ins and outs of how these massive events have been put on, how the deals have been struck and so on, but it has been exciting—and slightly vindicating—to see that when sufficient effort has gone into such events, they have turned out to be hugely popular. Moreover, players are going away with life-changing amounts of money; indeed, they are earning more from these events than they are from their national contracts.

It is just one bit of the puzzle. I do not think that anyone who plays cricket in Scotland thinks that they are going to make loads of money out of it, but I wonder whether we can get to a point where all the women who play cricket are able to play it as their job and do not have to balance it with their work or other forms of getting income. We are still very far away from that.

The challenge is what can be done not necessarily to replicate the IPL in Scotland—I do not think that that can be done—but to tap into that interest and those opportunities. I do not know what the answer is, but I also do not know whether enough people are thinking about answers, either. Maybe that is unfair—perhaps they are—but a lot more could be done, and we have to be smart and creative about how we go about doing this in a country such as Scotland.

I would also really welcome some cross-sport collaboration, because some sports are doing a much better job of this than others. From what I have seen, I do not know whether enough learning is being shared or whether there is enough working across the sports to try to do this sort of thing.

09:30

Gemma Fay: Perhaps I can give a little bit of context with regard to the International Cricket Council and the population of India. It is all about mass: if everyone in such a population were to pay a penny, say, you would get a billion. So, the size of a country and the popularity of a sport plays into the infrastructure that can be developed. India has a population of 1 billion, but only one professional league. The International Cricket Council is one of the world's richest governing bodies.

Then we come to Scotland. I work in rugby, so I will take that as an example. We have 3,000 adult women who play rugby in Scotland, but we have no professional clubs. We are trying to establish a semi-professional league, and that requires us to collaborate with our Welsh and Irish partners. We are seeking investment from other bodies. However, the cost of that, just to play seven games in a season, is astronomical.

I go back to the point that was made earlier. First and foremost, we have to develop the infrastructure, quality coaches, quality training and match play opportunities to enable people to develop themselves and to develop the sport. Then in five or 10 years—I am thinking of cricket—we might have something in Scotland that is a product that big investors will come and support. However, if the international team is not getting enough matches right now, it will be difficult to make that happen.

It is a bit of a catch-22 situation. If someone was to say that they wanted to invest money in a certain thing, would the governing body say that it was right for it, right now? It might not; it might say that something else is right. However, the investor might say, "Well, we don't want to invest in that, we want to invest in this thing."

We need to ensure that every governing body has the plan that is right for its sport, depending on where it is starting from and where it wants to go, which takes into consideration all the steps that are required to build towards the professionalisation of a sport. Also, it has to be understood that, just because you pay a player today whom you did not pay yesterday, it does not mean that things will automatically get better. It still takes about 10 years to develop a player. You will not see the results of paying professional

players for five to ten years, depending on the maturity of the system.

In essence, would everyone like to have a professional women's league? Absolutely. Will that automatically change things? No, it will not. People have to understand that. It is not a quick fix. It requires continued investment through an infrastructure over a period of time. Ultimately, the last thing that you do is actually pay players, but now there is pressure to do that first. You will not see the results now—you have to wait. Do investors and Governments have the patience to wait for that investment to bear fruit? That is the challenge.

The Deputy Convener: We will move on to discuss media representation and attitudes in society.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Good morning to everyone in the room—and to the folks online, too.

I am interested in media coverage. A recent BBC survey of elite sportswomen found that media coverage had improved but was still not what it should be.

Gemma Fay: That is a good statement.

Emma Harper: What are your thoughts on that from personal experience? How would you like to see that taken forward?

Eilidh Doyle: For my sport, it is all or nothing: it all gets thrown in when there is a Commonwealth games or the Olympics and there is a big story. Last year, we saw Eilish McColgan winning at the Commonwealth games and that brought a lot of media attention, as did Laura Muir's success at the Olympics in Tokyo. The coverage all happens in the two weeks that a championship is on and then athletics is forgotten about. Obviously, it is current when the championships are going on, but various events go on throughout the whole summer. In Scotland, our back pages and media—everything—is dominated by football throughout the whole year.

Media coverage is better than it was, probably because there are more athletes having success. When I first started my career, we were not winning the medals that we are winning now. It is better, but there is still a lot more that could be done.

If we consider the success that Scottish athletes have had in comparison to, say, male footballers, they should be superstars—what they have done is huge. Yet people do not know who they are; they could walk down the street and nobody would bat an eyelid because people do not know who they are. That situation needs to change. There needs to be more coverage and more exposure of their success, which is huge.

Connie Ramsay: I totally agree that big events such as the Commonwealth games or the Olympics shine much more light on certain sports and that, in the two-year gaps in between, there is not really any attention paid to them. Judo is one of the sports in which Scotland is successful in such events. In the Commonwealth games in Glasgow, Scotland got 13 out of 14 medals, and the coverage was pretty good. However, following that, there was nothing—that was the end of that. Judo player Sarah Adlington, who competes in the over-78kg female category, became a double gold medallist at the Commonwealth games in Birmingham, but there was basically no coverage of her being that successful. Judo should be promoted to, for example, females who might be a little bit larger, because it demonstrates that sport is open to everybody, but there is just not the coverage. When the big events are on, the coverage is good, but apart from that, it is not.

I am not sure of the exact numbers, but we do a lot of judo after-school clubs, breakfast clubs, lunchtime clubs and so on. A lot of kids do judo, but they do not know what the sport looks like, because it is not on the telly, so we have to try to explain it to them or show them video clips, whereas, if the world championships or European championships were on the telly, that would promote the sport and show the kids what it is. Judo is a weight-category sport, so smaller people, larger people, people in the middle and people with every type of female and male body can compete. It is a good sport to demonstrate the fact that sport is open to everybody. However, the only way to communicate that is through the media, and I do not think that the message is out there enough. I am not saying that every judo tournament should be broadcast—some of the ones that I watch are not at the right level for that—but it would be good if even highlights from the major championships could be broadcast, and that would promote sport and take that agenda a little bit further forward.

Emma Harper: I am interested in the use of social media in that regard. For instance, when the Dumfries Ice Bowl recently hosted an ice hockey world championship, I put stuff up on Facebook about the Solway Sharks Ladies ice hockey team. I am interested in Lee Craigie's perspective on that, particularly in relation to the gravel championships, which are not as tough as mountain-biking events but are still pretty tough. What are your thoughts on the use of social media as a way to widen the visibility of women in sport?

Lee Craigie: That is a helpful segue, because I was going to address that issue from a slightly different angle. There is an important point to be made about moving away from the big broadcast events and looking at the power of social media to

change the narrative around where women belong in sport.

To link into the last question about what good looks like, it is tempting to say that good looks like mass public spending so that everyone can participate in sport at a grass-roots level, but the reality is that that is not the case. Especially in cycling, we need to make good, solid and fair connections with the bike industry. A lot of people are trying to sell stuff online, but the sorts of relationships that get established with the bike industry are still very misogynistic. For example, the idea behind the promotion of women in mountain biking online is that people will say, "Oh, she looks good in that," and then go to an online shop where they can buy that item of clothing. If you look at what those brands are selling, you will see that they are selling bikes that are too big for us, equipment that we cannot use because it is unsuitable for our hands, and a range of clothing that is any colour between pink and purple. There is not the range of diversity that lots of different women can tap into.

When it comes to media coverage, we need to address the issue of our commercial partnerships and ensure that those brands understand the importance and the power of diversity. Usually, there is a huge range of stuff for men and a small women's section. There needs to be a similar range for women, so that all different types of women can look at all the different ways of being in sport, particularly in male-dominated sports such as mountain biking, and say, " I belong in this space."

When it comes to mountain biking, social media coverage is incredibly powerful, but work is needed to level that up to make sure that women get the same opportunities to promote the way that they want to look and the way that they want to be on a bike, in a fair, diverse and representative way; otherwise, we are just not doing our jobs.

The Deputy Convener: Can I move on and come back to this? There are a number of other questions.

Emma Harper: Sure. I want to ask about the clothing issue that Lee Craigie brought up, but I can come back to that.

The Deputy Convener: That would be ideal. I call Gillian Mackay.

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): Gemma Fay, I want to pick up on something that you said about the societal attitudes behind some of the things that we see—and, in particular, how that comes out in the media. For example, a lot of the media sports reports comment on fixtures for the Chelsea team but then comment on "the Chelsea women's team" afterwards. They use that sort of language to distinguish between the two. Is it damaging to women's sport to have that instead of "Chelsea men's" and "Chelsea women's"? Does it create, almost, a second-class distinction between the two? Do you think that it is done consciously, or do we need to continue to challenge it?

Gemma Fay: It depends on the sport. The club was Chelsea Ladies Football Club, and the Chelsea women made a big point of saying, "We are now Chelsea FC Women"—because, I believe, "women" is seen as a more empowering and powerful terminology. I agree with that. My opinion is that the term "ladies" is somewhat submissive.

Different sports take different approaches. The rugby world cup is not men's or women's, it is just "the rugby world cup" and, dependent on the year in which it is played, people should know which it is. I think that we all know that the rugby world cup 2023 is the men's event; however, the rugby world cup 2025, in England, will be the women's.

Football at international level has gone a different way. It has the men's world cup and the women's world cup.

Often, the issue is due to the commentators. There are commentators in everything. We talked about social media. It is a brilliant tool but is horrific at times, so we need to be very careful. People who have uneducated opinions can do a lot of damage. However, at the same time, it is a mechanism through which to take control of our narrative.

When I played football, the US women's national team called itself the USWNT, so we called ourselves the SWNT—the Scottish women's national team. We owned that name. Then the Scottish FA started using it for us as well. We knew that that name was us. It defined us.

I did not have a problem with saying that I played for Scotland. I played for Scotland. If people say that I "played for Scotland women", I say, no, I played for the Scottish women's national team. Personally, as an individual and as a player, I did not have a problem with that. Others might, but I did not, because I knew that I was female—a woman—and that I was playing for the national team. I knew that that was mine, and I did not have a problem with it.

There are other examples. Arsenal has moved to being just "Arsenal", but I hope that that was in consultation with its women's team. Some women feel strongly about having the word "women" associated with their titles; others feel strongly about not having it associated with their titles. There should not be a directive from us, as a society, to say that either of those makes

someone a second-class citizen, if the people who live in the situation say that they want to have it. That is done on purpose. If none of you has met Emma Hayes at Chelsea, I tell you that she is a pretty fierce woman. If the team did not want "women" in the title, it would not be there. That is my opinion on the matter.

Gillian Mackay: What you have said is powerful, about individual teams and individual sports people claiming the narrative.

Next week, we will have the broadcasters. If there was one thing that you wanted us to raise with them, what would it be?

09:45

Gemma Fay: For me, it is a question of planning. What is the broadcasters' plan to increase the exposure of women's sport or women in sport across various channels, and what is preventing them from doing it now? I live in a world of strategic planning; that is my job. It is about what the outcome is, how we will get there, where we are now, what measures are in place and how we will hold ourselves accountable in regard to whether or not we achieve it.

There is no doubt in my mind that—this is a cheesy phrase, but it is true—if you cannot see it, you cannot be it. I know more about kabaddi than I know about other sports because, when I was younger, it was on Channel 4 every Sunday morning when I woke up, and I used to play it with my brothers in the living room. My mum hated me for it. I could tell you about kabbadi and its rules because I was fascinated by it—it was different and new—and I had exposure to it. I have watched judo, including the major championships, and I kind of get it but not really, because I have not seen it enough. I could tell you the names of some of the female judoka because I have worked in sport; however, if I had not worked in sport, I could not have told you who they were.

If we want people to aspire to be something in this world—not just an influencer, although that is what they see—let us show them the opportunities that exist to be a strong and powerful woman in the sporting world and let us show them what that looks like.

Having worked in the sports industry, I know that trying to nail down a broadcaster is very difficult. I take my hat off to BBC Alba, which seems to be the entry broadcaster for most female sports in Scotland. That might be because it is cheap and it does not cost BBC Alba anything. It does not matter; at least the sports are given exposure.

You guys will know that there was a recent thing about trying to get the men's national football team back on free-to-air TV. Well, you can watch the women's national football team on BBC Scotland, online and on BBC Alba. You can watch the Scottish women's rugby team through the six nations tournament, but, even then, it is a struggle to get broadcasters to pay for that, and they do not pay for it. There is a flipside to that, but I do not know what their challenges are. I do not know what they are being told that they must provide.

If there was a plan and policy in place to say that, by X date, we should have X per cent of women's sport being broadcast and it should be diversified across certain categories, that would be a positive step, and at least we would all know that we were working towards something. We should get the sports in together with the broadcasters to hash it out and see what it looks like. Some people would not be happy because there would not be enough coverage, but there would be more than there currently is or has been.

The Deputy Convener: We move to Sandesh Gulhane. It would be helpful if colleagues would direct their questions to witnesses to ensure that we get a good spread.

Sandesh Gulhane: I have a couple of questions, if I may. Eilidh Doyle and Connie Ramsay both spoke about coverage. However, I direct my question to Gemma Fay.

I am an Arsenal fan, and the Arsenal women's team is very well represented by Tim Stillman, Ian Wright, Arseblog and a podcast that is exclusively about Arsenal, so I can tell you that Kim Little was injured or that Vivianne Miedema hurt her anterior cruciate ligament. I can tell you things about the women's game that I could never have told you five or 10 years ago because there is now dedicated coverage, which I find really fascinating. Are we missing that in Scotland?

Gemma Fay: Yes. It comes down to a couple of things. I will pose a question. Would you have that coverage if, for the past 10 years—it is the tenth anniversary of the WSL—the WSL had not been on the BBC and if the FA had not paid for a programme to be on? By the way, at first, the highlights package was on at 11:45 on a Tuesday night. Would you have that coverage if BT had not taken it and if Sky was not showing it? You would not be that interested, because you would not know that it existed or who those people were.

I could tell you stats about Kim Little from the past 20 years because I have known her that long. I tell you right now that, if she was English, she would have been Ballon d'Or winner three or four times. She is one of the best—in fact, people, shoot me down if she is not the best—footballer, male or female, that this country has ever produced. However, because she is not on social media and because she is not English, has not

been on the England team and has not gone to world cup finals and so on, she is not known as the player that she is or has been.

We do not have the exposure across the sports in this country, therefore we have a niche podcast market that is run and is listened to only by people who know the sport. It is not listened to by people who do not know the sport and could get into it, because it is not backed up by anything. If you have a podcast on a sport that people have gone to watch matches of that have not been televised, others will say, "I don't know what you're talking about, because I didn't see it." However, if a podcast is talking about an incident that has been televised, people will say, "Actually, I've got a different opinion from that, because I witnessed it."

The issues go hand in hand. We do not have the individuals who are looking out to the masses, because the exposure—as the other women on the panel have talked about—is flash in the pan. The Commonwealth games come along, and we all know who wins at the Commonwealth games, but in six months' time, if we are asked whether we can remember them, the answer is, "No, not really." That is because it is not getting backed up.

Sandesh Gulhane: I will bring in Eilidh Doyle and Connie Ramsay on this. I am looking at the BBC Sport website. The first time that it speaks about women's sport is quite a long way down the page, and it is a rugby video highlights package.

Gemma Fay, you spoke about Trans World Sport, which I wanted to speak about. It is free to air. When I was a kid, everyone knew about kabaddi. We played it in the playground and it got banned, because we had injuries.

Gemma Fay: It is a bit physical.

Sandesh Gulhane: The fact is that we all knew about it because it was on TV and we all played it. Is there a lack of coverage of judo, for example? We do not have a highlights package. We do not have a free-to-air TV channel where people can see judo every day.

Connie Ramsay: I definitely think so. I agree with Gemma Fay. I am a really big football fan and I go to football games, and I am getting more interested in women's football as well. When I was growing up, it was always the men's side of things, but now I see more women's sports. I have more time, being a retired athlete, so rather than focusing only on judo, I can see a wider range of sports.

I check up on the women's football scores on the BBC website any time that it is being played, but it is not being updated. The game is going on live, but nobody is taking a second of their time to update the score. I have to wait until a few hours after the game to find out what the scores are, unless I really look into the media.

Simple things such as that are, in my eyes, really not acceptable. We have TV programmes with titles such as "Sportscene", which might be dedicated to just one sport. Why not have a highlights show that shows all different things, such as results from athletics, judo, mountain biking, cricket—whatever it is? That could open people's eyes on those sports, get people's names out there and get people talking about them.

When people do well, I might meet my friend for lunch or whatever and say, "Did you see so and so? They've done this." My friend will then go to another friend to talk about it, and the word gets spread by people talking among themselves.

If people do not know the information, they cannot talk about it or spread the word. It does not have to be hour-long shows; it could just be five or 10 minutes of short snippets of things. That would really benefit the Scottish media.

Paul Sweeney: I want to reflect on the point that was touched on earlier about Olympic and Commonwealth games. It seems to me that, in many ways, the watershed for British in sport is Atlanta 1996, when we had our worst-ever performance. I think that the UK came 36th in the medal table, with one gold medal and 15 medals overall.

After that, there was a transformation, with the pumping in of lottery funding into those sports. It is fair to say that the funding has been disproportionately targeted at sports that the UK or team GB regard as having the best prospects for medals, so cycling, women's swimming and athletics achieve the lion's share of lottery funding or UK sport funding.

Do you see that as having a direct impact on the transformation of societal regard for those sports, particularly with regard to the 2012 Olympic games and the 2014 Commonwealth games? Could sports such as judo benefit from greater investment in that way? Would that security and that focus on excellence and coaching build a performance level similar to that which has been achieved for those other sports? That is improving public perception and increasing engagement with and interest in those sports. Has it created a virtuous cycle for them?

I will start with Eilidh Doyle, because of her background, and it would also be good to hear from the witness with a background in cycling.

Eilidh Doyle: I think that there is a lot in that. Obviously, the funding is geared toward the big events, so everything is put toward the Commonwealth games or the Olympics. I think

that the most important thing is how you build off that.

In judo, I remember that, at the 2014 Commonwealth games, the Renicks sisters won the first gold medals for Scotland. They became massive and were thrown into the limelight, but it was Euan Burton who carried the flag for Scotland. We talk about legacy and what happened after that. Where did the Renicks sisters go from there? What happened to judo after that success? We need to look at that and build on it.

From an athletics point of view, we had a really great games and went on to have successes, but look at the facilities and venues. It costs a fortune to get access to the Emirates arena to use it, and that is the venue that was meant to be for the future of athletics. Look at swimming pools—guys such as Duncan Scott and Ross Murdoch were massive at the games, and yet we are losing swimming pools.

The important thing to ask is, where is the money that is there going and how is it being used? On your point about lottery funding—I might be going off on a bit of a tangent—I do not like medal targets. I understand why they are there and why they are needed, but I do not think that having them shows how successful a sport is. It can hide things by not showing the full picture. For example, swimming had a really successful Beijing Olympics, so UK Sport pumped a load of money into it. At London, swimmers got only a couple of medals, so swimming lost all its money. However, at Rio they came back and had a great games. If we look at that pattern, we see that the amount of money that is going in is not reflective of the success, or the perceived success, of the sport.

It is not just about throwing money at a sport; it is about understanding what that sport needs. As Gemma Fay was saying, every sport is different and has different needs. Where is the starting point? Where is the money going to be invested? What is required to have success and what does success look like for that sport?

Paul Sweeney: That is really powerful; thank you. Lee Craigie, do you have an insight on that from the cycling perspective?

Lee Craigie: Yes. I am definitely on board with what Eilidh Doyle said. I hate medal tables, as well. It is true to say that cycling got a huge injection of money after Atlanta. However, it is interesting that, when you break down cycling medals, all the medals get won on the track. There are tens of medals that can be won on the track—I do not know how many exactly; I am not a track cyclist—but there is one medal that can be won on road or in mountain bike. Considering the sports that young people can get into, they do not look at a track event and think, “Oh yeah, I’ll just nip down to my local track and get into that”. Kids who are cutting about on their BMXs outside in the street are more likely to go off into the woods and learn to be mountain bikers. What is elite sport if it is not about inspiring those kids?

This is about the distinction between having a hard focus on the medals, which is what ultimately gives our national governing bodies their funding, and what elite sport is actually for. In my mind, elite sport is about inspiring the next generation, and not about encouraging folk to sell stuff or about promoting the sport to people who live next to a track and can afford to go into one to teach themselves one really specific skill. We have work to do if we are going to use sport in the way that I think is intended.

Paul Sweeney: In the context of cycling being a well-resourced sport, I am thinking of Beth Shriever, who had to crowdfund her way to a gold medal in BMX at Tokyo.

The Deputy Convener: We need to move on to the next theme, which focuses on periods, pregnancy, parenthood and related issues. I will bring in Emma Harper to ask about the issue of clothing, which has already been raised.

Emma Harper: I was reading over the weekend that the Norwegian beach handball team was fined for not wearing the regulation bikini, because they came out to play in shorts. The bottom line was that they had campaigned for 15 years not to wear bikinis, because sometimes they fall down or slip up and are not comfortable.

There have been issues with regard to the uniforms that are supposed to be worn and what might be available. I have also been reading about sports hijabs for women and allowing women to choose what to wear so that they can be comfortable and participate in sport. That sort of thing seems to be growing among women who, for instance, want to align with the teachings of Islam.

Lee Craigie talked earlier about how clothing is only pink, purple or some colour in between. What are your thoughts on the availability, comfort and sizing of clothing, and what we need to support the participation of women and girls, especially adolescent girls, in sport?

The Deputy Convener: To whom do you want to direct that question, Emma?

Emma Harper: I am not sure who will want to answer that. I will go to Eilidh Doyle first.

10:00

Eilidh Doyle: The issue is being looked at in athletics. We used to have a standard outfit: the women would wear crop tops and pants, and men would wear shorts and vests. Over the years, with

sponsors such as Nike and Adidas getting involved, there is now a whole wider range and more choice for women—and men—to feel more comfortable.

One not so great point relates to the rule in athletics that everyone in a relay team has to wear the same outfit. I used to run as part of a relay team. Thankfully, when the rule was brought in, I was one of the senior members in the team and therefore felt a little bit more confident in saying, "Look, I don't wear pants—I wear shorts, because that is what I am more comfortable in". The younger members in the team would normally wear the pants and crop top, and they were happy enough to say that that was fine, but had I been a younger member going into that team, I might have felt that I did not want to rock the boat and would therefore have worn something that I was not particularly comfortable in. When you go in to do this sort of performance, the last thing that you want to be thinking about is what you are wearing. You need to be comfortable out there.

We need the people in the governing bodies and organisations to be aware that this is an issue. We need a safe space where we can talk about what we can wear, what the options are and how we can make everybody comfortable. Conversations are going on and things are getting better, but there are still lots of issues. For example, are young women or girls watching athletics and thinking, "I'll have to wear a crop top like that if I want to be an athlete"? This is about ensuring that there are people in the governing bodies and organisations who can have those conversations and can ensure that everybody is comfortable in what they wear.

The Deputy Convener: We need to move on, so I will bring in Evelyn Tweed.

Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP): Good morning to you all. I have enjoyed your contributions so far.

Respondents to our call for views said that they felt that there was little provision in elite sport for pregnant athletes or athletes who had had children. Does your sport make provision for those athletes? What more support could be provided?

I see Emma nodding—I am sorry; I mean Gemma.

Gemma Fay: It is fine. I get called so many things. Do not worry about it.

That is a really interesting question. Speaking with my Scottish Rugby hat on, I can tell you that we have just given professional contracts to women for the first time, and at the moment we are doing a piece of work on our policy on pregnancy, parenthood, adoption and egg storing.

The reality is that, when you are at your peak performance level, you are also at your peak fertility level. We do not want athletes to fear that. I know of one athlete of my generation who came back from a pregnancy, but that was it—it was not really a thing that happened. It was not talked about or discussed. It was just assumed that, when you had a child, that was you, unless you had a support system around you that could support you back to peak fitness and being available for selection.

A lot of work is being done in that space at the moment. The gold standard out there is probably New Zealand cricket, which supports its athletes through a four-year pregnancy and parenthood policy. First and foremost, we need to understand athletes' thoughts and perspectives; we need to know where they feel the pressures are and what they would like to do in these situations. We then need to marry that up with the organisation's existing pregnancy and maternity policies.

You also need to understand the uniqueness of being an athlete, which is a job. What is unique to that situation that might impact a woman's ability to breastfeed, bond with her child or come back from pregnancy? It is often treated the same way as an injury, but that is not what it is. Every individual female is different and how women react to pregnancy is different; one person's postpartum journey could be completely different from another's. How will that impact on their contracts?

At the moment, particularly within rugby, a lot more work is being done on this than has ever been done before. We are talking to our athletes as we try to develop a policy that supports them as athletes and parents and which is in line with the role that they might be selected for. For example, a former player of mine who is now in the women's national team takes her child with her when she is with the team, which allows her to be there. I do not know what the Scottish Football Association's policy is.

We have only recently begun to talk about this issue within professional women's sport. Everyone is on a journey. If the governing body of a sport is not on that journey, too, why not? That is what it needs to do. The governing bodies on that journey should collaborate to ensure that they share best practice and support female athletes in allowing them to become the best athletes that they can be and, indeed, the best parents that they can be, if they choose to become parents during their sporting career.

Evelyn Tweed: Does anyone else want to come in?

Eilidh Doyle: I had a baby in 2019. When I decided to get pregnant, I was still an athlete, and there was no policy in place at that time. Since then, UK Sport has put in place a policy that says an athlete who decides to start a family cannot be

taken off funding—she will still get funding for another year. That is a big step. During that time, I was looking at other work, because I could not be sure whether I would keep receiving funding. Discussions about funding took place in October and my baby was due in January, so I could have had a two or three-month-old son and no income. Thankfully, that policy has changed.

We need an improved understanding of the support that is there, and we should be able to have open conversations. People can get very secretive; an athlete can feel as if she is hiding a horrible secret when she decides to start a family. Who will she tell—or tell first? When will she tell them? It should be a great moment, but women worry about not wanting to tell anyone—including the media, coaches and head coaches—too soon. We need an open dialogue so that female athletes feel comfortable having those discussions and know that support is in place.

As Gemma Fay has said, every person's pregnancy and labour are different and everyone has a different mindset. Some people might want to come back to their sport after having a baby, but then have the baby and decide that they do not want to. That is okay. It is important to make everything supportive. It is good that things are developing, but there is a lot more that can be done.

The Deputy Convener: Stephanie Callaghan has some questions.

Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): When we went to Dunfermline and spoke to some governing bodies, the governing body for rugby told us about flexibility, the social aspects of the game and changes to rules. We also visited Fighting Chance to see judo, and an amazing woman, who was also a professional rugby player and a mum, told me that she went to a variety of judo classes at different levels and was able to take her child along with her so that she could get her fitness back and continue with professional rugby.

We know from the BBC sportswomen's survey that a quarter of respondents—which is not a lot—said that they felt supported in having a baby and continuing to compete and that a third delayed having a family. Notwithstanding the need for policies and support within sporting organisations, would another part of the solution be to have other sports that women can be involved in and to which they can take their children? Would that contribute to getting them back to being competitive?

I am not sure who would want to pick up that question. Because judo is part of it, perhaps Connie Ramsay can answer.

Connie Ramsay: This is a really big thing. Putting the elite athlete aspect to one side, I can tell you that, since opening my own gym, I have been trying to work with women who had no confidence to go into a normal gym. The number of people who will not set foot in a gym is astonishing. I come from a sporting background and have done judo since I was four years old. As a result, I have always been around sport, and I cannot believe that people would not want to do it. It is fun; it is a lifestyle; and that is what I have been trying to encourage.

As soon as they fall pregnant, many people in society say, "Oh, I'm pregnant, so I can't do any exercise." I am trying to change people's mindset. Once they have had the baby, they can, if their body has healed properly, start to slowly get back into sport. We need to widen people's attitudes and encourage them to see that there are ways and means of doing this.

We need professionals to come in and help, so it is not just a case of someone going straight back on to the judo mat and getting thrown by or throwing and sparring with others. We have to think about whether that is the right thing for people and encourage them to come back into the sport by giving them access to that sort of help. Indeed, quite a few judo players have done that recently.

With regard to those who become pregnant, we need a big push to help them back into the sport and to be a little more open in that respect. A very successful English judo player called Nekoda Davis will be one of the first British judo players to come back from pregnancy; she has been selected for the world championships again, which is really encouraging. It shows other people what they could be capable of doing.

As Eilidh Doyle and Gemma Fay have said, we need to get a variety of people to come together to give the best advice on how to push forward.

Evelyn Tweed: Do you feel that free period products have made a real difference? What more could we do to help women and young girls?

Gemma Fay: I play five-a-side football on a Wednesday night in the heart of Glasgow. Even in that facility, which is dominated by men, there are free period products available. There is no changing room that I can go into, but there is a toilet that has free period products. It is positive.

However, we need to normalise talking about not just periods, but the impact that they have on sport and performance. I was a goalkeeper, so hand-eye co-ordination was very important. As I am sure that you will appreciate, when you are on your period, that sometimes goes out the window. When you are playing England and you cannot catch a ball, that is a bit of an issue. At that point, it was not talked about and it was not something that was monitored. You took paracetamol and

ibuprofen and you prayed to God that you could focus on something.

Free period products are fantastic, but we are still not normalising what a period does to a female. We are not normalising the fact that some people can have the lightest period ever that is over in three days, while others can have one that lasts seven days, and then they start to bleed again after another three days.

Personally, the first two days of my period are a nightmare—I pop painkillers and I cannot move—but I was expected to train on those days. If I did not train or go to training because I was not feeling well, I knew that that would count against me. However, at the time, I could not say to my coaches, "By the way, I can't train because I'm on my period and it really affects my motor function, my perception-action coupling and my ability to perform the tasks to the best of my ability, and if I rush out and a ball hits my stomach, it will kill me."

10:15

It is important to understand the impact that menstruation has on an elite female athlete's ability to perform their daily tasks. I know that we monitor that more now—we did some great work in rugby to collect data on that—but the data and research on female sports in general are really light. We just do not have enough data, and although we are doing more research now, we have not done enough in the past so that we can use that information and create practicable applications in the sporting environment that get the best out of the female athletes while showing an understanding of the impact of female-specific things on those athletes at certain times.

Connie Ramsay: You need to look at the stage just before elite athlete, too, because that might be having an effect on why people are not pushing into the elite level. You might have a teenager competing at a high level, and then their period comes and it puts them right off. We train in white judo kits; it is a little bit different from what people have been saying about pinks and purples, but this is a very traditional sport. You have your jacket and your trousers, but everything is in white. As in cricket, it puts teenage girls off coming on to the mat.

Judo is also a weight-making sport, and when you get your period, it can affect the weight category in which you compete. If you are getting weighed every day and you are found to have put on two kilos, the first thing that you get asked is, "What have you done? Have you been going out and eating too much? You're competing at the weekend." If you give the person a day or so, the weight should come back down. There is a need for open conversations with coaches and others. The last time I was in a professional set-up, it looked as though things were getting there; you were able to speak to coaches and explain the situation to them to ensure that they understood.

As I have said, though, it is all about taking a step back, looking at that teenage stage before people become professional athletes and ensuring that people can discuss these things and have those conversations at that point.

The Deputy Convener: I am afraid that we need to move on—I am very conscious of the time. However, if we have time at the end, we will certainly come back to those issues.

Clare Haughey has questions on harassment and abuse.

Clare Haughey: My questions continue with the theme of barriers, because the sexual harassment experienced by some female athletes in elite sport was identified as a barrier to participation in some of the evidence that the committee has received. I note that, in the elite British sportswomen's survey that Emma Harper quoted earlier, 64.6 per cent of elite female athletes reported experiencing sexism in their sport, but 75 per cent of them did not report it. I am keen to learn about the current measures and support for reporting harassment in your sports and how adequate those are in protecting women and girls.

The Deputy Convener: Is there anyone in particular to whom you want to direct that question?

Clare Haughey: Perhaps we can bring in the remote participants, because I am conscious that we have not heard a great deal from them. Lee Craigie, do you want to kick off with a view from cycling?

Lee Craigie: It is probably worth highlighting what we take harassment to mean. I am going to step away from the idea that it is blatant; although the situation is probably better now than it was when I was racing, there is and always has been an undercurrent in the world of mountain biking. Because I was surrounded by a lot of men, there was a lot of male banter, and there was also a lot of not very covert exclusion from things.

As I became one of the older members of the team and therefore more senior, I was able to set a slightly different tone. As soon as I—or another woman—was able to do that, the whole thing changed, and that slightly different tone with regard to what was and was not acceptable was incredibly important to the young people in the teams that I was operating in.

As far as reporting is concerned, I do not know of any instance of any young person—or, indeed, any person—wanting to escalate a matter, because it was not the appropriate thing to do. It

would have been a case of someone saying, “Oh, it’s all just banter,” and putting it to one side. However, at the time, I felt very strongly that there was a constant undercurrent of undermining sexism.

The car parks of mountain bike trail centres are very blokey, which is very intimidating. That is a sexist set of circumstances that will repel all sorts of young people from taking part in that sport. We retired sportspeople, coaches and other people who represent our sport are all responsible for setting a tone of inclusion, whether that is around sexism or otherwise. There is work to be done in mountain biking in particular.

Clare Haughey: I was interested in what you said about an underlying current of harassment, sexism or what is interpreted as “banter”, and how no one would report it. What were the barriers to some of those women and young girls reporting how they were made to feel or what was said in their presence?

Lee Craigie: Because we were always in a minority, we had to get along and you can quickly be scapegoated by people saying, “She’s just being a woman. She’s making more out of this than necessary. She doesn’t understand our humour.” I would often be on tour for six weeks at a time and I would be the only woman among a lot of younger guys. If I asserted myself or tried to change the tone, I had no allies with me and nobody in authority to help me to set a different, inclusive and non-confrontational tone.

It was sort of my responsibility to make more of an issue of it, although no young women were watching: it was just me on my own. Had young women been watching, I would have failed them by not standing up and changing that tone. However, it is an incredibly difficult thing to do if you are the only woman in that space, because you are automatically scapegoated as whiny and different, and as not understanding the humour. That is the sort of stuff that we need to tackle early on at a basic level.

Clare Haughey: Thank you, Lee. I want to turn to Priyanaz Chatterji, as she is in a more female environment with her team mates.

Priyanaz Chatterji: For sure, I am in a team sport where we play among our gender, so I am in a women’s team. That being said, cricket is obviously a male-dominated sport, as it has been historically. That is very much still the case with the personnel who are involved now. This is not specific to Scotland, but I would say that it is still very much a boys club wherever you go. Lots of male former cricketers go on to work in cricket. It is also quite a small world where everyone knows everyone else and, in general, that can make raising issues quite challenging.

In some cases—this is often the case in society—it can be seen to be more problematic to raise an issue than to be someone who is causing the issue, if that makes sense. There is generally a lot of, if not fear, reluctance to raise issues, because lots of things are often brushed off as jokes or banter, as Lee Craigie has just said.

It is really important to have clear processes in place, but that has not always been the case in my sport. Processes need to be put in place and people need to know that they exist and what they are. There also has to be trust that, if someone raises an issue, it will be dealt with appropriately. That comes down to processes being in place but also to people being involved who are willing to have difficult conversations and sometimes to challenge their colleagues and other people they work with. I have known of cases and seen instances of people in positions of power being aware of problematic personnel, but being happy to brush some of their less good traits aside and point out what else those people were doing because they did not want to rock the boat. Unfortunately, change will not happen unless people are willing to rock the boat.

That can look like different things for different people. Having allies is incredibly important. I have sat on boards to do with cricket on which I have been the only woman and the only person who is not white. I can think of instances when issues of racism or sexism have come up and it has been incredibly challenging to call that out, because of the power dynamics and my feeling that I will be seen as a troublemaker if I do that.

There have been times when I have had to speak to people on those groups offline and bilaterally. I have been lucky that, at least some of the time, they have been supportive and we have been able to address the issues to an extent. However, doing that is really hard.

There is another factor to add in. I am still a fairly young woman, and I often engage with middle-aged or older-aged men. There is the third dynamic of the power differential. It is not easy.

I do not think that there will be any quick fixes. There is a need to have processes in place, and part of the solution is simply having the right people who will act with integrity. Sometimes, acting with integrity means having difficult conversations. I guess that there also needs to be an accountability process or a way for people to challenge things if they do not think that that is happening. In addition, we need to try to encourage cultures in which people feel comfortable speaking up about things that are not acceptable or appropriate.

Clare Haughey: As a quick supplementary question to the witnesses who are in the room, do

you recognise what has just been said in your sports? Do you think that the processes that are in place are robust enough for women and girls who are moving towards becoming elite athletes or are currently participating as elite athletes?

Gemma Fay: Sport is a microcosm of society. The people who are in sport exist in society, too, so it would be naive to think that things that exist in society do not exist in sport—they do. We should not shy away from that fact and, where things happen, the issue is how we call that out and change that.

I turn to the point that Priyanaz Chatterji has just made. You are trying to change a culture. To change a culture, you have to change the behaviours. To change the behaviours, you have to change the attitudes. That does not happen with a snap of your fingers; it happens through an education process. It also takes more people to call out what is not acceptable. I understand Lee Craigie's point about banter. I used to gauge how well we were doing in women's football based on what taxi drivers would say to me. At the beginning of my career, I would be asked whether we switched tops or showered together. Towards the end of my career, they would say, "I saw the game the other night." That happened in a really short space of time, and it shows the changing attitudes towards sport and women in sport.

A point was made about whether the systems that are in place are accessible or known. We are always trying to evolve the systems to ensure that people feel safe enough to report things. However, if matters are reported, action must be taken. That is the challenge. Yes, there are systems in place for reporting issues, but there must be an understanding that, if we want to change things, we must do something with the information when we get it. Whoever reports an issue must have an understanding that that is the case, otherwise it is not a reporting mechanism; it is just a place to divulge information. If we cannot do anything with that information, we will not create the changes that are needed.

Clare Haughey: It does not encourage anyone to report something if they feel that they will be scapegoated or—

Gemma Fay: The issue is how you deal with that information. If something is reported, whether it be sexism, misogyny or whatever, we must take action and speak to the individual to tell them what we would like to do with that information. Unfortunately, for change to happen—this is the case in society as a whole—brave people need to stand up. If they do not do that, governing bodies cannot do anything with that information to effect change, other than what they are already doing, which is putting in place plans and policies, and working with clubs, to promote good and positive behaviours. Even if we do that, there will still be individuals who are just not good people; that will continue to be the case.

It is a question of constantly getting across the message that something is not banter but offensive. People have to be asked whether they understand the impact that such behaviour has on people.

It is absolutely the case that there are people who call out others. However, there are also people behind the scenes who must try to figure out a way to change that behaviour. Those people must also understand that change does not happen instantly but will take time.

We have a problem if people are not acknowledging that there is an issue, if people are not trying to address the issue and if the issue does not change over time. However, as I have said, when we deal with people, we are dealing with attitudes and behaviours, and behaviours take a long time to develop and to undo.

10:30

The Deputy Convener: In a neat segue, we will now move on to talk about inequalities. Perhaps we can draw out more of that issue in the following conversation.

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): Good morning, panel members. What are the barriers to women from ethnic minority communities participating and progressing in your sports? I open it up to anyone to respond.

Eilidh Doyle: Athletics is very diverse, and I am proud of the fact that it is very accessible. If someone can run, jump or throw, they can get into those aspects. There are very limited financial barriers or, indeed, other barriers at that stage. Athletics is very inclusive. It can be done throughout the country, and there are not many limitations.

One limitation, however, is coaching, which, to be frank, is dominated by white, middle-class men. We also see a lot of that in the staffing. Things are getting slightly better, but young athletes from ethnic minorities come into teams and see no one in the staffing or coaching group to whom they can relate. That is probably one of the barriers with regard to staffing and coaching.

David Torrance: Do any of the other panel members have anything to say?

Priyanaz Chatterji: Can you repeat the question, please?

David Torrance: What are the difficulties for women from ethnic minority communities in participating and progressing in your sports?

Priyanaz Chatterji: I am happy to talk a bit about that.

In contrast to Eilidh Doyle's comments, I have to say that cricket is not, unfortunately, that accessible a sport, simply because a lot of equipment and facilities are needed. Therefore, people from working-class backgrounds have much less access to it. Obviously, those people often intersect with people from ethnic minority backgrounds; there is a lot of overlap in those issues. However, there are separate challenges, too.

I would echo the comment about staffing, which tends not to be particularly diverse. In my experience, the majority of staff—coaches, psychological support staff, physios and strength and conditioning staff—are typically white, and the skills coaching staff are predominantly male. That reflects the history of the sport in the country; it has been played predominantly by white middle-class men.

As for the specific challenges for ethnic minority women, there are various factors involved. I am conscious of speaking on behalf of a very diverse set of people, but the challenges with regard to cricket, for example, include awareness of the need to ensure that longer-sleeved clothing is available to players who do not wish to wear short-sleeved clothing. There must be choice. Women and girls must have the choice to wear what they want, whether it be a crop top or long-sleeved top to run in, or a hijab.

Other factors include ensuring that appropriate food is available for people from different backgrounds. It has nothing to do with my ethnic minority background, but I have been a vegetarian for quite a long time, and I know that, sometimes, the vegetarian option at the cricket events that I went to was not at all nutritious. In contrast, my team mates who ate meat got a much better meal. Obviously, whether a person gets fed appropriately can affect their performance in the second half of the game.

There can be challenges if clubs do not have good facilities for women. In some cases, people might be reluctant to go to a club that is exclusively male and which does not provide girls' spaces. Those might well be some of the issues.

David Torrance: How welcoming are sports to lesbian and bisexual women and what challenges do they face? That question is open to everyone.

The Deputy Convener: In the interests of time, perhaps you could direct that question to just one person.

David Torrance: I will ask Gemma Fay to talk about football.

Gemma Fay: I cannot speak on behalf of an entire group, but I do not think sexuality was ever an issue or a barrier. I would argue that, in the past, football was a welcoming space for those from the LGBTQ+ community, who felt safe and felt that they owned the space.

I cannot comment on how an entire group might feel, but my sexuality has never played a part in my participation in sport. My sexuality does not even come into my thinking about participation in sport; to be honest, it does not come into much of my thinking. I live as an individual and if I want to do something, I do it. People's opinions do not really matter to me. I know that that is not the case for others, but I can speak only for myself. I have never felt discriminated against in any aspect of life because of my sexuality. I am a really private person and no one knows what my sexuality is—I do not lead with it. Instead, I lead with who I am and what I enjoy.

As I have said, I cannot speak for everyone from that community. I can speak only from my own community, which is just me, and I have to say that I have always found sport to be a predominantly safe space.

David Torrance: I have one more question.

The Deputy Convener: You can ask one more, and then we will need to move to a conclusion.

David Torrance: How difficult is it for girls and women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to get into sport? I know that mountain biking and football can be expensive, but I would be happy to hear from any of the witnesses on this matter.

Gemma Fay: It can be difficult with any sport that requires equipment.

Lee Craigie: It can be very difficult. Bikes and equipment are expensive. We do not see people from diverse backgrounds taking part in mountain biking. Socioeconomically, and in terms of its ethnic diversity, cycling has a long way to go and the commercial sector has a lot of work to do to help us level up.

Gemma Fay: This is a barrier in any sport that requires specific equipment, and the popularity of a sport is a barrier, too. We have a fantastic network of schools that can provide opportunities. There is also community sport, but the fact that it is under increasing funding pressure affects access to facilities.

I am a huge advocate of highlighting the inextricable link between physical and mental health. If we want a healthier and happier Scotland, we must provide the opportunity for not only girls and women but everyone to experience the positive attributes of being physically active and having access to places in which to be

physically active. That will play a part in the nation's long-term health and wealth.

The Deputy Convener: We have three supplementaries. I am conscious that we are over time, so I just want to check whether the witnesses are happy to take them. If they are okay for time and the committee is happy to bear with us, that is fine.

I must ask members to pose only one supplementary and direct it to only one person. We will start with Emma Harper.

Emma Harper: I will go specifically to Connie Ramsay because she is fae Tain, which is pretty rural, and because Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders, which are in my region, are outside the central belt. My simple question is: what are the challenges in getting young women and girls to participate in sport in rural parts of Scotland?

Connie Ramsay: I moved away when I was 16. I was lucky that my school was helpful; I was allowed to do school part time and judo part time. I would do school on Monday morning and then my dad would put me on the bus down to training. I would train Monday night, all day Tuesday and all day Wednesday, and my dad would then pick me up from Ratho to drive me back up in time for school on Thursday and Friday. I was lucky to have my parents' backing. Wherever I needed to go, they would get me there. It is difficult for a lot of other girls and boys to participate in that way.

I have just moved back to Tain; I have been down since I was 16 but have now moved back up. One of my aims now is to give people encouragement. I have always wanted to do a long-term project on that. Through such a project, which is in my head, I want to try to give even one person insight into the life that I have managed to achieve and help them see the world and not get stuck in the bubble up there.

As I have said, I had my parents' backing, which was helpful. If I had not had that, I would not be where I am now. You cannot get put on a bus when you are nine years old and need to get to a judo competition in Aberdeen, in Glasgow or even down south in London. Perhaps I could be the person who supports people, gets them on to a minibus and takes them down to Glasgow to experience a tournament at the level that they could be at. That would be helpful because, right now, there is nothing. There might be a community in Inverness but, north of that, there is not much going on. I hope to give people a bit of insight into that.

Sandesh Gulhane: I have to say to Gemma Fay that it is not fair that she gets to play five-a-side football, because no one will ever be able to score past her.

Gemma Fay: I never play in goal. I did that for 20 years.

Sandesh Gulhane: You said that there were not many women in the sport, but there are even fewer ethnic minority women. Connie Ramsay, too, talked about how women do not go to the gym, but the fact is that even fewer ethnic minority women do so.

As you guys are all elite sportspeople, I want to talk about elite sports. My question is specifically for Eilidh Doyle. Why does elite sport not have big ethnic minority participation? For example, we can all run but that does not translate into participation in elite sport. I would have liked to ask all the witnesses that question, but as we simply do not have the time, I will focus on athletics.

Eilidh Doyle: It probably comes down to the pathway. My career was straightforward in that I joined a club, had great experiences there and went to competitions. Then, I had success and had the support around me that allowed me to travel around the country. However, I went with my friends. Because they were all people like me—it was not a massively diverse group—I felt like I fitted in wherever I went. I felt like I fitted in throughout the whole pathway; I felt like I was the same as everybody else.

Perhaps the barrier comes right at the beginning, at the start of the pathway. Are people, at that initial point, not able to get involved in a group where they feel that they belong? I do not know. I cannot speak from anybody's experience other than mine, but I felt like I belonged straight away and that my pathway to elite sport was very straightforward.

I do not know whether that answers your question, but it could be that. Is it the gym thing? Just as people think, "I don't want to go to a gym. I won't feel comfortable there," are they thinking, "I don't want to join a club. I won't feel comfortable there" because they are a minority, do not feel included and do not feel involved? I do not know.

Globally, elite athletics is very diverse. It is massive. Every country does athletics. What we have been talking about might not necessarily be a barrier to the sport, but it might be a barrier to a pathway to get to the elite level.

10:45

The Deputy Convener: Finally, as Gillian Mackay mentioned, we will have broadcasters with us next week. Very quickly—in a line, if you can—can you tell us what you would want us to ask them? As Gemma Fay has already covered some of this, I will go to Eilidh Doyle and Connie Ramsay and then to our online participants.

Eilidh Doyle: You could ask them whether they are conscious of the fact that, when women turn 30, broadcasters start to talk about their retiring. This might be more specific to my sport but every time that I was mentioned in an article or by a commentator after I turned 30, they would talk about me coming to the end of my career. You should bear in mind that I had just come off my most successful season; I won a medal at the Olympics in 2016 and turned 30 in February 2017. However, for the whole of that following year and then until I retired at 35, I was always getting asked when I was retiring and how long I was going to go on. None of my male counterparts was asked those questions. You should ask the broadcasters whether they are conscious of saying such things.

Connie Ramsay: My question would be about the diversity of sports—in other words, why we stick to the mainstream sports and whether there should be access to other sports that might not be as popular but which could be used to raise people's awareness. That might help build up sport in general rather than just certain individual sports.

Lee Craigie: I would ask them to do some digging and find quality, informed and articulate female representatives of the sport that they are broadcasting.

Priyanaz Chatterji: I would just echo what everyone has said.

I hugely agree that there is a massive double standard in sport with regard to women's age. Although I am 29, I feel that I am considered old, whereas my male counterparts are definitely not. It would certainly be good to raise that issue with broadcasters.

I would also be interested to know what they need to see in order to invest more in women's sport. What, in their view, are the barriers and the solutions in that respect? What is their long-term strategy? How do they think that can be aligned with all the different stakeholders in sport to move things forward for women?

The Deputy Convener: Gemma Fay, do you have anything to add?

Gemma Fay: I will add just one thing to what Lee Craigie has said. There is a difference between putting women's sport on television and providing the "talent", as it is called in the biz, that supports its production. When I used to work on male football, I would spend seven hours on research, only to be told a year later that all the men have the information given to them. The question that I would ask, then, is: what are the broadcasters doing to develop talent that has credibility in women's sport and which understands the women's game in Scotland, so that those productions provide a quality experience for the viewer?

The Deputy Convener: I thank all the panel members for their attendance this morning at what has been a very informative and interesting session. I am sure that we could have gone on all day, but I appreciate that colleagues have other things to get to. Thank you for your time.

Subordinate Legislation

Food Additives, Food Flavourings and Novel Foods (Authorisations) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 (SSI 2023/78)

10:48

The Deputy Convener: We will move straight to the next item, which is consideration of a negative instrument. I should have said before launching into this item that panel members are free to go, but they are, of course, also welcome to stay.

The purpose of the instrument is to authorise a new food additive, a new food flavouring and a new novel food to be placed on the market in Scotland. It also authorises new conditions of use and changes to the specification of an existing novel food. The policy note states that the Scottish statutory instrument

"aligns Scotland with England and Wales as well as with similar EU legislation for these products, all of which have now been authorised by the EU Commission."

When the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee considered the instrument at its meeting on 28 March 2023, it made no recommendations in relation to it, and no motion to annul has been received.

I invite comments from colleagues.

Emma Harper: I often talk about the instruments that we approve regarding food additives, food flavourings and novel foods; indeed, I am interested in the issue and I have mentioned it previously. I just want to raise awareness of it, because it is important that people are aware that novel foods exist. It is not just about eating insects—it is about additives, flavourings and food enhancing with dietary supplements. This instrument, for example, refers to vitamin D_2 mushroom powder, which is an interesting dietary supplement, because of the claims that it can enhance focus, reduce anxiety and help people be calm. I just wanted to say that it is an interesting subject that is worth highlighting.

The Deputy Convener: Thank you.

As there are no further comments, does the committee agree that we do not wish to make any recommendations in relation to the negative instrument?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Deputy Convener: At our next meeting, on 25 April, we will continue to take formal evidence as part of our inquiry into female participation in sport and physical activity, with a session focusing on media coverage, as previously trailed, and representation of women and girls in sport. That concludes the public part of our meeting.

10:51

Meeting continued in private until 11:16.

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