



OFFICIAL REPORT  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

DRAFT

# Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

Tuesday 11 March 2025

Session 6



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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**Tuesday 11 March 2025**

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**HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND SPORT COMMITTEE**  
**8<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2025, Session 6**

**CONVENER**

\*Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
\*Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con)  
\*Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP)  
\*Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green)  
\*Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab)  
David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
\*Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Maureen Campbell (sportscotland)  
Forbes Dunlop (sportscotland)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Alex Bruce

**LOCATION**

The Sir Alexander Fleming Room (CR3)



## Scottish Parliament

### Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

*Tuesday 11 March 2025*

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]*

### Decision on Taking Business in Private

**The Convener (Clare Haughey):** Good morning, and welcome to the eighth meeting in 2025 of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee. I have received apologies from Elena Whitham and David Torrance.

The first item on our agenda is a decision on whether to take item 4 in private. Do members agree to do so?

**Members indicated agreement.**

## Sportscotland

10:00

**The Convener:** The next item on our agenda is an evidence session with representatives from sportscotland. I welcome to the committee Maureen Campbell, the chair of sportscotland, and Forbes Dunlop, its chief executive officer.

I invite Forbes Dunlop to make a brief opening statement.

**Forbes Dunlop (sportscotland):** Good morning. Thank you very much for the opportunity to come along to discuss the important contribution that sport makes. We all know the benefits of sport and of being physically active. Sport plays a really important role in keeping the nation active. It also contributes to the Government's priorities set out in "Physical Activity for Health: Scotland's National Framework"—which was launched last year—and, in turn, to the national outcomes.

Sixty-two per cent of children meet the physical activity guidelines and, when school activity is included, the figure rises to 72 per cent. Sixty-three per cent of adults meet them. The guidelines were set by the chief medical officer and those statistics come from the 2023 edition of "The Scottish Health Survey".

As well as benefiting physical and mental health, sport makes an important contribution to the economy. A report following recent work that we commissioned concluded that sport makes a contribution of £3.8 billion in gross value added and that 69,000 people are employed in the sport sector in Scotland.

Although we know that sport makes a significant contribution to health and has a social impact, we need to balance that against realism about the pressures and stresses that the sector currently faces. Local investment in sport and physical activity has dropped quite significantly over the past 10 years. Work that we did in the autumn, led by EKOS Consultants, concluded that there had been about a 20 per cent drop in investment. That has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of sport-specific local officers, and it is having a significant impact on the sports facilities estate.

The rising costs of energy, staffing, maintenance and construction have been well documented and we see the impact of all that in sports facilities closing, their opening hours reducing and costs to access them increasing. There are also maintenance backlogs in a number of facilities across Scotland. Sportscotland has commissioned a significant piece of work to look at

the sport estate and the first wave of information will come through in the spring. We have looked at the estate as a whole—the facilities that are out there and their use—and, after that, we will work with local partners to look at what we need for the future. That will be a significant piece of work and we would like to share it with committee members in the spring.

At the heart of the sporting network and community are volunteer-led clubs. More than 800,000 people are members of such clubs in Scotland. That volunteer-led network is the envy of many sectors and is the backbone of Scottish sport. However, there are also significant pressures on those clubs and volunteers, and we need to limit the financial and administrative burdens on them.

The sector works closely together. We regularly meet local and national partners to talk about the challenges that are being faced and how we can collaborate and work better together to find solutions. We also talk about the importance of advocacy and influencing in relation to sport and we have good awareness of the challenges that the sector is facing.

As the national agency for sport, sportscotland has made the recent decision that we must do everything that we can to protect the investment going out the door to our partners to deliver sport. We are in the process of carrying out a strategic workforce review and voluntary severance scheme, the purpose of which is to free up internal costs in order to keep money going out the door to our partners to support the important work that they do.

In summary, we know that more investment is required at local and national levels if the sector is to continue to respond to the challenges that we face. Public funding for sport must be considered as an investment and not a cost.

**The Convener:** Thank you very much, Mr Dunlop. We will move straight to questions.

**Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee City West) (SNP):** Good morning, Forbes and Maureen. Thank you for coming along at relatively short notice; it is really appreciated.

It is important that the benefits of sport are available to all sections of society, so it caused some angst to us all and was of great concern when, back in 2022, the “Changing The Boundaries” review that was produced by Plan4Sport concluded that Cricket Scotland’s governance and leadership practices were institutionally racist. At that point, Cricket Scotland was placed into special measures to work through the recommendations with sportscotland.

Since then, the committee has taken evidence from sportscotland on two occasions—in October 2022 and in 2023—but we have not managed to hear from you since the special measures were removed, in November 2024. Are you confident that Cricket Scotland has gone through all the recommended actions? What are you doing as an organisation to make sure that this is not happening, not just in Cricket Scotland but anywhere else?

**Maureen Campbell (sportscotland):** I will start, then Forbes can give a wee bit more detail. I think that you are absolutely right. We are very concerned to ensure that there is no racism in sport, and we will do all that we can to make sure that there is no place for racism. We want to make sport accessible and equal for everyone.

The board decided to take Cricket Scotland out of special measures and put it into a supported framework. A new chief executive and a new chair are in post, along with a new board. They have been working tirelessly to address the “Changing The Boundaries” report recommendations and the outcomes of the work that was subsequently done by the resolutions team. Positive changes have been made. It is a journey and there is still a way to go and a huge amount of work to be done, but I acknowledge the progress that Cricket Scotland has made.

**Forbes Dunlop:** The recommendations in “Changing The Boundaries” were particularly focused on structural and governance changes for Cricket Scotland. A full governance review was undertaken and, subsequently, proposed changes were taken to an extraordinary general meeting. Importantly, those were supported by the members and have streamlined the governance of Cricket Scotland, making very clear the accountability back to the board of Cricket Scotland. That is quite a significant change. It was important that Cricket Scotland was given time to consult its members, for its members to understand the implications of the change and, ultimately, for its members to support that, which they did.

Maureen has touched on the fact that Cricket Scotland now has a permanent chief executive, Trudy Lindblade, and a permanent chair. There have been a number of short-term appointments in those positions but that has now settled. A new board has been appointed and there are a number of new members in the Cricket Scotland team.

With full consultation with the cricket community, Cricket Scotland has now completed a new strategy and an equality, diversity and inclusion plan, and, just on Saturday, as part of international women’s day, it launched a women and girls cricket strategy. Some big governance and structural changes have taken place, which will

provide much clearer accountability on everything that happens in the sport.

It is important to say that there is still significant unhappiness and unrest about the referrals and subsequent investigations that came from the “Changing The Boundaries” review. Those who raised complaints feel as though the investigations and sanctions have not gone far enough and have not held people accountable. Those who have been complained about and who were in leadership positions at the time feel as though the process was not strong enough and did not support the history and the background to the full extent. The sport has made some significant changes and progress, but a number of the individuals who are involved with the referrals and investigations are still significantly frustrated with where those have got to.

**Joe FitzPatrick:** This is an important area. My experience of cricket is that it is accessible to a wide range of people. I was recently at the opening of the Kinloch Cricket Club’s new ground in Dundee and saw diversity among the people playing there. It is important that folk have the confidence to play sport and it is great to hear of the continuing efforts to get more women involved, as well.

Do you monitor the involvement of ethnic minorities in different sports? If not, would you consider doing so to ensure that such data is available and published?

**Forbes Dunlop:** We do monitor that.

On the cricket situation, maybe one frustration is that the good work that clubs around the country have done over the past few years has not been recognised. I think that that has always been the case. Cricket clubs have been doing a brilliant job and their membership is among the most diverse in sport. The issue in cricket was that that diversity was not represented in the leadership roles—that is, it was not represented in the decision-making positions, board positions and senior positions. However, it is important to recognise the great work that volunteers have been doing in cricket clubs across the country over the years.

We get annual returns from all sports, as part of which we get a breakdown of membership against protected characteristics. Some sports have much more detailed membership data that they can share with us than others do, and quite often that is down to the structure of the membership of the governing body. The annual return might be at an individual or at a club level. You can imagine that there can be differences between sports as a result. We have been discussing and debating, as has the board, a challenge that many sectors face these days, which is that a lot of people do not necessarily want to share some of their personal

details. We ask for full returns every year so that we can monitor and see trends, but different sports with different membership schemes give us different levels of information.

**Joe FitzPatrick:** Is there guidance from sportscotland about how that should be done? The committee is frequently frustrated about the lack of or inconsistent data, which makes comparisons difficult. Perhaps you could consider doing something in the future to try to get data that is more comparable. That would be helpful to ourselves and others.

**Forbes Dunlop:** Absolutely. We provide guidance and templates, and apply a consistent approach. The inconsistency, if you like, comes down to the membership structure of each sport and how much information they can collect.

**Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con):** Good morning. I have a quick question. Forbes, in May 2023, you said:

“When it comes to racism, it is no longer good enough to not be racist. Scottish sport must become anti-racist.”

What exactly did you mean by that statement and what have you done in the two years since you made it?

**Forbes Dunlop:** What I meant by that statement was that it is no longer good enough to stand on the sidelines and call out racism when we see it. We need to be more proactive about educating the entire workforce, including the volunteer workforce, and we need to be much more confident in addressing issues of racism when they occur.

Since that time, we have provided a raft of training. In the past two years, about 200 people have been through EDI education courses that sportscotland facilitates. That is not just our staff, but members of governing bodies, members of local authorities, active schools managers, community sport hub officers and so on. Quite a big piece of education has gone on.

We have been working very closely with the University of the West of Scotland on an anti-racism framework, learning and taking best practice from the university sector, which has done really good work in that area. In particular, we are working with Khadija Mohammed, who is a recognised leader and expert in the area. We have not yet published an anti-racism framework, but we are having conversations and discussions about it. We intend to have a framework that the sports sector could adopt.

10:15

**Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab):** Good morning. You will know that, in 2023, the committee conducted an inquiry into female

participation in sport and our report identified a number of barriers. What is sportscotland doing to encourage female participation in sport? What else do you think might need to be done, perhaps in co-ordination with the Scottish Government, to continue that work?

**Maureen Campbell:** A huge amount of good work has been done to acknowledge the barriers to girls and women participating in sport and the inequalities that they face, which we are working hard to address. We have a number of initiatives to encourage governing bodies, clubs and communities to ensure that their facilities are fully accessible, open and welcoming—those partnerships are key. We have successfully listened to what young girls and women say about what they feel would help them to be more regular participants in sports. We have initiatives such as the fit for girls programme, in partnership with the Youth Sport Trust, which aims for girls to be peer mentors and to support and encourage other girls to stick with sport and stay involved in it. About 46 per cent of participants in our active schools programmes are female.

Our initiatives aim to sustain girls and women's participation in sport and physical activity when other constraints make it more difficult for them to do that. They also aim to break down any perceived barriers to participation. We are working hard to encourage young girls to stay involved. We are also working hard with governing bodies to recognise the value and health benefits for older, particularly menopausal women who get involved in sports and physical activity. Many governing bodies will introduce initiatives that encourage women's participation and focus on sustaining that.

We know that, if women are involved, quite often, children will get involved, which makes it easier for them to sustain their participation, so we are encouraging that. Last year, our women and girls in sport week was supported by many of you, as well as many other organisations, and was very successful. We wanted to highlight the excellent opportunities for women and girls across the country.

**Carol Mochan:** I will highlight a specific example of possible bias in funding. Recently, I met Zoe Lee from Netball Scotland. We know that netball is predominantly a female sport, but a Scottish team does not play in the United Kingdom league, although the teams would love to and are supportive of doing so. We should consider the way that female sports attract funding. If young women and girls could see female netball players, that might help with their participation in sport. What can sportscotland do to try to address that?

**Maureen Campbell:** Forbes Dunlop can pick up on the specifics of the netball league, as it is complicated.

**Forbes Dunlop:** We have had extensive discussions with Netball Scotland about the super league and Scotland's participation in it. Scotland had a team and withdrew last year.

We do not support any sports teams at a professional level—we have never done that. When the previous iteration of Netball Scotland put forward a team for the league, it was supported by commercial and other public sponsors, including the university sector and Glasgow Life.

We discussed the implications of not being in the league with Netball Scotland. Our focus and resources tend to be directed towards national teams that compete internationally and the related age-group teams. I agree with you that, of course, we would love to see participation in a netball league, as that is another opportunity. Ultimately, there is an issue with resource, as participation in the league is very costly. I know that a number of the England-based teams also withdrew from it when the new franchise was established.

**Carol Mochan:** Is there something that we can do more locally? I am very aware that women and girls participate in netball but that we then lose them. Doing some work to try to support netball in communities might be helpful.

**Forbes Dunlop:** Absolutely. I do not have the exact figures here, but we make a reasonably substantial investment in Netball Scotland so that it can put in place development officers across Scotland to support netball clubs to grow and develop.

Another great example is the adoption of walking netball, which has been fantastically successful. Slightly older ladies who might have played netball as youngsters are coming back to netball through walking netball. Again, that is an initiative that we support through Netball Scotland.

**Carol Mochan:** Thank you very much.

**The Convener:** To what extent does sportscotland have oversight of youth football in Scotland?

**Forbes Dunlop:** I was at the football round-table discussion that was held yesterday, and the topic of the next round-table discussion is youth football. We work with the Scottish Football Association, and our investment predominantly goes into women's and girls' football and community football. We do not tend to be involved in youth football that is led by the Scottish Professional Football League clubs and the academy structure that sits in those clubs. A relatively small number of players are in those



SPFL academy programmes. The vast majority of youth football is taking place in community football clubs across Scotland, and we support that with our investment and our work with the SFA through its network of teams.

**The Convener:** What authority or influence does sportscotland have to ensure that football academies are supporting the wellbeing of players and preparing them for life outside of football?

**Forbes Dunlop:** Our direct engagement in that would be limited.

**The Convener:** Despite the fact that you give funding to the SFA?

**Forbes Dunlop:** The funding for the SFA goes into community grass-roots football and women's and girls' football. The academy programmes that are run by the SPFL trusts, which are funded predominantly by the SPFL and the income that it generates through the media, is something that we are not that close to.

**The Convener:** You will be aware that, over various sessions, the committee has shown particular interest in the welfare of young players. In December last year, the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland and the campaign group Realgrassroots filed complaints with the Competition and Markets Authority concerning Scottish football's treatment of young players. The complaints state that the SFA and the SPFL rules that restrict

"youth players' freedom to move between club academies ... violate UK competition law and"

might constitute

"economic exploitation of children"

and a breach of players' human rights. Taking into account that you have said that you do not have a lot of involvement in that, has sportscotland taken an organisational position on the matter? Do you have any involvement in responding to those complaints?

**Forbes Dunlop:** We do not have a role in responding to the complaints. I think that that sits with the SFA and the SPFL—they need to respond to the complaints. We have not taken an organisational view that has been discussed at board about that.

**The Convener:** Why not?

**Maureen Campbell:** It is predominantly because of the clarity of roles and responsibilities. Although we are trying to encourage the SFA and the SPFL to make sure that they are giving the matter due attention, our investment and our controls are around community grass-roots football. We are trying to influence from the bottom up to show that, if children and young people are

being well cared for in the community football space, they can continue to progress and develop. We are trying to influence by role modelling rather than by forcing the SFA and the SPFL into any particular position.

We are obviously aware of the situation, and where we need to take a view on it, the board would be happy to do so. Thus far, we have been able to leave it with the SFA to deal with.

**The Convener:** If you are looking to influence and to be a role model, do you see a problem with how the current system works?

**Forbes Dunlop:** I am not that close to it. I understand the academies programme and how young people are contracted to those clubs, but it is not a matter that we have got close to.

If the committee feels that we should be looking at the issue, we can find out more information and speak to the SFA and, probably more importantly, the SPFL.

As I mentioned, I was at the football round-table discussion yesterday, which Maree Todd chairs. All the different parts of football—the Realgrassroots organisation, supporters committees, the SFA, the SPFL Trust and Scottish Women's Football—are around that table, and we are also included. We will talk about that very issue at the next meeting.

**The Convener:** About that specific issue?

**Forbes Dunlop:** I am sorry. To be clear, we will talk about youth football. The specific issue that you are talking about is academies and the SPFL. We will talk about youth football, because Realgrassroots is rightly asking whether we can focus on and discuss the vast majority of children who are playing football rather than the narrow group of children who are in academies. I am not sure exactly how that agenda is constructed.

**The Convener:** I am a bit concerned that that is the direction of travel, given the concerns that have been raised about that specific group of children—they are predominantly, if not exclusively, boys—over a number of years, and the concerns that have been raised at the committee by various organisations. Have you had discussions with the football authorities about that specific issue?

**Forbes Dunlop:** No.

**The Convener:** Okay. Do you have any plans to do so, given the complaints that have been raised with the CMA?

**Forbes Dunlop:** Yes, I will pick that up with the SFA and the SPFL and ask them for an update on that matter.

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** Good morning. I must declare an interest, in that I have two grandsons in the academy—who, it has to be said, are having a great time.

I was involved in last session's Health and Sport Committee, when the SPFL and the SFA were brought in to speak to that committee and the Public Petitions Committee about the treatment of those in the academy—you have said that it is not a big number, but it is about 3,000, so I think that it is a reasonable number. Of those 3,000, only 0.7 per cent will ever end up in football, which is fine—the problem is the way in which the other 99.3 per cent are treated. When they are cut, they are cut adrift.

Surely, there should be a link between the academy, the cut, and community football, which should be a destination for 100 per cent of those footballers. That disconnect is where I have a concern. We brought in the SPFL and the SFA, and they certainly did not take enough care of those who were being cut.

I urge sportscotland to consider what happens to those children who are, in some cases, quite brutally cut from the academy—surely, sportscotland has a responsibility to ensure that there is a sports destination for them.

**Forbes Dunlop:** I agree 100 per cent. I risk falling back on personal experience, but I know a number of young people who have tried out for and been in academies that are strongly linked to their community club and then moved back to the community game. However, I appreciate that that is not always the case and that the transition back and forth can be traumatic, which I understand is the concern here.

We are very happy to go and speak further to the SFA and the SPFL to find out more about that and see what role we can play in that transition. As we all know, progression in sport is great when you are going in one direction but, when it does not quite go your way, the most important thing—and the thing that would concern us most—is that people stay physically active and find an opportunity to take part in sport at the right level and in the right circumstances for them.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** I would like to circle back to some questions, starting with the most basic one: do you think that it is right that a child be owned by an entity?

**Forbes Dunlop:** No.

10:30

**Sandesh Gulhane:** Okay, so children should not be owned by an entity, but that is what is currently happening in academies. You said that it is happening to a very narrow group of children in

academies, but those children will be our future Scottish football stars and we will, I hope, watch them at world cups, which will bring a huge amount of joy to the nation. As Brian Whittle said, there are very good examples of children prospering and enjoying themselves, but children are owned, have no freedom of movement and have no ability to continue playing football in different places. Surely, that cannot be right?

**Forbes Dunlop:** As I said, I do not have the necessary level of detail to engage in that conversation. I agree with you that children should be free. The whole premise of my response to Mr Whittle was that I want to see people taking part in sport. If any restrictions—contracts or otherwise—are put in place that prevent children from taking part in sport, that is a bad thing.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** Multiple people have done podcasts and have spoken about their experiences in academy set-ups. There is a young footballer in England, Myles Lewis-Skelly, whose mum is doing a lot for other parents who are part of the academy set-up because it is so brutal.

Lots of people talk about the significant effects on mental health when they are cut out of the system. Now is an appropriate time for me to declare an interest as Queens Park Football Club's former head of medicine. Clubs such as Queens Park will then pick up such players and try to get them going. Is there a place for sportscotland to ensure that our children who are at the elite level of the sport do not end up with significant mental health issues because of being cut?

**Forbes Dunlop:** Yes, our role is to have conversations with the SFA and the SPFL. The very nature of professional football clubs—the level of investment that they are dealing with, along with the governance arrangements and their roles and responsibilities—means that they are bigger than sportscotland in all sorts of different ways. However, we have a leadership role and we will pick up that conversation with the SFA and the SPFL and find out more about the situation.

**The Convener:** I have to say, Mr Dunlop, that I am rather concerned by what I have heard this morning. You said that you will have conversations and that you are trying to influence, but given that the issue that has been raised this morning has been coming to the committee's attention for several years and over several parliamentary sessions, I am concerned that sportscotland has not already picked up on it. The complaint was put into the CMA in December last year, and we are now in March, but there have not been conversations yet. I ask that you update the committee on sportscotland's position when you have had those discussions with the SFA and the SPFL.

**Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab):** I will raise the issue of the Glasgow school of sport at Bellahouston academy. The school has been operating since 1999 and currently has around 65 pupils, 40 of whom are from outside the Glasgow City Council area. It costs Glasgow City Council approximately £380,000 per annum to sustain pupils who come from outwith the local authority. The council has recognised the cost pressures, and it proposes to close the school in 2026. It closed to new admissions last year. I believe that it has engaged with sportscotland about a way forward for sustaining the school, but that was not successful. What is your position on whether the school offers a valuable contribution to Scotland's elite sport development, and what could be done to broker a solution in order to sustain the school in the long term?

**Forbes Dunlop:** We have been in conversation with Glasgow Life and Glasgow City Council about that for some time. The school of sport was absolutely the right thing when it was established, but during the subsequent years there has been quite significant progress in governing body investment and programmes, and in the approach to development of youth sport across the Olympic, Commonwealth and Paralympic sports.

As the former chief executive of Scottish Swimming, I note that just under half of the current students are swimmers, and it was certainly our opinion that having a strong Glasgow swim team, working in partnership with the school of sport, was the way forward.

Since the school was set up, things have evolved quite significantly. Glasgow City Council has clearly documented that it does not feel that the costs are sustainable, given the percentage of Glasgow residents versus the percentage of non-Glasgow residents at the school. It is important that more detailed conversations take place about the right next step for every young person who is currently in the school, and those conversations are taking place now.

**Paul Sweeney:** Has sportscotland engaged with other local authorities about whether they could sustain the pupils who currently attend the school for the duration of their secondary education? Has sportscotland made any effort to be involved in future planning in relation to pupils who currently attend the school and whether the model should be sustained? You seem to be suggesting that the model is obsolete. Is that correct?

**Forbes Dunlop:** I am not saying that the model is obsolete—I am just saying that things have changed quite considerably since the school was established. We have not engaged with other local authorities but, through the institute network, we are engaging with Glasgow City Council and staff

at the school of sport on where the young people are now and what the future might hold for them.

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** Good morning. What action is sportscotland taking to support sport taking place in rural, remote and island areas?

**Maureen Campbell:** It is really important that we ensure that children and young people, and people of all ages, are able to take part in activities across the country, particularly in rural communities. A number of initiatives have been put in place in that regard. For example, the athlete travel award scheme encourages athletes who have to travel by providing some mitigation of the cost of travelling and competing.

We work with local authorities in more rural areas to ensure that they have mechanisms in place to support clubs. Forbes Dunlop mentioned that Scotland has strong clubs—there are very strong clubs in rural communities. We work with governing bodies to ensure that those clubs are well supported and are able to make best use of the available resources.

Sportscotland has invested just over £1 million in preparations for Orkney's hosting of the island games. That funding was about ensuring that the facilities would be ready and helpful to the games being held in Orkney, and that people in Orkney would have quality facilities that could be sustained beyond its hosting of the games, because that will create better infrastructure for sport and participation.

We work with local partners to ensure that the best resources are available.

**Forbes Dunlop:** Maureen Campbell has covered the issue well. I was in Shetland at the end of last year, and I have made a couple of visits to Orkney as part of our commitment to the island games. We have provided significant new investment to support, most importantly, long-term provision of facilities in Orkney. When I was speaking to volunteers and staff in Shetland, it was interesting that they talked about the impact of Shetland's having hosted the island games almost 20 years ago. They talked about the facilities that were built back then and how they were being used by local clubs and community groups, and we very much expect and hope that something similar will happen in Orkney.

**Emma Harper:** Is there variation between regions or between rural and urban areas in the sports that people pick up? For example, Stranraer and Dumfries have Olympic and world-class curling. Dumfries has an ice hockey team, the Solway Sharks, but the women's and men's teams have to play in England, because it is easier to get to Sheffield, for example. There are

teams there, whereas there are no teams nearby in Scotland.

Stranraer is developing a water sports hub, which is great because we will have people on the water paddle boarding and sea kayaking, which I have done down there—it is amazing, and it is good for your mental health. Is there a regional aspect to what gets funded or is it based on what sport is taken up?

**Maureen Campbell:** It is not so much about a regional approach coming down from us—it is about what comes up the way. You gave many facilities-specific examples. Particular physical facilities can draw children and young people in, and the other magic ingredient is the coaching. Where you have inspirational leaders who are great at bringing together groups of young people and can sustain a sports club, those sports thrive.

There are pockets across the country of particular sports being stronger. When you look at the history and heritage behind that, the viability of a sport is largely down to the location and creation of a facility, as you describe, and to being supported by a strong club infrastructure. It is not that we would necessarily say that Stranraer should have ice sports or the water sports examples that you gave, but the facilities are there and the history and heritage behind that are very much related to the creation of a club and the community around it.

Children and young people generally go to sports that are local to them, and how local they are can vary. It is very much about getting the first experience, which will usually be in a sport that is relatively local, which then pulls them in to sustain activity in that sport.

**Emma Harper:** I know that sportscotland has invested £424,000 for Dumfries and Galloway Council to offer an active schools programme, community sports hubs, community cycling and coaching. We have five of the 7stanes cycle routes in Dumfries and Galloway. Cycling is another sport that can be accessed, and sportscotland has supported those facilities.

I am also interested in the research that is under way to understand the transport and travel barriers that people in island communities and remote places face, and Maureen Campbell mentioned support for that. Can you tell us when the research will be completed, and when will it be published?

**Forbes Dunlop:** I will be honest—I do not know the specific research. I would need to find that out. I did not know that we were conducting that research. I apologise. I need to check whether it is being done by us or is being done more locally.

However, what I can say, and it is a particularly good example, is that our young people's sport

panel, which we recruit from across Scotland, including island communities, has done good work in the past couple of years on the particular barriers that young people in island communities face.

We support travel schemes and grants. They do not by any stretch of the imagination cover the costs that individuals and families face, but they make a contribution. We regularly go to island communities and engage with clubs, leaders and groups there to ask what more we can do. I am sorry that I did not know that we were doing that specific research. If we are, it has not quite got to me yet.

**Emma Harper:** Okay. I have a final wee question. The six nations rugby is on now, and it is pretty exciting to watch. I am meeting Scottish Rugby on Thursday, with a specific focus on girls in rugby. You can be any body shape and have a position on the rugby field, which is absolutely fab. Does sportscotland collaborate with Scottish Rugby on promotion and engagement so that more young women can play rugby?

**Maureen Campbell:** It was interesting that when Scottish Rugby presented to the sportscotland board, I think in 2023, one of the facts that it identified was that the fastest-growing membership in Scottish rugby was in the women's game. It is seeing a huge level of take-up and interest in getting involved from girls and women. We encourage them to do so, and there is a programme to support that.

10:45

**Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green):** Good morning.

Does sportscotland collect data on the socioeconomic status of people who participate in sporting activities—both those who do the sport themselves and the volunteers? If so, what does that data show?

**Forbes Dunlop:** We collect data through our annual returns from governing bodies and through the programmes that we run or invest in directly. It will not be a surprise to the committee that people who are living in lower socioeconomic areas take part in sport less. We invest heavily in one programme—we are very proud of it—that aims to balance that out. It is our active schools programme. We see no difference between areas in respect of active schools take-up or participation rates, although we know that, across sport generally, socioeconomic status has an impact.

**Gillian Mackay:** Given the gap that exists, how can sportscotland work with local authorities—and how is it doing so—to ensure that access to

physical activity is effectively integrated into broader public health and anti-poverty strategies?

**Forbes Dunlop:** The new “Physical Activity For Health: Scotland’s National Framework” was launched last autumn. We are now working with 13 local authorities using that framework to look at all eight investment areas. We recognise that sport is one strand of physical activity and of helping people to be physically active. Active travel, education and active schools places are others. We use that framework in our work with those 13 local authorities, to talk to them about their sport and physical activity strategies and how those connect to their community planning partnerships.

That is what we are doing on the planning front. At operational level, most local authorities and leisure trusts have schemes that provide subsidy support for people who live in areas of deprivation to access sport facilities.

Ultimately, there is a cost barrier. In my opening remarks I talked about access to facilities. We know that the cost of running facilities has gone up, so the price of accessing those facilities has gone up. Over time, that will only continue to widen the gap.

**Gillian Mackay:** What work is sportscotland doing with governing bodies to reduce the cost of participation, particularly for children and young people who want to get involved in club sport outside school? The cost of equipment is a huge barrier to some and will prevent some families from being able to continue physical activity outside school.

**Forbes Dunlop:** An initiative was developed by our young people’s sport panel a few years ago, and it has become quite trendy now to use second-hand clothing and to recycle kit. A lot of that is going on: the initiative that was developed by the young people’s sport panel is now being used in sports and leisure centres across Scotland. There are bins and buckets that people can put stuff in so that it can be recycled and reused.

However, I want to be clear that, although that is very good and I am sure that it is helpful, it does not remove all the financial barriers and constraints that you referred to. We all know what those barriers are. The majority of the time, it comes down to the cost of running facilities, and we know that that that is going up. It is getting harder and harder to run facilities, and it is hard for governing bodies—which, in the main, do not own, manage or run the facilities—to remove the cost. In the majority of cases, facilities are locally run and managed.

**Maureen Campbell:** A number of sports clubs run localised club-specific schemes to ensure that people for whom cost is a barrier can get free

membership or membership at a reduced rate for a period of time in order to encourage and sustain participation by, for example, children coming out of an active schools programme. However, there is no getting away from the fact that taking part in sport is quite expensive, so trying to make it as affordable as possible is very much on the minds of club organisers. Again, many clubs are doing a lot of fundraising activities in order to mitigate the cost to individual participants, so that the club as a whole can be sustained.

**Gillian Mackay:** On the specific point that Forbes Dunlop raised about local facilities and locally run facilities, we are seeing a lot of facilities becoming part of community asset transfers, with local authorities looking to offload some of those assets. One in my region is Grangemouth stadium, which I know Scottish Athletics is involved in. What practical support, if not financial support, can sportscotland give teams and governing bodies, such as Scottish Athletics, that are looking to take over such venues in order to keep them running for the groups that use them?

**Forbes Dunlop:** In the particular example that you mention, we are working closely with Scottish Athletics and Falkirk Council to try to find a solution that does not burden Scottish Athletics with a facility that needs significant investment over the next five to ten years. It would be wrong to burden Scottish Athletics with that on-going bill without the right balance and support coming from the local authority.

An increasing number of facilities are being transferred to community groups and clubs, and there are brilliant examples of local clubs taking over management, booking, opening and closing and day-to-day running of facilities. Where that is happening, we see increased and better use of the facility. We are involved in lots of excellent examples where that is happening, but I think that we need to be mindful not to burden small organisations such as governing bodies—many of them are pretty small—with the running of facilities, especially when we know that facilities will need significant investment over the next period.

**Joe FitzPatrick:** I would like to continue the theme of inclusivity in sport, with particular regard to people with disabilities, and to give you the opportunity to talk about the work that you are doing to encourage sports to make their offer more inclusive to a wider range of people. I know that some sports are doing fantastic work, but we still see a lower rate of people with disabilities participating in all sports. Can you comment on that?

**Maureen Campbell:** One of our priorities is to make sport fully inclusive. The work that governing bodies have done with the support of Scottish

Disability Sport, which is the overarching governing body for disability sport, has been about making adjustments and amendments, making activity accessible and making changes to how games are played and how they are set up. Having the Paralympics on television has served as an encouragement to get involved—“If you can see it, you can be it.” That has brought lots of young people into the fray and has made them want to get involved.

Sports clubs are good at integrating and, in Scotland, we have a very inclusive approach. We are working to support governing bodies that are, in turn, supporting their memberships to run inclusive clubs, where it is feasible and practical for them to do so, although there are still disability clubs, which, by definition, are best suited to deliver in that way. We are trying to make sure that we are promoting the excellent work that goes on and that we are supporting the coaching infrastructure in a way that ensures that coaches and leaders are able to give people the best possible experience.

It is important that children and young people with disabilities are given full access to quality physical education and have good physical literacy relative to their capability, and we are working hard with the governing bodies to make sure that that happens. Forbes Dunlop might want to add to that.

**Forbes Dunlop:** The ambition of Scottish Disability Sport, which it has been working towards and we have been supporting, is that every governing body in Scotland should be fully inclusive. For example, Scottish Swimming should take care of all aspects of swimming for everyone. We completely agree with that approach. There are a number of governing bodies at different stages and places on that journey. A lot of the funding that we give to Scottish Disability Sport is to support its vision of getting all governing bodies to the point at which they are fully responsible for inclusion. We think that that is the right direction to go in.

That work is based on the Scottish Disability Sport inclusion model, which recognises that sometimes the best thing is full integration and sometimes the best thing for the individual participant is a disability-specific club, because that meets their needs better. The inclusion model that SDS has developed is an excellent piece of work and we fully support and endorse that approach being taken across all sports.

Over the past couple of years, we have also done work with Enable Scotland, which has been a new partnership for us. The work has been really interesting and a lot of significant learning is coming from it. It is about working with young people with a learning disability and creating

placements for them to work in Scottish governing bodies. There are a couple of placements with local partners, but predominantly it is about working in governing bodies.

SDS also does quite a bit of work with PE teachers on the SDS disability inclusion model. It has been working with universities, and SDS is now delivering inclusion training through the teacher education programme.

As I was there last week, I will also mention the world wheelchair curling championship, which is still taking place. It is a fantastic event for Scotland to host and it is a sport that we have been particularly strong at over the years.

**Joe FitzPatrick:** Thank you very much—you have both just covered a couple of the notes that I made. I wrote down that “You can’t be what you can’t see” and I wrote down “curling” because although there is a curling competition on-going, most people would not know that. I knew about it because the sports minister, Maree Todd, told me just how exciting and amazing it is.

That is a point for the media. We need to call on the media to recognise just how amazing disability sports have become and what great entertainment they can be. We really need the media to step up, just as they are doing for women’s sport, which is getting much better coverage now. We need better coverage of disability sports so that young disabled people can see what opportunities there are. They can then work out what will work for them and get involved in sport and get that buzz. We can all get a buzz from watching it, if it is on the telly.

**Maureen Campbell:** It is about having good coverage of all the sports that are what might be classified as “minority sports”—predominantly Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth sports that do not get enough media coverage across the mainstream media. We are constantly trying to support governing bodies with putting together the right package of information to give to the media. It is about making sure that the media are informed.

Like Forbes, I was down at the wheelchair curling last week and I sat next to some local residents who had come in. They had not seen wheelchair curling before but they came along because it was on their doorstep. They really enjoyed it and they were going to go back to future sessions. It is about being able to expose people to new opportunities and new ideas. Auchenharvie leisure centre hosting a world championship is a great opportunity for people to see a sport at a high standard and we want to encourage such events right across the country.

**Forbes Dunlop:** We might well come to it later, but the Commonwealth games presents a great opportunity because of the number of para events

that are integrated into the games. The Commonwealth games movement has done that over the past two or three cycles and I know that the Glasgow programme has significant para events that are fully integrated into the games model in 2026.

**The Convener:** We will come on to the Commonwealth games later.

**Brian Whittle:** We will probably be pretty aligned on most of what I am about to ask regarding the impact of physical activity on both physical and mental health. It is obvious that there is a decline in the nation's physical and mental health and, at the same time, we have a decline in physical literacy.

I am also concerned about socioeconomic inequality and access to sport. Participation in sport, especially at a higher level, is becoming much more middle class and is happening more in private education. How do we tackle that? After all, it is part of Sportscotland's remit to focus on the health of the nation.

11:00

It strikes me that we have delivery mechanisms that provide opportunities, such as the 1,140 hours of free childcare. As you know, physical literacy happens pre-school—children's cardiovascular and neuromuscular systems, as well as their bone density, are pretty much developed by the time that they get to school. We have spoken about gender inequality, but that tends not to be prevalent in younger age groups, which are much more open.

In the past 10 years, there has been a 43 per cent reduction in PE specialists at primary schools, extracurricular activity at secondary schools has been decimated and there is a lack of connection with community sport. What is Sportscotland doing to try to get the Government to see the pieces of the jigsaw and what we are trying to achieve? In my view, we have all the pieces of the jigsaw but we are not putting them together.

**Maureen Campbell:** We are trying to put the jigsaw together and ensure that everyone is aligned on the priorities and how best to engage with and support physical activity. We want an active Scotland and we want to ensure that everyone can take part in sport and benefit from both the physical and mental health benefits, which you identified and that we all understand. We know that it is a long-term game and that we need to ensure that we continue to encourage and support people to be active. Our active schools programme has been in place for 20 years this year, so we need to look at the generational change. As you have identified, when young

people engage in sport through the active schools programme, they manage to sustain their participation throughout their school journey. We hope that that generation will continue to participate in sport throughout their young adult lives and, therefore, into adulthood.

We need to continue to advocate for everyone to understand the benefits of sport, both physically and mentally, and to seek to align resources and partnerships for the best possible outcome. Everyone's resources are tight and pressured—you hear that regularly in the chamber—but I think that sport has the opportunity to bind people together. The voluntary input that underpins club infrastructure in Scotland is part of our opportunity to try to keep those things aligned and to keep them well supported in order to achieve the benefits that we want.

**Forbes Dunlop:** I have mentioned a couple of times that the physical activity for health framework was launched last autumn. For me, that is a critical piece of work that must be driven centrally and applied locally. It is based on research from around the world and it recognises all the different components that are required in order to have a more physically active nation. Sportscotland has absolute responsibility for sport, which is an important part of it, but the work also recognises the active transport networks that need to be in place and the role of communication and messaging, nationally and locally, on the importance of physical activity. We have a role to play in that through the physical activity for health framework and the strategic group that sits below that, which includes Public Health Scotland, Education Scotland and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

I agree with you that national organisations and bodies must continue to work together to deliver against population health goals. Sportscotland takes complete responsibility for a number of specific interventions, such as the active schools programme that Maureen Campbell mentioned. We also have a very successful partnership with Scottish Action for Mental Health, which I know will be in the Parliament tomorrow night. We have been really proud of that over the years; we have worked closely with and invested in SAMH, and it, in turn, has delivered mental health awareness training to every active schools co-ordinator, every community sport hub officer and any other member of the professional workforce in Scotland. As a direct result of that engagement, the awareness that has been raised, the confidence that people have and the conversations that are happening are definitely impacting on people's lives.

We make some direct interventions and we have a role to play in and a contribution to make

against the physical activity for health framework. I absolutely agree that the pre-school and school settings are where we could and should always aspire to do more. That is where we need to get to young people, and we need to get to them more and get them more active in those settings.

**Brian Whittle:** That was a good plug for the SAMH event tomorrow night, which I am hosting.

I come back to this point, though: the active schools network, although quite patchy at the moment, is a really good delivery mechanism. One of the big problems with it was the extracurricular angle and the issue of how kids got home afterwards, but now that there is free bus travel, that problem has been taken away.

Now the question is: how do we connect what is taught through active schools to the community? How do we ensure a pathway in that respect? As I said, despite all the good work that you are trying to do, the reality is that physical literacy in the country is significantly declining, and I say that as a coach of 30 years, watching the kids who come to me. We are having to go further and further back in their literacy journey to get them ready to participate in sport, so how do we connect active schools to community sport—that is a massively important question. Indeed, how do we utilise delivery mechanisms such as the 1,140 hours of free childcare so that we have active play and start to teach our kids physical literacy again? You are right that local facilities are closing all over the place and are under extreme pressure. In this instance, though, we potentially have a delivery mechanism that is not being fully utilised.

On top of that, I have a question about utilising the school estate. Has there been an audit of all the facilities that could be available but which are currently not being fully utilised?

**Forbes Dunlop:** I would make just a couple of points on that.

First, I know that this is definitely not what you are suggesting, but I think that it is important to point out that active schools was always meant to be complementary and additional to good-quality physical education in school. We are working closely with Education Scotland on a number of the different reviews that it is carrying out on education, tapping into the health and wellbeing strand that has always been part of curriculum for excellence and saying that it is absolutely critical that good-quality physical education happens in school. Active schools is there to complement and add to that instead of replacing it.

A target area for active schools is the school-club link initiative, but I believe that we could do much more in that respect. The risk is that it tries to be everything to everyone; the fact is that the young people in schools who are already quite

active members of school clubs are quite often the ones who turn up to active schools sessions, and through our active schools network, we need to focus on getting the less-active young people more engaged. There is a piece of work to be done there.

We have not looked at the pre-school piece of the jigsaw to date, although that is something that we can do.

Your last question was about the school estate. That will be captured in our facilities review that, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, we are starting just now. The review will look at community facilities and the education estate to give a full picture of what is out there and, importantly, how well it is being used. I think that we all recognise that there might be a need for some rationalisation of the estate, but we need a very clear picture of it in the first instance.

**Brian Whittle:** I appreciate that your angle with active schools is that it should support PE, but as an aside, I think that PE should align itself with the community, too. I do not see the point of doing six weeks of basketball and getting kids really enthusiastic about it, and then moving on to something else if there is no outlet for them to move on to. I think that there is a disconnect in that respect.

I was at an event at a social enterprise yesterday that is phenomenal. It uses a big climbing wall in a former church in Kilmarnock, and it has moved into outdoor canoeing and all sorts of stuff. Those activities are for people in recovery. They are not about teaching people sport but about teaching people through sport and bringing people together and creating confidence, resilience and aspiration through group activity. To me, that is investing in health and not just things like recovery beds, needle exchange and so on. What it is doing is giving people a different direction. I think that that is not understood particularly well. Like many other similar sports organisations—including your organisation—that social enterprise is under extreme financial pressure. Do you think that the Government understands the impact that sport can have in the community, not just for the sake of sport, but for education through sport? Are we doing enough to promote that impact?

**Maureen Campbell:** That is one of the key things that sportscotland talks about at almost every board meeting. How do we make sure that we are advocating for the value of sport, in terms of physical and mental health, economic value and community cohesion value? So many of the projects that we know about—whether they are walking groups, mental health groups, the climbing group example that you gave, Mr Whittle, or outdoor activity groups—lie at the heart of



community cohesion and engagement and bring people in. For us, it is about trying to get that point across. Everyone recognises the value of that but finds it difficult to prioritise in funding decisions, and it is a continual job to convince everyone. We continue to press all funders to recognise the value and importance of what is there. Everyone is living in constrained times, and we need to be realistic about what is achievable, but I have not come across anyone who does not believe that investment in sport and physical activity gives a positive return. Everyone is sympathetic to it, but they do not necessarily have the leverage to unlock the resources that we would like to see.

**Brian Whittle:** I agree with you, but if everybody is in agreement with that, why do we keep cutting the budget? Yesterday, when I spoke to the users of that climbing facility, who are recovering from all sorts of addictions and whatnot, it was clear that the cost of treatment would be exponentially more than the cost of that facility. That is the point that is not getting picked up. Is sport an easy option when it comes to cutting funding?

**Maureen Campbell:** I do not think that it is an easy option. We will not want to be bogged down in legal frameworks and statutory responsibilities, but I think that it is about where the statutory protection lies. Other parts of services that are protected have a statutory framework that is much more detailed than the one that we live in. We like our framework because it gives us flexibility, but if you had fewer choices because of statutory requirements, you would make different choices. So, it is about us making sure that we make the best case possible. People are very supportive of sport and physical activity and the benefits that come from it.

**Brian Whittle:** Unfortunately, with that framework, you are getting less and less investment from central Government, which means that you have less and less ability to invest. For me, that model is not working. You will not be surprised to hear that I think that we should be investing much more heavily in this sort of activity, but the model is obviously not working.

**Maureen Campbell:** The local pressures are probably the greatest. Our budget has had moderate reductions and small increases from time to time, but the pressure is very much at the local authority level, where the largest number of resources are under the greatest amount of pressure.

**Brian Whittle:** Although your budget is now £10 million less than when I came into the Parliament.

**The Convener:** Mr Whittle, we need to move on.

**Brian Whittle:** Okay.

**The Convener:** Thank you. I call Emma Harper.

11:15

**Emma Harper:** It is not necessarily sportsScotland's responsibility to do such a wide sweep of the physical activity out there. Yesterday, I was at the convention of the south of Scotland, and we focused on transport and getting folk on their bikes to the bus or on their bikes to a train, but there did not seem to be a lot of people asking whether they can hang their bike on the train or the bus somewhere. It is about agencies collaborating and working together, so that is not sportsScotland's responsibility.

That is what Maureen Campbell seems to be saying about local authorities working together in collaboration, getting out of silos and so on. We have had lung health choirs singing in the Parliament. That is a physical activity but it is not within sportsScotland's remit. The people who perform in the lung health choirs say that they are so much more physically able because of how singing helps their lung health when they have conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. I am interested in your thoughts on that.

My point is that it is a wider issue that is not just your responsibility. It is about everybody collaborating and working together to improve physical activity for folk in Scotland.

**Maureen Campbell:** It absolutely is. Forbes Dunlop referred to the physical activity for health framework, which covers all those dimensions. It is about encouraging everyone to be more active, whether that is singing in the choir or walking to the bus stop. It is about encouraging people to be aware of the value of physical activity, but our job is to encourage people to participate in sport and physical activity.

You are right that there is a range of players across the piece, and that is why it is right that the physical activity for health framework is articulated in the way that it is. It makes it clear that a range of players need to be involved if we are to succeed in delivering an active Scotland.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** I would like to turn to the 2026 Commonwealth games, which will be in my home city of Glasgow. I am absolutely confident that the sun will be shining, and I am even more confident that Glaswegians will embrace the games. What role will sportsScotland play in preparation for and delivery of the 2026 games?

**Forbes Dunlop:** There are probably two aspects to that. The first will be the role that we always play with Team Scotland. We invest in Commonwealth Games Scotland and the preparation of Team Scotland, so that we know that Scottish athletes will turn up at the games in

the best condition, with the best preparation giving them the best opportunity to perform. We are having conversations with Commonwealth Games Scotland about what we invest in and how we invest it. Our colleagues in the sportscotland institute of sport play a big part in that. Our medical team, our physiotherapy team and our scientist medicine team all work with the games athletes on an on-going basis, but particularly as we go into the games.

The second strand is that we are working closely with the organising committee and with Glasgow on the venues. We have invested in three of the four venues significantly in the past. We know that capital investment and works are required in preparation for the games. Importantly for us, and a wee bit like the Orkney example that I gave earlier, we want to make sure that that new money is well invested, not just to deliver a games experience, but to leave a long-term impact for clubs, communities and athletes in Glasgow and beyond. There are therefore a couple of strands—our work with Team Scotland and our work with the delivery team.

We welcomed the Glasgow 2026 delivery team into our offices in Templeton, so we share an office with them just now. On a practical level, it is helpful to be able to have on-going conversations. It is quite a new team and it is having to get up to speed really quickly, and we have quite a lot of internal knowledge and experience that we can help them with. Being in the same building is definitely helpful for that.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** We are aware that we got the games rather late, and there are sports that are going to miss out—diving, hockey and cricket, to name a few. I have certainly been contacted by representatives of many sports who want to come in. We understand that that is happening because we got the games so late in the day, but what measures are being taken to support excluded sports to prevent potential disadvantages?

**Forbes Dunlop:** We had already invested in the sports that we expected to be in the Australian games. We commit our investment, in principle, on a four-year cycle, so our investment had been committed, and we have not taken away any of that investment. For sports such as hockey, which were previously in the games and now are not, we have not removed investment. We have done what we can to leave the investment on the table for them to explore other competitive opportunities.

What we cannot replace is the profile that comes with the Commonwealth games. Of course, Scottish hockey teams will compete in other international fixtures, but the sport will not get the profile that it would get from being in a Commonwealth games. We have not taken away

the investment. We continue to work with every one of those sports to see what their alternative plans are and to support them where we can. However, I completely understand the disappointment, both for the sports and for the individual athletes who cannot now take part in what would have been their home games.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** I turn to legacy. Evaluation of the 2014 games showed limited improvement in population level health, physical activity and sports participation. What can sportscotland do, or what is it doing, to ensure that that does not happen again?

**Forbes Dunlop:** I do not think that hosting the 2026 games in Glasgow in just over a year's time will result in a particular uptick in the physical activity levels or health of the nation. The £120 million investment in the games will not result in that, given the context of everything else that we have talked about today. Some of the more stubborn and substantial challenges at local and national levels are the things that we would need to change.

I am conscious that I have referenced this a number of times, but the physical activity for health framework and the evidence that sits behind it are really clear that, by hosting the Commonwealth games, if we do not have all the other pillars firing up and working towards a similar outcome of a more active nation, we are unlikely to deliver.

That is not to say that the 2026 games will not have some very positive impacts. I know that a number of the governing bodies that are involved in the games are having conversations about how they can maximise the opportunity that the profile that home games will give them. Whether that will have an impact at population level is questionable.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** In a previous answer, you spoke about the fact that sportscotland is going to look at making a more long-term impact. What type of things will you be doing to get that long-term impact?

**Forbes Dunlop:** The conversation that we have been having over the past months with the board is about the fact that we firmly believe that we need to free up and attract as much new resource as possible to invest in club and community groups and in the volunteers who run sport on a day-to-day basis across Scotland. We believe that that needs to be not our sole focus but an absolute focus in what we do.

At times, when resources are tight, we risk trying to do a little bit of everything for everyone. As a result of the conversations, discussions and debates that we have had with the board and the evidence and detail that we have taken to and gone through with it, we believe that we need to be more focused on club and community sport to

show its value and to support the volunteers who are supporting the 800,000-plus people to be involved in clubs.

Very importantly—this is a journey that we have been on for the past four or five years or maybe longer—those clubs, community groups and organisations must understand the need to be more inclusive and cannot continue to just work with the same groups of people. I think that we have seen progress on that.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** My final question is on the issue of freeing up resources and attracting new ones. The Emirates arena was built for the 2014 games and is going to host the cycling for the 2026 games. Glasgow Life faces a £108 million shortfall and yet the £5 million naming rights have now expired, so it is no longer called the Emirates arena. Given the profile of the 2026 games, what help can sportscotland give to facilitate sponsorship to try to put more money into the local communities that you have just spoken about?

**Forbes Dunlop:** There has been a lot of discussion about the specifics of sponsorship across all aspects of sport. In the UK, in all but a few sports—once you move away from football, rugby and, to an extent, golf—there is now very little sponsorship happening at any significant level. In the past, across the big Olympic and Paralympic sports, British Athletics, UK Athletics and British Swimming have attracted reasonably big sponsorship deals. However, the vast majority of those have now gone.

We work very closely with Glasgow Life and I met it last week. We talked about its facilities, estates, swimming pools, hockey centre, its pitches and its pitch strategy. We work closely with Glasgow Life on the strategy and the provision and how that develops and evolves. However, we have not discussed the specifics around supporting it with the Emirates sponsorship.

**The Convener:** I bring in Paul Sweeney.

**Paul Sweeney:** I appreciate the feedback on the planning for the Commonwealth games.

I want to pick up on the point about legacy, and, in particular, the opportunities for developing capital facilities that are not currently being utilised. For example, Whitehill pool in the city's Dennistoun district, which is close to Tollcross international swimming centre, has been closed since December 2023 due to the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, which has displaced a number of local clubs, including ones that focus on people with disabilities.

Has sportscotland engaged with the organising committee for the 2026 games and the Commonwealth Games Federation about what capital investment opportunities are available to

ensure that facilities, in particular in the deprived parts of Glasgow, can be repaired in time for there to be a legacy proposition for the Commonwealth games?

**Forbes Dunlop:** I have had conversations about Whitehill pool and its challenges with Glasgow Life, which has done an audit of swimming pools in Glasgow. In the funding model that was agreed with the organising committee and the Commonwealth Games Federation, the capital moneys are specifically targeted at the four venues that will be used to host and deliver the games, rather than the wider facility estate. Discussions, negotiations or agreements that focused on the games venues are concluded, but we are having an on-going conversation with Glasgow Life on the wider facilities estate.

**Paul Sweeney:** That is great. One of the core venues for the Commonwealth games is Scotstoun stadium, the main tenant of which, Glasgow Warriors, is looking into developing the facilities. Are there any discussions about how the capital investment can assist with a longer-term legacy in rugby development—for Glasgow Warriors in particular—at the stadium?

**Forbes Dunlop:** We are involved in those discussions, and we are trying to find the right solutions to protect athletics at that venue, as it is an important venue for Scottish athletics, too. We talked earlier about Grangemouth athletics stadium; there is an important link between a number of these projects. It is absolutely our responsibility to make sure that we support and protect both rugby and athletics. We are involved in conversations to try to find the right long-term solutions, rather than focusing solely on delivering the games.

**Paul Sweeney:** Has there been any discussion with the Scottish Event Campus about the planned expansion of its facilities and how that can support a legacy for the games?

**Forbes Dunlop:** That is not something that I am familiar with, but I can find out more about it.

**Paul Sweeney:** That is no problem.

I will quickly return to an earlier point on equalities and equity of access to sport as a potential legacy of the Commonwealth games. I believe that a concern was raised at the November meeting of the Scottish Sports Council Trust Company board regarding

“strategies to engage key groups, such as BAME children experiencing poverty.”

It was highlighted that there were

“challenges in identifying specific students within schools”

and that there could be better use of

“data to target support and remove barriers, including financial assistance.”

Could the Commonwealth games offer an opportunity to enrich the data picture on engaging young people, especially those from deprived backgrounds or ethnic minority backgrounds? Do you think that looking at that picture through the prism of the Commonwealth games would allow us to build such relationships, given that Glasgow has the most ethnically diverse population in Scotland?

11:30

**Forbes Dunlop:** Absolutely. That work sits with our core partnership with Glasgow Life. We are having such conversations with Glasgow Life. As well as using the data and insight that we have obtained through our active schools team and our community sport hubs team in Glasgow, we are looking at a couple of other new initiatives, which we are having conversations with Glasgow Life about.

With the Commonwealth games coming around, the spotlight will again be on sport. When the spotlight is on sport, it is important not only that we celebrate our fantastic Scottish athletes, who I am sure will do very well, but that we talk about some of the challenges and the access issues that are experienced by those who do not have the same opportunities to participate in sport. It is important that we use the Commonwealth games as an opportunity to have such conversations in more public arenas and that more people are able to listen to and engage in those conversations.

**Paul Sweeney:** Do you have any ideas about how that work might evolve? Could that happen through engagement with the charities that work with more deprived communities or engagement with specific schools? Is an idea emerging of how that work might be developed?

**Forbes Dunlop:** A range of work is on-going. We see the work in relation to schools as being work in progress. We have been involved in that work for a long time, and it will continue.

In addition, there is a new piece of work emerging on how we can better engage with the community groups, some of which are charitable organisations, that serve areas of deprivation and ethnically diverse communities in Glasgow. Conversations are taking place with Glasgow Life about that. We have some solutions, and new investment and new partnerships are coming through, although we are not quite at the stage of being able to firm that up. It is work in progress, and we are not far away.

**The Convener:** The final question comes from Brian Whittle.

**Brian Whittle:** Thank you for letting me come back in, convener.

I want to ask about the legacy issue. It is clear from looking back at the 2014 games that a successful legacy of that was the club together programme that was run by Scottish Athletics. Consideration was given to mirroring that in swimming and cycling. That involved investment in the provision of 15 hours of professional help in a club, which was paid for by the sponsor club and the local council. It was their job to look at how we recruit. The results of that programme were measurable. Over that period, an extra 3,000 people were involved in all aspects of it.

Do you think that it would be worth revisiting that model and looking at how we could expand it?

**Maureen Campbell:** The governing bodies have got really good at understanding how they can capitalise on events that come to their area. They understand what worked well in 2014, 2018 and 2023. It is a case of them looking at those examples and recognising that they need to be ready. They know that there will be an influx of children and young people on the back of the games, so they must not wait until September, October or November; they need to be ready to talk about that in June and July.

The club together model is a good example, but there are others. Each of the governing bodies of the sports that will be included in the games wants to be ready to capitalise on the interest that they will generate among children and young people who have perhaps not previously engaged in those sports, and to ensure that there are opportunities available and that the clubs have a pathway ready to support children who do not want to try a sport only for a day but want to have a sustained period of participation.

**Forbes Dunlop:** The work that Scottish Athletics did in that regard was excellent, and Scottish Swimming did similar work. SportScotland has run a direct club investment programme for a period of time. I mentioned the conversations and the focus that our board has had on freeing up investment and attracting more money to the club and community space. It is a case of reducing the financial and administrative burden on club volunteers who want to coach children and young people so that they can take part in sport. They do not want to spend all their time dealing with all those other things.

Our plans will be about how we can focus on and build on the success of the model that you mentioned.

**The Convener:** I thank the witnesses for their attendance at committee and for staying slightly past the agreed time. They are now free to go.

## Subordinate Legislation

### National Assistance (Sums for Personal Requirements) (Scotland) Regulations 2025 (SSI 2025/30)

11:34

**The Convener:** The third item on the agenda is consideration of three negative instruments. The first is the National Assistance (Sums for Personal Requirements) (Scotland) Regulations 2025. Its purpose is to increase the value of personal expenses allowance in line with average earnings, which is an increase of 4.1 per cent. The policy note states that this allowance is usually increased each April at the same time as social security benefits are updated.

The Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee considered the instrument at its meeting on 25 February and made no recommendations. No motion to annul the instrument has been lodged.

As members do not have any comments, does the committee agree not to make any recommendations in relation to the instrument?

**Members indicated agreement.**

### National Assistance (Assessment of Resources) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2025 (SSI 2025/31)

**The Convener:** The purpose of the second instrument, which is the National Assistance (Assessment of Resources) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2025, is to increase the value of savings credit disregard from £8.15 to £8.50 for a single person and from £12.10 to £12.60 for a couple, in line with the increase in average earnings, which is currently forecast at 4.1 per cent.

The regulations also increase the lower capital limit from £21,500 to £22,000 and the upper capital limit from £35,000 to £35,500, in line with the increase in the consumer prices index, which is forecast at 1.7 per cent. In addition, the regulations disregard various payments to individuals living in residential care, ensuring that those payments are not taken into consideration by local authorities when carrying out a financial assessment for charges for those living in residential care.

The Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee considered the instrument at its meeting on 25 February and made no recommendations. No motion to annul the instrument has been lodged.

As members do not have any comments, does the committee agree not to make any recommendations in relation to the instrument?

**Members indicated agreement.**

### National Health Service (Common Staffing Method) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2025 (SSI 2025/43)

**The Convener:** The purpose of the third instrument, which is the National Health Service (Common Staffing Method) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2025, is to amend the National Health Service (Common Staffing Method) (Scotland) Regulations 2024, which specify the staffing level and professional judgment tools that must be used as part of the common staffing method for specified healthcare provision.

The Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee considered the instrument at its meeting on 4 March and made no recommendations. No motion to annul the instrument has been lodged.

I believe that Sandesh Gulhane has a comment to make.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** I declare an interest as a practising NHS general practitioner.

There are 1,003 consultant vacancies and 3,100 nursing vacancies across NHS Scotland. Doctors and nurses up and down the country are working on underfilled rotas, covering and cross-covering, doing extra shifts and suffering moral injury. Not a single NHS worker believes that these regulations have improved their rotas or their work life. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care has broken his promise to our nursing colleagues in a deal that he struck to reduce their working hours. How do nurses feel about fair work and fair pay when trust has been shattered?

There are no consequences for managers when they flog our hard-working NHS staff. They sit in their cosy offices on huge fat-cat wages, watching our staff burn out. There is no managerial accountability. I would like the minister in charge to come here to discuss the instrument, to see what tangible difference it makes to our doctors and nurses who are working so hard, and to ensure that we have genuinely safe staffing.

**Emma Harper:** I would be interested in getting further information on what common staffing methods are. I know that, in intensive care units, one-to-one care is often provided—that is, one nurse to one patient—whereas, in a recovery room, it is two-to-one care. In the operating room department, no one can cut skin until a certain number of people from the department are present. Staffing levels are based on, for example,

the type of anaesthetic and surgery, and whether the patient is awake. That is based on my experience in the perioperative environment, but we also have new roles with physician associates, anaesthesia associates and surgical assistants.

I would be interested in fleshing out the detail on what the instrument means, rather than looking at reducing work hours. I do not think the cabinet secretary has betrayed anybody—that aspect is in process; it is an on-going discussion.

**Brian Whittle:** Listening to my colleagues, I am struck by the disparity between what we are trying to do here and the reality on the ground. I have spoken to a lot of healthcare professionals in an acute environment where staffing levels are putting them under extraordinary pressure and are a danger to patients.

There is, in some cases, a disparity between what is legally required and what is happening on the ground. Like my colleague Sandesh Gulhane, I think that it would be to our advantage to have the minister or the cabinet secretary come here so that we can discuss that.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** Given the timescales within which the committee has to consider the instrument, I propose that the clerks write to the relevant cabinet secretary or minister to request that they come to committee next week to speak to the regulations and specifically about staffing levels and the professional judgment tools. Is the committee content with that proposal?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** The committee's next formal meeting will be on Tuesday 18 March, when we will begin taking oral evidence on the Right to Addiction Recovery (Scotland) Bill.

That concludes the public part of our meeting today.

11:41

*Meeting continued in private until 11:53.*

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