

## **Annex C**

### **VOCAL Conference – Thursday 1 October 2009**

#### **Opening Speech**

**Thank you Rod for your warm welcome this morning.**

- Good morning everyone and thank you very much for inviting me to speak at your Annual Conference in this lovely setting in North Berwick.
- Culture and Leisure Services are strategically placed to contribute greatly to the quality of life of communities therefore I am delighted to have been given this opportunity to give the opening address at such a worthwhile Conference.
- I can only apologise however for not being able to participate in the full day's programme due to other Ministerial business.

#### **East Lothian**

- This is the second year that the VOCAL conference has been held in North Berwick, recently crowned the most beautiful town in Scotland, winning the Rosebowl Trophy in the Beautiful Scotland awards and I would therefore like to thank East Lothian Council for both hosting the conference

and congratulate them for their achievement in securing this prestigious accolade for the town.

- I understand that the town also won the Coastal Resort Award and the Permanent Landscaping Award – quite an accomplishment and further evidence of the Council’s commitment to keeping the local community an attractive, safe place to live and visit.

## **General**

- I am thoroughly enjoying my portfolio responsibilities as Minister for Public Health and Sport. There are clear linkages between health, physical activity and sport and one of my main goals is trying to get the nation more physically active with the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of all Scottish people.
- It is definitely an exciting time to be Sports Minister in Scotland with a number of high profile events taking place including the International Children’s Games taking place in North and South Lanarkshire in 2011, the Commonwealth Games and Ryder Cup in 2014 and of course, the Open golf championship returning to Muirfield, just up the road, in 2013.

- The next few years provide a unique opportunity for the development of physical activity and sport in Scotland, to allow us to build on our on Scotland's sporting history that and to fulfil our ambitions for Scotland.
- Scotland remains a desirable destination for sport and cultural tourism because of its wonderful history, scenery and the warm welcome we give to visitors and events such as the International Festivals and the Open are a powerful draw which we must always respect and work hard to protect.
- In mentioning golf, it would be unthinking of me not to take a second to say it was particularly pleasing to see North Berwick's own Catriona Matthew, Scotland's latest addition to the list of Major winners, win the recent Women's British Open at Royal Lytham and St Annes.
- They called it the mother of all victories as she won the Open only eleven weeks after giving birth to her 2<sup>nd</sup> daughter. The efforts of Catriona is not just a victory for her, but a victory for all mums around the world.

## Concordat

- The Government, when we came to power in Scotland, decided that a change was needed in the way we all do things. We entered into discussions with our partners in local Government and agreed the historic Concordat between the Government, CoSLA and Local Authorities.
- Flowing from this new relationship are the Single Outcome Agreements with Local Authorities which are outcome based performance frameworks used to focus on what we want to achieve over the next 3 years.
- This relationship provides an excellent and strong foundation for our partnership to deliver in Scotland on sport and culture. The Government also recognises that different Local Authorities will place different priorities on providing culture, physical activity and sport within their own areas.
- The Concordat does give us, however, the opportunity to secure the place of culture and sport within Local Authorities' wider community plans.
- The benefits of engaging in the cultural and leisure services provided by Local Authorities for individuals and communities

are well documented and indeed are the services most likely to be engaged in by the majority of residents, therefore their importance within the community planning processes cannot be underestimated.

- We will continue to work with VOCAL, CoSLA and other partners to encourage every Local Authority in Scotland, along with their Community Planning partners, to plan for how we can all take advantage of the opportunities provided by the current services and also events such as the 2014 Commonwealth Games.
- I am greatly enthused from my discussions with Local Authorities in what we can do together, learning from each other, sharing examples of the best practice that currently exist and sharing new ideas and initiatives that will help us collectively contribute to improving services and increasing opportunities.

## **Legacy**

- As many of you will be aware, the 2014 Legacy Plan was launched on 1 September 2009 and I am already heartened by the reception that the Plan has received and the enthusiasm from our Local Authority partners to work

together with us in developing project plans and achieving the ambitions set out in the document.

- The Plan focuses on four key elements with improving the Nation's health as the unifying theme, aiming to improve the health and fitness of our people, our communities and our businesses.
- The Commonwealth Games Legacy will provide opportunities for communities across the whole of Scotland – not just those in the West - to enjoy and participate in the range of programmes that will be delivered through the Active, Connected, Flourishing and Sustainable themed elements of the Plan and the focus will be on encouraging partners and individuals to be able to get involved and contribute in their own way to making the Legacy a reality.
- The Government has identified within each Local Authority a Legacy Lead who will be the initial contact point for implementation of the Plan's key programmes, responsible for internally communicating the opportunities in order that the Plan is implemented from the start with enthusiasm and that this is then maintained.

- I have been very encouraged by the feedback from the recent meeting of the CoSLA All Scotland Group and the willingness of Local Authorities to get involved and to help us shape the delivery of the Plan.
- The role of VOCAL in this will be important, specifically in developing strong links with local partners, particularly through the Area Institute Network and with Governing Bodies of Sport.
- There are however a number of key Legacy programmes that I would like to highlight here today.

## **Volunteering**

- There will be huge opportunities for volunteering before, during and after the 2014 Commonwealth Games.
- Not just volunteering at major events and providing a sustainable resource to support our community groups and clubs, but through the development of more formal volunteering programmes, to help build up a more confident, flourishing and ambitious Scotland in which individuals and communities are empowered to do things for themselves.

- The Government is working with a number of partners, including the 2014 Organising Committee, EventScotland and Volunteer Development Scotland to develop a number of volunteering interventions that will help us to unlock the full potential of volunteers in creating a prosperous Scotland.
- The Legacy Plan for the 2014 Commonwealth Games will also allow us to potentially *accelerate* progress on the implementation of National and Local strategies for physical activity and sport.
- In order to focus on the Health theme within the Plan will be the development of two key initiatives within the **Active Scotland** component of the Plan aimed at increasing the availability and accessibility of physical activity and sport to individuals and communities that will in turn contribute to improving the health and fitness of the people of Scotland.
- These initiatives are the “*Active Nation*” Programme, which aims to create a popular and high-profile movement to motivate people of all ages across Scotland to become more active and the development of a network of *Community Sports Hubs*.

## **Active Nation**

- The physical activity programme, Active Nation, in the Legacy plan is straightforward in its ambition, but challenging. To get people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds involved in and enjoying the benefits of being more physically active.
- It will also aim to showcase the wide range of activities available across Scotland and highlight how becoming more active can be fun and beneficial to all.
- This is particularly important for our children, who, if we can get them interested in becoming active at an early age may just be the break in the chain we are looking for that ends Scotland being known as the sick country in Europe.
- It is vital that physical activity forms part of all young people's lives and that there are appropriate opportunities to stimulate and develop an interest and commitment that will provide a foundation for sustained physical activity throughout their lives.
- Creating a new network of Community Sports Hubs will help greatly by making it easier for local people to get together to

access local facilities in their local community, and try new activities and also, have some fun!

- I am pleased that the concept of Community Sports Hubs has been well received and with the help and expertise of **sportscotland** and Local Authorities we will create a network for the Hubs that make better use of existing facilities and the natural environment to help create a focus for individuals, communities and sports organisations to come together.
- The Community Sports Hubs network may go some way to getting young people off the streets and into worthwhile activities in sport. Who knows, we may just find a Scottish sports star of the future who otherwise would have gone unnoticed.
- A small Project Board is being established to strategically oversee implementation and communication of the Community Sports Hubs programme and will be discussing with all Local Authorities the terms of reference for the network, how Local Authorities can get involved and to develop a co-ordinated approach to learning from each other.

## School Estate Strategy

- In seeking to make more of the use of existing facilities, such as the school estate, just last week Fiona Hyslop, the Cabinet Secretary for Education & Lifelong Learning launched the new School Estate Strategy jointly with COSLA, “*Building Better Schools – Investing in Scotland’s Future*” which sets out our joint vision for the future of Scotland’s schools to ensure that they are equipped to meet the needs of children, teachers and the local community.
- The new Strategy recognises that schools are much more than just ‘educational establishments’ and the availability and accessibility of school buildings and facilities for community use - be it educational, recreational, sporting, cultural, social or other - are equally important.
- That has been an aspiration of the Government for sometime now and we are beginning to see this aspiration realised and one of the main aims of the new School Estate Strategy is to consolidate and accelerate that trend.
- There are many links between the new Strategy and other Government policies, both national and local. Significantly, for schools built over the next few years to lead the way in

provision of and access to sport and recreation facilities and activities, both indoor and outdoor, all contributing to achieving a healthier Scotland.

- This approach is consistent with and will support the Community Sports Hubs described in the Legacy Plan to improve the use of and access to school facilities for physical activity and competitive sport.

### **Local Sports Development**

- Like the School Estate strategy, it is important that our ambitions are given a strategic context and in responding to the recent report by the Health and Sport Committee in its Pathways Into Sport Inquiry, the Government stated its support for the development of sport and physical activity strategies within each Local Authority area that encompass the provision of opportunities for all communities.
- These strategies should also reflect the need for the provision of a connected facility network, provision of sports pitches and training areas and the development of the volunteer and coaching workforce to support sustainable development and the club infrastructure.

- There exists therefore a unique opportunity to support the development of these strategies and the increase in participation desired through more effective communication across the sporting infrastructure and better evidence and sharing of the many examples of good practice that currently exist.
- The Government will support **sportscotland** in the development of increased opportunities with you and developing sports strategies within Local Authorities, linked to the roll out of the new regional structure for **sportscotland**, the Area Institute and Community Sport Hubs networks.
- As I said before, these are exciting times for us all and I look forward to working in partnership with all Local Authorities in achieving of joint ambitions across Culture, Physical Activity and Sport in the coming years.

I am sure you will all enjoy the remainder of the conference today and tomorrow and I wish you all every success with your continued good work.

Thank you.