

## Observatory for Sport in Scotland (OSS)

### WHAT YOU THINK THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR SPORT IN SCOTLAND....

Thank you to everyone who attended our first Think event and University forum in May. As you know OSS is a new think and do tank that wants a strong sporting future for Scotland.

We know the future for sport cannot be disentangled from the future of many other aspects of Scottish life and that nobody has a crystal (foot)ball. But by asking you and others working across sport in Scotland where you think the future lies is a good start.

Multiple social, economic and cultural influences impact sport as they do all aspects of Scottish life. Influences include but extend way beyond those of family, neighborhood, region and country to encompass global networks and systems of trade, productivity, technology and media, environmental management, power relations, conflict and international collaboration.

Taking current insight and drivers including social, economic and cultural influences we asked sports stakeholders what they thought might impact on community sport in Scotland over the next 10 to 20 years. What they told us identifies the prevailing mood, concerns, optimism and pessimism that exists and these in themselves shape our future.

The good news first - the gender effect is the most positive driver with an optimism that in the future more women will take part in sport. Stakeholders were also optimistic that sports could adapt to meet changing consumer preferences; that the positive wave of increasing health and fitness consciousness would continue and that developments in education would be a positive force.

Continuing austerity was the largest negative factor likely to push participation in sport down rather than up by impacting infrastructure, provision and investment. Stakeholders were pessimistic about the impact of social inequality on participation in sport with a growing polarisation between the affluent and poorer parts of society and its geographical manifestation in area deprivation and cycles of poverty because of this.

It will be interesting to see if the new section of the Equality Act that came into force in Scotland on 1st April 2018 which "places a legal responsibility on particular public bodies in Scotland to actively consider ('pay due regard' to) how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making

strategic decisions" helps tackle inequality in the face of austerity impact.

Other drivers identified as negatives were poor health linked in particular to obesity; the impact of social media and associated technologies on sedentary lifestyles; and less so the ageing population; the impact of major events - interestingly more see this as negative than positive.

This is the start of a journey. These drivers need a focused debate and innovative thinking if we are to shift this sense of inevitability to build on their positive aspects and slow down or reverse their potentially negative influences.

**Join the discussion at the next OSS think event *Getting to grips with inequalities inside and outside Sport in Scotland* at Aberdeen Standard Investments, 6 Saint Andrew Square, Edinburgh, EH2 2BD. 19<sup>th</sup> June 130pm.** Email [marie@oss.scot](mailto:marie@oss.scot) OR SIGN UP HERE:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/getting-to-grips-with-inequalities-inside-and-outside-sport-in-scotland-tickets-46362151443>

### Future Events

We are currently planning future events and are interested in hearing from you about areas of particular interest. Email [marie@oss.scot](mailto:marie@oss.scot)

### Thank You

Thank you to the supporters, universities, business leaders, sports stakeholders, advisers and speakers who have helped OSS to get off the ground. Our first piece of ongoing research into participation in sport, our forums and the remarkable progress we have been able to make would not be possible without you.

### WHAT IS OSS AND WHERE IS IT GOING?

OSS is a Charity<sup>1</sup> and is a *thinking and doing* tank.

The *thinking end* of OSS is focussed on research and analysis, some commissioned directly by OSS and some catalysed through our links with academia via our University Forum. The *doing end* of OSS is built on our links with business and the community sports sector who, using

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the information and evidence generated by our *thinking end*, seek to engage and influence funders and policy makers.

#### What does OSS do?

**OSS' Research Strategy and Programme.** Recently we have commissioned several pieces of research to bring evidence-based clarity on the levels and trends in Scottish sports participation. This research is underpinned by international insight, as well as being combined with new perspectives such as the theory of 'sporting capital' (the sporting equivalent of 'human capital').

**OSS' Cross Sector Collaborations.** Through its engagement with business, the sport in the community sector and academia, and the creation of Forums where they can come together, OSS has brought together stakeholders who combined bring a better informed, louder and stronger voice for the cause of sport in the community. Backed by relevant and independent research these stakeholders are in a strong position to seek to influence policy recommendations for the funding, infrastructure and growth of sport in Scotland.

#### Next Steps for OSS?

**The 'Scottish People and Sport Survey'** OSS is proposing a new 'Scottish People and Sport Survey' to better understand participation and what drives and sustains it. Such a survey would allow clearer and more effective international comparisons and benchmarking, in particular enabling Scotland to learn from those countries where participation outstrips ours.

**OSS' Future Research.** OSS is already engaging at the grassroots level so we can better understand which issues concern the sector the most, so that we can shape our future research accordingly.

The issues are widespread and include: social inequality and sport; facilities and access; impact on sport by technology; the role of walking, sport for transport and traditional sports in our futures; the polarisation of the active and inactive and the social and health impacts; the individual and social cost of poor and decreasing physical attainment; the economic value of sport; sport in education; widening access to our built infrastructure in schools, universities; learning about sport systems and funding from exemplar countries in community sport.

**Building a Movement: Sport in the Community.** OSS plans to deploy a range of tools, including research, think events, Forums, media, publications and policy recommendations, to help raise the profile of sport in the community. Our aim is to create a movement of passionate volunteers who can share their resources to support a growth in sport in the community across Scotland.

We hope you will join us.