THE SUSTAINABILITY OF LOCAL SPORTS CLUBS IN SCOTLAND

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sport 21 is the national strategy for sport in Scotland, first published in 1998 and updated to cover the period from 2003-2007. The strategy aims to get more people involved in sport more often, as well as to enable everyone in Scotland to realise their full potential.

It is clear that local sports clubs are a vital part of the fabric of community life in Scotland, and bring a range of social and economic benefits to local communities.

This report describes research undertaken between July 2005 and January 2006 to identify and investigate the sustainability issues facing sports clubs. The research has identified a range of issues, and proposes a number of actions to address these. The research also identified a wide range of good practice issues, as well as innovation by clubs, Scottish governing bodies and others. A publication providing information to clubs about how to seek assistance with many issues relating to sustainability was also produced as part of this research project, drawing on the good practice examples identified.

At a general level, sports clubs may be missing out on a good deal of assistance as they do not identify themselves with the wider voluntary sector. Assistance on a range of issues is available through the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) network, and from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) (as well as Volunteer Development Scotland and a range of other organisations).

Structural and management issues

The vast majority of sports clubs in Scotland are voluntary organisations, although only a very small number of sports clubs are registered charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs. A majority of clubs surveyed in this research were found to be unincorporated associations. Few clubs reported having established trading subsidiaries (largely due to the relatively small size of their turnover)

Relatively few sports clubs were found to have business plans or sport development plans. One of the key issues underpinning sustainability is that clubs have to operate in a business-like manner and should be run with this in mind.

Many clubs reported difficulties in securing volunteers to join management committees and act as office bearers, and there appears to be little training undertaken for this group. Only about 40% of clubs reported having treasurers with any form of accounting or book-keeping qualification.

Some governing bodies promote club development programmes, which appear to be very well regarded by those clubs which have taken part. A number of local authorities, and some governing bodies, are now offering accreditation programmes for clubs, usually supported by a development officer. The availability of training, club development and accreditation programmes varies greatly across Scotland, and between different sports.

Clubs reported concerns about insurance, both from a cost and appropriateness point of view and the issue of child protection is provoking considerable concern among clubs. Few clubs appeared aware, however, of the “Child Protection in Sport” service being offered by Children 1st.
Most clubs have difficulty in keeping pace with relevant legislative changes and it is likely that there will be a good deal of relevant legislation which clubs may be unaware of. Few clubs appeared to have any real conception of equalities issues.

Membership issues

Most clubs in most sports appear to be very local in terms of the catchment areas from which members are drawn. This also makes them vulnerable to social or demographic changes, and particularly to competitive pressures. Small clubs and those in rural areas, or small towns are particularly vulnerable to fluctuating membership.

Some sports, for example, curling and bowling are facing considerable pressures due to the aging of the current membership base. The picture for some other sports is more positive. Some clubs, however, are facing pressures from demand, and are, effectively closed to new members.

Many clubs reported difficulties in recruiting women and young people, as well as, in some cases, people from minority ethnic communities. Disability sports organisations also reported difficulties in recruitment. Girls aged 10-15 and young women were identified as particular groups which clubs struggle to recruit. Although many clubs expressed concerns about recruitment or retention, few clubs plan their recruitment strategy.

Some clubs were found to have developed innovative or interesting approaches to tackle at least some of these issues, including free or reduced membership, schemes to defray the initial cost of equipment, specific assistance for young people, making links with schools and other organisations, marketing initiatives (such as leaflets, websites and the promotion of events), as well as making investment in facilities.

It is clear that many clubs are struggling to retain some groups of members, again, particularly young people.

Funding Issues

Sports clubs must at least cover their costs, but this is rarely enough, as clubs need to generate a surplus to invest in facilities, or to cover repairs and replacements. Clubs are clearly facing increased costs. Sports clubs as a whole may be less vulnerable financially than some other parts of the voluntary sector due to this “lack” of reliance on grant funding.

Many sports clubs exist with little or no external funding support. Many clubs reported frustration that they did not appear to have access to information about grants and many clubs appear to struggle with fundraising and sponsorship, and a large majority have limited opportunities for earning trading income. Even among clubs with other sources of income, a majority have annual membership fees as their main source of income and are vulnerable to fluctuations in membership.

At least some of these difficulties are due to the inexperience, or lack of skills among committee members. Some clubs have developed considerable expertise in accessing external funding, often through experience, and through concentrating efforts in one person, or a small group of people.
Clubs with revenue-earning capacity are largely concentrated in sports where there are also concerns about recruitment. The overall impact of the smoking ban is hard to gauge, but it is likely to hit social clubs – particularly those clubs which have no regular source of income in closed seasons.

Some clubs were found to have diversified their activities, but these have been largely confined to clubs with either excess ground, or large clubhouses which can be let to external groups. There were very few examples identified of clubs cooperating to any extent. A small number of mergers were identified and some examples of ground sharing.

**Facilities issues**

Overall, more than half of all clubs indicated concerns about facilities. These concerns were slightly different for clubs which owned their facilities to those who rented or hired them. Only about half of the clubs surveyed as part of this research have long term security of access to their playing and other facilities.

Some sports facilities are also under pressure from both housing development and other priorities for funding. The lack of investment in sports facilities in some areas was identified in various ways by many clubs. Conversely, it is also clear that considerable investment is being made in sport in some areas (by clubs and local authorities).

The main area of concern for clubs is the quality of facilities. These concerns take a number of forms, including concerns about maintenance, incompatible uses, drainage, changing rooms and other facilities. These concerns covered most sports and all areas of Scotland in some form (although football clubs were perhaps the most likely to voice concerns). Some clubs which own their own facilities are clearly constrained by the lack of money to invest in maintenance and upgrading.

In some areas, there are concerns about the ways in which facilities are managed, for example in terms of granting exclusive access, lets being cancelled at short notice and a general lack of communication with clubs. Some clubs identified facilities simply being withdrawn. Some clubs which operate in school premises clearly feel that this is a source of difficulty, although this is not the case for many other clubs.

**Staffing issues**

A minority of clubs currently employ staff, and those that do tend to be concentrated in a narrow range of sports. The exception to this is coaches, who are employed across a wide range of sports. The largest number of staff are involved in grounds maintenance and bar and catering work. Relatively few staff were found to be employed in management roles. Golf clubs represented a high proportion of all clubs with staff.

Relatively few clubs identified having concerns about staffing, beyond the issue of affordability. A number of clubs noted that it is very difficult to obtain funding for administration and other core staff.

A bare majority of clubs employing staff appear to provide training to these staff, either induction training or ongoing skills training although some good examples were found in the
survey of the use of, for example, Investors In People and Learn Direct, as well as contacts made with colleges. Although coaching is a growth area, some clubs in some sports reported difficulties in finding an adequate supply of coaches, and in securing the training of club members wishing to qualify.

Volunteer issues

The survey identified a total of nearly 14,000 volunteers working across all sports, and in clubs of all types and sizes. (The total number of volunteers currently active in sport is estimated to be between 140,000 and 145,000.) The numbers of volunteers varies greatly by club, but there is no particular pattern evident in terms of either sport or area.

Most clubs appear to have a relatively unsophisticated understanding of the value of volunteers and few clubs appear to be taking a structured approach to the recruitment and management of volunteers. Similarly, few reported having volunteering policies, and none reported having a specific coordinator.

Relatively few clubs appear to have policies of direct relevance to volunteers in place. By some margin, the most common policy cited was in relation to child protection. There is little evidence of development activities for volunteers, except those involved in coaching activities.

Across the voluntary sector generally, organisations are reporting increasing difficulties in recruiting volunteers, and this pattern is repeated among sports clubs. Around 40% of clubs surveyed identified difficulties in recruiting volunteers. In some areas, the pool of available volunteers is limited (for example, rural and island areas) and clubs in these areas may face some specific difficulties. Very few clubs mentioned working with Volunteer Centres, and none mentioned Volunteer Development Scotland.

Links and joint working

Many clubs appear to have strong links with the community, and believe that they provide an essential opportunity to community members for both recreational and social activities. Some (particularly those with social facilities) may provide the only “social club” in some areas. Clubs also recognise the benefits they can bring to all ages, but particularly to young people and older people, in terms of providing the opportunity to engage in physical activity.

The role of clubs in addressing government policy objectives in health and physical activity are also well-understood (although it is perhaps surprising that so few clubs appear to target health sector funding successfully).

Although only 200 clubs identified links with schools, the real level is likely to be higher. Most clubs appear to recognise the dual benefit involved. Schools have access to coaching, volunteers and often facilities, while clubs are able to introduce young people to their sport at an early age.

Links to local businesses were found to be less strong. Most clubs saw businesses in terms of sponsorship. None mentioned business as a source of volunteers. None of the clubs mentioned, for example, Scottish Business in the Community, and only a tiny number mentioned Chambers of Commerce.
There were very few examples of joint working between clubs except at a very basic level. Some clubs, for example, ground share, while some may cooperate in the recruitment of coaches.

**Support issues**

It is clear that clubs derive most of their support from two main sources, governing bodies and local authorities. The extent of seeking help from, and support provided by other providers is relatively small. The extent to which clubs access support from governing bodies and local authorities appears to vary across Scotland, and across sports. Some governing bodies appear to provide more support than others.

The extent and nature of support from other bodies varies greatly and often appears to rely on the knowledge of staff or committee members. Few clubs identified using the Help for Clubs website.

The main issues with which clubs identified requiring support were, as might be expected, funding and child protection policies. About 10% of clubs simply said that more information should be available about most topics.

**Overview**

Many clubs face a number of problems, and the research suggests several areas and issues for which advice and support could be provided or targeted, in order to help to tackle some of these difficulties. It is also clear that some clubs have identified various forms of good practice which have been successful in contributing to their own sustainability, and these can be shared with others.

**Suggestions for action**

Among the suggestions for action made (covering a range of issues) were¹:

- Making clubs aware of the assistance available through the wider voluntary sector.
- Updating the Help for Clubs website to take account of suggestions made directly and indirectly by clubs through this research.
- Making clubs more aware of Help for Clubs, and promoting awareness of the range of assistance which is available to them through sport and mainstream voluntary sector sources.
- Providing a range of assistance on business-related issues, including business planning, skills and raising finance.
- Supporting the development of support for accessing funding (particularly non-sports sector funding), including through the promotion of workshops and material on the Help for Clubs site.
- Developing guidance on diversifying the use of clubs’ assets.
- Providing guidance to clubs on the issues faced by unincorporated associations and the need for insurance.

¹ These are edited from the full list in Section 3 of the main report. Some suggested actions have been conflated.
- Providing additional guidance on charitable status and Community Amateur Sports Club status.
- Making clubs more aware of the Child Protection in Sport service (from Children 1st)
- Providing guidance on effective structured approaches to the recruitment of both staff and particularly volunteers.
- Both the development of additional assistance, and the promotion of awareness of current assistance with the recruitment and development of volunteers.
- Support for the development of local facilities audits, either by area, or by sport (e.g. football pitches and associated facilities).
- Promotion of links between clubs and local businesses, for example through Scottish Business in the Community.
SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sport 21\textsuperscript{2} is the national strategy for sport in Scotland, first published in 1998 and updated to cover the period from 2003-2007. The strategy aims to get more people involved in sport more often, as well as to enable everyone in Scotland to realise their full potential.

1.2 The strategy sets out a wide range of ways in which this will be achieved, and recognises the importance of sports clubs as part of this. Sports clubs are highlighted as one means of enabling people to participate in sport in Scotland and in enabling their lifetime involvement.

1.3 In this context, sports clubs are an essential part of the infrastructure for the development of sport in Scotland and for the achievement of the strategy. The strategy also sets out a number of developments which will be required in order to achieve the targets which relate to strengthening, developing and investing in clubs. Overall, it is recognised that it is important to ensure that clubs have the capacity to undertake their role and that they are sustainable into the future.

1.4 This report describes research undertaken between July 2005 and January 2006 to identify and investigate the sustainability issues facing sports clubs. The research has identified a range of issues, and proposes a number of actions to address these. The research also identified a wide range of good practice issues, as well as innovation by clubs, Scottish governing bodies\textsuperscript{3} and others. A publication providing information to clubs about how to seek assistance with many issues relating to sustainability was also produced as part of this research project. This draws on much of the good practice described in this report.

1.5 The report is in three sections. The first provides a summary of the aims, objectives and methodology of the research, and the strategic framework for the study. The second section provides a summary of the findings of the research, and the final section sets out a series of conclusions and recommendations.

Aims and objectives of the research

1.6 This research explores the issues and constraints facing clubs in 2005. It also highlights the social and economic role of local sports clubs in their communities.

Aim

1.7 The overall aim of this research was to:

“...identify the social and economic constraints currently faced by local sports clubs in Scotland, and to identify how these may be overcome, using case studies to demonstrate good practice in the form of a guidance document which can be used by sports clubs”.


\textsuperscript{3} Throughout the report, the term “governing body” is taken to mean “Scottish governing body”.

1
Objectives

1.8 The related objectives were:

- To establish the social and economic role that local sports clubs play in their community, and how they contribute to social cohesion and social and economic capital.
- To examine the role volunteers play in local sports clubs, and how they contribute to the success and sustainability of the club, both socially and economically.

METHODOLOGY

1.9 A range of methods, both quantitative and qualitative, were used to undertake this work, and details of each strand are provided below.

Scoping paper and review of literature

1.10 The first stage involved a review of relevant literature, and drawn from the findings, production of a “scoping paper” on the sustainability issues clubs may face. A range of material was examined, including sport-related literature and material focusing on wider issues facing voluntary organisations. This paper formed the basis of the design of a large scale postal survey which was the main focus of the research.

Large scale postal survey

1.11 A key strand of this research was the collection of evidence from a large scale survey of local sports clubs themselves. The first stage of this involved identifying sources for the sample (as there is no single repository of information about clubs). Prior to this, however, clarification was sought from the Information Commissioner about the data protection implications for organisations of providing mailing lists. It was confirmed that this would not pose a problem, except in the limited number of cases where individuals were members of local sports councils.

1.12 Following confirmation from the Information Commissioner, an approach was made to each of the governing bodies recognised by sportscotland, as well as to each local authority and to each local sports council, to request access to their lists of clubs. Although this generated a large potential sample of clubs from across a range of sports and areas in Scotland (and from these, a random sample of 5000 clubs to receive a postal questionnaire), there were a range of difficulties encountered, including:

- Incomplete and inconsistent lists of clubs.
- Some lists for the same areas being held by local authorities and Local Sports Councils (and which were different).
- Some sources being unable to provide lists electronically.
- Some governing bodies, Local Sports Councils and local authorities being unwilling to release information due to the data protection concerns, even through these issues had been addressed with the Information Commissioner.
1.13 The survey was circulated to the sample, along with an explanatory letter and a FREEPOST return envelope. The questionnaire was presented in booklet form, and consisted of 8 pages, which it was considered would deliver the best balance between the level of data and the rate of return. The questionnaire covered the following areas:

- Basic details about the club.
- Club membership.
- Structure and policies
- Facilities.
- Staff and volunteers.
- Finances.
- Links to other organisations and the local community.
- General issues.

1.14 A combination of closed, “tick box” and open ended questions was used to enable the analysis of a large amount of data, whilst ensuring that clubs had the opportunity to provide their more detailed views.

1.15 A total of 1,402 responses was received (representing an excellent response rate of 28%) and generated a vast amount of material.

1.16 All of the data was input verbatim to Pinpoint, a questionnaire design and analysis software package, in order to preserve all of the detail of individual responses and to enable the identification of direct quotations. The quantitative data was analysed using Pinpoint. The qualitative data was assessed manually, coded and sorted by issue.

1.17 Wherever possible, postcodes were collected for the locations at which clubs played their sport. These were used to create a subset of the data set comprising clubs in areas of deprivation (based upon the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation). In addition, sportscotland asked that a further subset of clubs be created in six West of Scotland local authority areas where overall levels of participation in sport were found to be low.

**Discussions with other bodies / survey of other bodies**

1.18 To supplement the data drawn from the survey of clubs, a number of additional telephone interviews (121) were undertaken with individuals from governing bodies and local sports councils, sportscotland partnership manager and local authority sports development officers. These interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes, and focused on similar issues to those covered in the survey of clubs. The data from this strand of the research was analysed qualitatively (by drawing out themes and issues raised) and is included wherever appropriate.

**Case studies**

1.19 A number of clubs were identified by the Research Advisory Group and from the questionnaire responses for the completion of case studies, which were carried out to explore particular aspects of good practice in more detail and to provide further qualitative material.

1.20 A total of 18 case studies was undertaken (8 “full” and 10 “mini” case studies) with clubs from a range of different sports; different areas of the country (urban and rural) and different forms of identified good practice. In the full case studies, visits to the club were
undertaken and interviews and group discussions held with staff, management and members, as appropriate. The mini case studies involved asking clubs a small number of additional questions (by telephone or e-mail) about particular aspects of their practice.

1.21 These case studies proved to be a very valuable additional strand to the research and provided a large amount of supplementary material, relating particularly to detailed examples of good practice. They have been used anonymously as exemplars.

Information for clubs

1.22 A document comprising information for clubs has been prepared separately, based upon the findings of the research and covering some of the common issues facing clubs. It was considered important not to duplicate existing guidance, but to signpost clubs to potential sources of support.

1.23 Before presenting the findings from all of these strands, it is important to identify the overall context for the work and some of the key issues from the wider literature.

The strategic framework

1.24 There are a number of key policy areas which are relevant to the operation of local sports clubs in Scotland.

Sport policy

1.25 Perhaps the key document, in setting the overall context within which sports clubs operate is the national strategy for sport, “Sport 21 2003-2007”, which has been endorsed by the Scottish Executive. The strategy was published originally in 1998 and was updated in 2003. It recognises that participating in sport has a number of benefits and presents a “vision for Scotland” with sport widely available, talent recognised and nurtured and world class performances being achieved. The strategy hopes to broaden involvement in sport in Scotland and identifies a “key challenge” for 2020 (that 60% of adult Scots will take part in sport at least once a week) and 11 targets for 2007.

1.26 Amongst these targets, two are particularly relevant to local sports clubs, as follows:

- Target 9 - over one million Scots will play sport in membership of clubs.
- Target 10 - Scotland will sustain 150,000 volunteers who are contributing to the development and delivery of Scottish sport.

1.27 In addition to “Sport 21” a physical activity strategy entitled “Let’s Make Scotland More Active” was published in 2003. This document identified the need for target levels of activity in Scotland, and aims to encourage people of all ages to take part in regular physical activity. Organisations involved in sport in Scotland (including clubs) will have a role in addressing this.

Voluntary sector issues and volunteering

1.28 The Scottish Executive’s Volunteering Strategy 2004-2009 focuses on volunteer development in Scotland and provides the framework for this (and will clearly be of
relevance to sports clubs). The strategy makes explicit links between volunteering and tackling poverty and disadvantage.

1.29 In 2004, sportscotland developed a strategy for volunteer development and support, to meet Target 10 in “Sport 21”. This strategy identified the need to take a number of actions to remove barriers to volunteering; develop policy relating to volunteering and monitor and evaluate progress.

Health

1.30 There are also clear links between health policy and the development of sports clubs. “Our National Health: A Plan for Action A Plan for Change” (2000) set out the health plan for Scotland. The document provides a statement of priorities for health and the NHS in Scotland. This also led to the establishment of the National Physical Activity Task Force, which prepared the physical activity strategy.

1.31 A further document “Improving Health in Scotland - the Challenge” presents a wider framework for action to improve health in Scotland, providing a policy framework for this. The document also identifies the need to improve the health of disadvantaged communities at a faster rate. Physical activity is identified as one of seven special programmes which “the challenge” focuses on (in addition to: healthy eating; smoking; alcohol; mental health and well-being; health and homelessness; and sexual health).

Other areas

1.32 There are also links between sport and other areas of public policy, including:

- Social justice.
- Best value and community planning.

The roles of key organisations

1.33 A number of key organisations in Scotland have a central role in policy and practice which is relevant to sports clubs.

sportscotland

1.34 sportscotland is the national agency for sport in Scotland and receives funding from the Scottish Executive to develop sport and physical recreation. It administers funding on behalf of the Scottish Executive and receives grant-in-aid, much of which is offered to governing bodies and local authority partnerships to develop sport. sportscotland is also the licensed distributor in Scotland of the Lottery Sports Fund. sportscotland also runs three national centres. Through its web site and publications, sportscotland is also a direct provider of advice and guidance to clubs.

The Scottish Executive and Scottish Parliament

1.35 The Scottish Executive provides funding to sportscotland and to local authorities to enable them to develop sports-related work, which in turn impacts upon local sports clubs. The Executive also provides funding to the “Sport 21” agenda and sets targets for that
funding. The Scottish Executive also has a clear specific role in relation to volunteering, and this includes the development of policy and legislation, as well as a role in promoting volunteering and information gathering. It also provides significant funding to volunteering activities, including support for the lead body, Volunteer Development Scotland.

1.36 At a wider level, the Scottish Executive has a range of roles in relation to the voluntary sector, including policy development. The Scottish Executive is a major funder both of voluntary organisations directly (although less so in relation to sport), and of the infrastructure to support local organisations, such as Councils of Voluntary Service. The Scottish Parliament has devolved responsibility for legislation in relation to sport.

**Local authorities and other public sector organisations**

1.37 The most common relationship between sports clubs and public sector bodies is likely, in virtually all cases, to be with local authorities. There are a range of ways in which local authorities have a key role in relation to local sports clubs in Scotland, including:

- The preparation of models of good practice for the development of clubs.
- The development of planning.
- The provision of funding, both in subsidising participation in sports, providing rates relief and supporting specific sports.
- The production, in many cases, of registers and directories.

1.38 Local authorities are a major provider of sports facilities (including school-based facilities) in Scotland. They may also have other contacts with sports clubs, including through community planning, specific service planning, licensing and various aspects of community safety.

1.39 Sports clubs may also have links with other public sector agencies. The most obvious of these is the police, but there may be others, such as local enterprise companies (e.g. through the provision of training places), Job Centres (e.g. through the advertising of vacancies) and NHS Boards (e.g. through joint initiatives on health promotion).

**Governing bodies**

1.40 Governing bodies are responsible for the governance of individual sports in Scotland, as well as providing a range of other forms of support. There are around 80 national governing bodies of sport in Scotland which will provide advice, support and information about participation in specific sports. Most governing bodies have systems through which local sports clubs can affiliate to them, and such affiliation is often necessary to enable a club to participate in competitive events.

**Sports Councils**

1.41 In most areas, a Local Sports Council has been established to promote and co-ordinate sports activities at club and neighbourhood level. Local sports councils promote local sport in defined geographical areas, and, as such, have a role in the development of local sports clubs, and provide support, publicity, information and development advice to member clubs. They can also provide assistance with access to training, enable networking between clubs, provide support to events and generally promote sport in their local area.
Other organisations

1.42 There are a range of other relevant organisations, including:

- Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS), which has a key role in developing volunteering policy in Scotland, as well as in promoting and co-ordinating volunteering.
- About 60 Councils for Voluntary Service (CsVS) whose role is primarily to provide support to voluntary organisations at a local level through both direct working and events, including training.
- SCVO, which is the national body for the voluntary sector.

Sports clubs in Scotland

1.43 In identifying the nature of sports clubs in Scotland, it is important to stress at the outset that there are difficulties in defining a ‘sports club’. A major audit of local sports clubs in Scotland (Allison, 2001), identified definitional problems resulting from the variation (and overlaps) in the nature and functions of organisations which might fall into this category.

1.44 The report suggested that there is no agreed definition of a “sports club” within sports policy, although there are administrative definitions for funding or affiliation purposes, as well as self-definition by clubs. Allison’s report suggested that a local sports club can involve: a single team; a led session in a sports centre; a regular booking made by an informal group; and clubs with single or multiple activities across a range of sports (including, for example, team, partner and individual sports, indoor and outdoor sports). There are also a range of issues evident in the definition of what does, and what does not constitute a “sport”. The approach to this is not consistent at present. For example, clubs participating in sports not recognised at a national level may be members of Local Sports Councils.

1.45 For the purposes of this research, self-definition by clubs has been adopted as the preferred approach. As will be evident from the Appendix 2, this means that a very small number of clubs from a number of minority sports have been included. The rationale for this is that these clubs are, in virtually all cases, members of their Local Sports Council, and may, therefore, seek support either from local or national agencies. Most appear to operate in a manner functionally indistinguishable from other sports clubs. Perhaps most importantly, these clubs are considered by their members to be sports clubs. In the case of, for example, hill walking, it is also clear that the activities promoted by the club may have a wider policy benefits, in this case in terms of meeting health and physical activity targets.

The nature of sports clubs

1.46 Within the recognition of these definitional issues, Allison’s report provided a large amount of information about the nature of sports clubs in Scotland. It estimated that there were around 13,000 sports clubs in Scotland, with the database used identifying 80 different sports. The National Strategy for Sport “Sport 21 2003 – 2007” suggested that clubs in Scotland, at the time of its preparation, were estimated to have 926,000 members and by
2004, when the Strategy to meet Target 9 was prepared, the most recent figures suggested that this had risen to 1,066,273 (sportscotland 2004)\(^4\).

1.47 The 2001 report identified various characteristics of sports clubs which participated in the research, including that:

- Most were single sport clubs rather than ‘sports clubs’ in a more generic sense.
- 91% were affiliated to their governing body.
- Around two thirds had links to local sports councils.
- Almost all were involved in competitive activity.
- Most of the clubs were found to be relatively small with over two thirds having less than 100 members.

Membership and facilities

1.48 Allison’s study found that:

- Just over half of clubs (55%) had both junior members and adult members
- Two thirds of clubs had male and female playing members

1.49 The most common facilities used for the clubs’ activities (including training, socialising, storage and changing) were found to be local authority leisure facilities, followed by clubs’ own premises and schools (again with local authority involvement). The use of facilities owned by other clubs or commercial facilities was found to be low.

Participation in sport

1.50 Allison (op cit) found that most clubs identified that their major driving force was the enjoyment of the sport, with a perception that broader development issues were less relevant. A recent report (Nichols, 2003) noted that between 12.3% and 14% of the UK population were members of voluntary sports clubs, with many of these clubs having been in existence for many years.

Legal framework / structure

1.51 As well as variation in the functions, operation and membership of local sports clubs, there are also variations in their management and structure.

1.52 Despite increasing involvement of the public sector, most local sports clubs in Scotland remain within the voluntary sector, and this clearly has an impact on some of the issues which they face (which will be described in this report). A number of reports (e.g. Allison, 2001; Sport England 1999; sportscotland, 2003) have suggested that a growing number of commercial sector sports clubs are developing.

\(^4\) These statistics will be updated in the final report of this study on the basis of information which will be provided by sportscotland.
1.53 A proportion of the voluntary sector clubs will be registered charities, although, historically, sport was not classed as a qualifying charitable activity in its own right. This situation is currently being addressed through the reform of charity law. In the interim, the government identified a new category of voluntary organisation, the Community Amateur Sports Club, with a broader definition of eligibility, and provided benefits similar to, but not identical to, charitable status.

1.54 In terms of staffing and operation, Allison (op cit) found that most operated with minimal staff, basic structures and minimal spending. More had unpaid staff than paid staff and the clubs were generally staffed by volunteers (who were often office bearers). While some paid for the services of coaches, the administration tended to be undertaken by elected committee members.

1.55 Management of clubs in the 2001 study was also found to be largely informal (and while slightly over two thirds of clubs had a constitution, formal documents were seen as a “safety net” rather than integral to their functioning). More than half retained and reinvested profits and a fifth had no formal legal status. Major decisions (particularly financial), in most cases, were found to be taken by committees.

The benefits of sport / local sports clubs

1.56 There is also considerable literature on the benefits and impact of sport in a range of areas (although it is also recognised that there are limitations to some of the research evidence which has been developed).

Health issues

1.57 A number of reports identify the benefits of sport to health, and Coalter (2005), for example, suggests that regular physical activity can contribute to a number of health outcomes, including: reducing incidence of obesity; cardiovascular disease; non insulin dependent diabetes; colon cancer; osteoporosis and haemorrhagic strokes. It is also noted that sport can make a positive contribution to mental health (and can, for example, reduce isolation).

1.58 Gratton (2004) noted that there remain inequalities in health, with lower socio-economic groups having lower health status than other groups, along with lower levels of participation in sport. It is suggested that if sports policy can increase participation amongst members of these groups, there will be health benefits.

Social and community issues

1.59 There has also been considerable focus upon the impact of sport upon social and community issues, with the suggestion that this takes place at an individual level and more widely. The sportscotland strategy to meet Sport 21 Target 9 identifies the role of clubs in particular as “providing a means of participating at various levels, sports clubs add to the fabric of Scottish society.”

1.60 At an individual level, it has been suggested that participation (either as a volunteer or as a participant) in sport can have a wide range of benefits for people in different age groups. These can include having a positive impact upon self-esteem, quality of life, enjoyment,
fulfilment and “social purpose”, as well as enabling skills and qualifications development (in some cases) and “giving something back”. Sport England (1999) also suggested that it provides “training” for community life and sportscotland (2004a) identifies that sports volunteers teach the value of a healthy lifestyle to future generations, as well as building community leadership and increasing social contacts.

1.61 At a wider level, it has been suggested that sport can have an impact upon social exclusion (e.g. sportscotland 2003) and community cohesion, and there has been a focus on the notion of “social capital” as central to this. Social capital has been linked to the existence of accessible community networks and organisations in which there is a high level of participation, as well as a sense of identity and mutual support.

1.62 It has also been noted that clubs and groups can be seen to be forms of “social capital”, and that taking part in activities contributes to building social capital. Volunteering is also linked to social capital, which, in turn, has been linked to other beneficial outcomes upon areas such as health, community integration and crime (e.g. Putnam, 2000).

Economic issues

1.63 The economic impact of sport has also been highlighted at both individual and community level. At an individual level, participation in sport (particularly through volunteering) can enhance employability, through the acquisition of transferable skills, experience and, in some cases, qualifications.

1.64 There have also been a number of attempts to quantify the impact of sport upon national and local economies (although it should be noted here that this does not suggest that this is the economic impact of sports clubs per se). These have focused on issues such as the economic impact on health; the overall contribution of sport to the economy; and the importance of teams and major sporting events (which are clearly less relevant to this discussion).

1.65 In terms of the specific economic impact upon health, Gratton (2004) suggested that the costs of inactivity are on the NHS, on absence from work and on the costs of premature deaths and noted that the total cost of inactivity in England may be as much as £3.3bn per year. Coalter (2005) identified that the cost to the NHS in Scotland of treating illnesses attributable to obesity was £170m per year. He also stated that the Scottish Executive Health Department (2002) noted that a 1% reduction in the level of inactive Scots, each year for 5 years, could generate savings to the NHS of £3.5m. It has also been noted that increasing health leads to reduced absenteeism, which, in turn, is beneficial to local businesses.

1.66 In terms of the overall contribution of sport to the economy, the value of the input of volunteers has been noted. Coalter (2005) described sport’s contribution to the Scottish economy as being over £1bn, through sales of clothing and footwear; subscriptions and fees; gambling; equipment; TV and other consumer expenditure. Excluding gambling, Coalter noted that expenditure in 2001 totalled an estimated £1053m. Sports provision also provides opportunities for employment and Coalter noted that around 42,000 people were employed in sports-related jobs in Scotland in 2001.

1.67 Community regeneration has been identified as a specific way in which sport can impact upon the local economy, and Coalter et al (2000) noted sport’s key role in
participation highlighting the opportunity for community development through sport. sportscotland (2004a) also identified the contribution of volunteers to community capacity building.

Education / achievement

1.68 Coalter (2005) noted that there is a common assumption that participation in sport can result in improved academic achievement. The overall evidence, however, is seen to be inconclusive. He suggested that the contribution may be more indirect, through, for example, promoting greater integration in educational settings, or enabling underachievers to participate in educational environments where they can improve their achievements.

Crime

1.69 There have been a number of reviews which have identified a potential impact of sport on crime (particularly youth crime). It has been suggested that sport can have a role in prevention (through diverting young people from crime) and in the rehabilitation of offenders. Much of the research material relating to crime focuses upon ‘diversionary’ sports programmes rather than sports clubs, but Coalter (2005) suggests that there are strong arguments for the potentially positive contribution that sport can make.

Other

1.70 It is also suggested that there are environmental benefits through sport (such as the identification of facilities which can provide a social focus and affect perceptions of a neighbourhood). Sports facilities can also provide a “green” space (particularly golf clubs, but also other facilities). The economic contribution of outdoor sports activities (as well as sports tourism) can also contribute to the sustainability of environmentally sensitive, or otherwise important areas.

1.71 There are also seen to be wider environmental benefits, and although these should be noted, they are often seen to be at a wider level, and can be less directly linked to sports clubs than is the case in some of the other areas.

Current issues, constraints and developments

1.72 Given these findings in relation to the importance of sport, and the links between sport and key current policy areas, it is clearly vital that sports clubs in Scotland maximise their efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. Against this background, however, it has been increasingly recognised that sports clubs currently face a range of issues and constraints which require to be overcome in order to enable them to do so.

1.73 Some of the key constraints and current issues are outlined below.

- Financial issues, such as uncertain and fluctuating income, difficulties in attracting (or finding) external funding and increasing costs.
- Operating issues, such as difficulties in finding committee members, issues with legal status and the lack of time for, for example, the development of business and operating plans.
• Issues with facilities such as lack of control, conflicts with other users, poor maintenance and quality, lack of storage, etc.
• Issues with declining or aging membership, difficulties in attracting specific groups to membership and problems with retention.
• Skill shortages among both staff and volunteers, including committee members, and a lack of qualified coaches.
• Issues relating to the involvement of volunteers, including securing enough volunteers, issues with child protection policies and with payment or expenses.

1.74 All of these issues were explored in the current study.
SECTION 2 : THE FINDINGS

2.1 The material in this section is drawn from four main sources. The primary source is the survey of clubs. A total of 1402 clubs responded to the survey, covering more than 70 individual sports (some of which, as noted in the previous section, are not necessarily recognised by sportscotland). The second source is direct contact with the clubs. A total of 8 visits were undertaken to clubs, usually to meet with members of the management committee, and with staff and members where relevant. Ten further clubs provided additional information about aspects of their operation which appeared to be innovative or to represent good practice. The third main source is a telephone survey of 121 local authorities, sports councils, sportscotland partnership managers and governing bodies. The fourth source is the assessment of the literature set out in the previous section.

2.2 While much of the material presented in this section is quantitative, it is important to recognise that the identification of issues is more complex than simply weighing the number of responses. A significant number of issues arose during the survey and case study visits, which were mentioned by a handful of clubs, or, in some cases, by a single club. It is clear, however, that these issues may have a wider relevance, either because it is clear that many other clubs may be in the same situation, or because a description of issue may illustrate an aspect of good (or less good) practice which clubs could learn from, or which could be addressed by sportscotland, governing bodies or local authorities.

2.3 The report also identifies a small number of initiatives which were launched after the end of the fieldwork period where these are directly relevant to the issues being considered here.

The clubs which responded to the survey

2.4 The table below summarises the sports played by clubs which responded to the survey. This table has been restricted to sports from which 10 or more clubs responded. A complete list of all of the sports covered by the sample is set out at Appendix 2.

Table 1. Sports with 15 or more respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of sport</th>
<th>Total responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bowling</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curling</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martial arts</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sailing</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Equestrian 21
Angling 19
Hockey 18
Short mat bowling 17
Basketball 15

2.5 The responses cover a very wide variety of sports. The objective of the sampling frame was to achieve a wide coverage of sports, rather than a fully representative sample. The presence of a large number of bowling, golf, curling and football clubs is broadly as would be expected given the pattern of clubs in Scotland.

Clubs playing more than one sport

2.6 A total of 130 clubs identified that members took part in more than 1 sport. The most common combination (as might be expected) was bowling and short mat bowling, followed by squash and tennis. A number of clubs reported playing both rugby and either cricket or hockey. In a number of cases, although rugby and hockey or cricket clubs shared the same name, they were found to be administratively separate (and responded on an individual basis).

2.7 Only a very small number of genuinely multi-sports clubs responded, but this reflects the fact that there are very few examples of such clubs in Scotland.

Sample of clubs by local authority area

2.8 Table 2 (below) summarises the ten local authorities from which the largest numbers of clubs responded. A complete list of the numbers of clubs which responded from each local authority is set out at Appendix 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highland</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fife</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth and Kinross</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumfries and Galloway</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Borders</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeenshire</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyll and Bute</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Aberdeen</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Areas with low participation in sport

5 The “representativeness” of the sample would have been difficult to assess in any event, as there is no definitive list of clubs available against which the responses could be compared.

6 One response was received from a club in Berwick which is a member of a Scottish-based governing body and plays in a Scottish league. Given that the focus of this work is on sustainability, it was decided to include the club’s response. It is not included in this table.
2.9 sportscotland has identified that participation in sport in a small number of local authorities in the West of Scotland is lower than elsewhere. For this reason, some analyses have been undertaken for Scotland as a whole, and some for the target group alone. All of the tables in this section present information for Scotland as a whole, but some of the findings contained within the text relate only to the “target” group. The local authorities identified by sportscotland were:

Table 3. Numbers of responses from local authorities with low levels of participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target LAs</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Ayrshire</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Ayrshire</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Lanarkshire</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renfrewshire</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Lanarkshire</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clubs in areas of deprivation

2.10 A number of analyses have been undertaken to try to identify whether or not clubs operating in areas of deprivation face additional issues. The question of how to allocate a classification “club in an area of deprivation” is, however, problematic. The standard description of deprivation used is that an area (called a data zone) should be within the worst 15% of data zones in Scotland as assessed using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). The geographical units used by the SIMD (data zones) are very small indeed, often little more than a few streets across. Most clubs, however, while physically located in an area, draw their players from a much wider area (see below).

2.11 For this reason, the SIMD has been used to generate a list of broader areas (basically postcode sectors) where there are high concentrations of deprivation. Clubs based in these postcode sectors were assigned to this classification. The clubs concerned may not actually be physically located in a data zone identified in the SIMD as being in the worst 15% in Scotland, but are likely to draw their members from a wider areas covering a number of data zones in this group. Allocation to this category does not imply that individual clubs will draw their members from areas of deprivation, but it is reasonable to assume that these clubs have a greater likelihood of this than clubs located in other areas.

2.12 There were also a small number of clubs identified which are physically located in isolated data zones assessed as being in the worst 15% in Scotland. In this case, the proportion of the catchment area of the club within an area of deprivation is likely to be very small. These have not been allocated to this classification.

2.13 Inevitably, the classification is something of a compromise, but appears to identify those clubs operating in areas where there is a reasonable level of deprivation. A total of 283 clubs were identified as being located in these areas. As might be expected, these are concentrated in urban areas.
2.14 As with the sportscotland target area, no tables are presented summarising the findings related to clubs in areas of deprivation, but rather, where issues arise, these are summarised in the text.

**Structural and management issues**

2.15 This section will provide a summary of the findings in relation to:

- The legal status of clubs.
- The management of clubs.
- Concerns about legal and policy issues.
- Equalities issues.

**The legal status of clubs**

2.16 The vast majority of clubs which responded to this survey (more than 95%) were found to be voluntary organisations, in some cases, with a trading subsidiary. The remaining forms of club were found to be:

- “Works” clubs, although, in some cases, it was noted that the company made only a nominal donation to club funds. This category also included clubs associated with public sector employers such as the police and fire services.
- Clubs associated with other associations (for example, miners’ welfare or churches) although these clubs may also be voluntary organisations in their own right.
- University or college sports societies.
- A small number of limited companies (most commonly golf clubs).

2.17 Voluntary organisations can choose a variety of legal structures. The most common across the sector is the unincorporated association. This is the least well defined structure, and affords little or no protection to management committee members, although clubs can purchase insurance to cover risks. Other legal structures include companies limited by guarantee and charitable trusts. Registration as a Community Amateur Sports Club, for example, requires that a sports club is not a limited company (and meets a series of other criteria). As the table below shows, a very large majority of clubs were found to be unincorporated associations.

*Table 4. Legal status of clubs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No formal legal status other than unincorporated association</td>
<td>1330</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered charity</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company limited by guarantee</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited company</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 Some clubs reported having more than one status (for example, cases where the club itself is a Community Amateur Sports Club, but a trading subsidiary is a limited company).
2.18 There was found to be a strong relationship between the size of a club and its legal status. Generally, larger clubs were less likely to have no formal legal status. Similarly, clubs with facilities of their own were also much more likely to report some form of legal status. Thus bowling, golf, rugby and cricket clubs, along with sailing clubs, were more likely than other sports to have some form of legal status.

2.19 The number of registered charities identified was, as expected, small, although this is likely to change in the future in the light of legislative changes which will make it easier for sports clubs to demonstrate charitable purposes.

2.20 It is interesting to note that there was found to be no discernable difference between clubs in the sportscotland target area and clubs elsewhere in Scotland in terms of legal status. The proportion of clubs which were found to be Registered Charities was virtually identical.

2.21 There were, however, some slight differences between clubs in areas of deprivation and clubs in other areas in terms of status. Overall, clubs in areas of deprivation were slightly less likely to be unincorporated associations, and slightly more likely to be companies limited by guarantee or registered charities.

**Management of the clubs**

2.22 As can be seen from the table below, while the vast majority of clubs have a written constitution, very few have either a sport development plan or a business plan.

*Table 5. Numbers of clubs with specific policies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A written constitution</td>
<td>1289</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A written sports development plan</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A written business plan</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.23 There are very slight differences between the sportscotland target area and the rest of Scotland in terms of the likelihood that clubs will have a written business plan or sport development plan. About 11% of clubs in the target area had either plan, compared to 12% in other areas, (with 4% in the target area being found to have a business plan although the proportion of clubs with a sports development plan is virtually identical).

2.24 About 11% of clubs in areas of deprivation were found to have either a written business plan or a sport development plan, compared to 13% in other areas (with 5% being found to have a business plan, compared to nearly 7% in other areas).

2.25 The differences illustrated here are very small, and certainly do not indicate any systematic difference in approach between areas.

2.26 As with legal status, there is a strong relationship between size, and, to some extent, ownership of assets, and the likelihood that a club will have a business plan. For example, around a quarter of the total number of clubs with a business plan were golf clubs, although, as a proportion of all golf clubs, this represents a little over 10%.
2.27 The sports with the highest proportions of clubs reporting having business plans are set out in the table below:

*Table 6. Proportions of clubs with business plans (by sport)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>%age of clubs with business plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korfball*</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi sports*</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triathlon</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trampolining</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowing</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shinty</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angling</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boxing</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shooting</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n.b. Very small numbers of clubs from these sports responded

2.28 The table below sets out the proportions of clubs (by sport) which reported having a sport development plan.

*Table 7. Proportions of clubs with sport development plans (by sport)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>%age of clubs with sport development plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ice figure skating*</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korfball*</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing*</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synchronised swimming*</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Football*</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi sports*</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orienteering*</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowing</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shinty</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice Hockey</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter sports</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n.b. Very small numbers of clubs from these sports responded
2.29 A total of 39 clubs reported having both a business plan and a sport development plan. Although the highest actual numbers were in golf, basketball and tennis, this was still found to represent 20% or less of clubs in each case.

**Business planning**

2.30 In no cases did a majority of clubs within a sport report having a business plan. Perhaps surprisingly, only 3% of bowling clubs (most of which own or lease premises) reported having a business plan.

2.31 A case study club (a cricket club) was found to have undertaken a systematic and comprehensive review of all aspects of the operation of the club, including:

- The work of the committee and office bearers.
- The management of its teams.
- The use of its assets.
- The maintenance of its grounds.

2.32 The work was carried out over an extended period by volunteers drawn from the committee (one of whom was a management consultant). The stimulus for the work was described by committee members as “hitting rock bottom”. This was described by club members as including being bottom of their league, and being unable to reliably field 11 players for each match (often relying on the children of senior players to make up numbers). The clubhouse was said to have fallen into disrepair, and the finances of the club were considered to be unhealthy.

2.33 The review was found to have led to a series of changes in the structure and operation of the club, including the development of a youth policy, a change in focus for the club’s social activities and an enhanced role for the club captain (based on the golf club model), office bearers and convenors. In the six years since the club adopted the policy, it has won its league, and contributed junior players to the international squad for the first time. During the 2005 season, the club was able to field 2 teams each week. It is worth noting that the plan remains an active document, and is reviewed by the committee each year.

2.34 Another of the case study clubs recently took part in the “Club Basketball” pilot programme. It is worth noting, however, that the club had, prior to its involvement in a structured programme, developed both its own strategic and business plans (with achievable annual targets), and a set of policies relating to the operation of the club. The club suggested that one of the key successes of this approach had been the involvement of players’ parents in the development and implementation both of the new policies and the achievement of the targets set for the club. The club was found to be growing rapidly (described as being “inundated with children” by a committee member), in part due to successful working with schools (identified as a key strand of the club strategy). It was also reported to be achieving competitive success (while still following an inclusive selection policy).

**Sport Development Plans**

2.35 As noted in the table earlier in this section, only 8% of clubs reported having a sport development plan. Most of the clubs which indicated having a sport development plan were found to be in sports such as rowing, basketball and hockey. Of the more larger sports, only
cricket and rugby were found to have more than a quarter of clubs with sport development plans. Only one bowling club (out of 259 which responded) was found to have a sport development plan.

2.36 Two clubs in North Lanarkshire identified that they had produced a development plan for their own club, and had also participated in the creation of sport development plans for local schools.

**Club accreditation and development programmes**

2.37 A number of local authorities were found to operate different types of club accreditation programmes, usually with a development officer available to assist clubs. As an example, a number of clubs (covering a range of sports and often very small clubs) identified the ACE Award (the “Angus Club Excellence” award run by Angus Council) as having been beneficial to them. The Club Dundee programme was also identified by some clubs. This provides accreditation at two levels. Level 1, the “affiliation level” requires a clubs to have in place a basic management structure, constitution and bank account. Level 2, the “development level”, requires the creation and implementation of a development plan, although this is mostly geared towards the implementation of policies such as child protection, than to business operation.

2.38 A number of other clubs were found to have participated in management initiatives operated by governing bodies, including clubs in rugby, cricket, basketball and golf (although such initiatives also exist in other sports). As will be set out later, very few clubs reported working with enterprise agencies (for example Business Gateway).

2.39 One club (a speed skating club) commented on the problems some small clubs face in developing written policies:

> “Documenting the club, a constitution and accounts are a basic requirement to receive funding. Not all volunteers have these skills - local councils could help more.”

2.40 It is worth noting that there is a good deal of assistance available on the SCVO website about management and organisational issues facing voluntary organisations generally. Direct assistance would also be available through Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSs) which operate in each local authority area in Scotland. It is clear in relation to these issues, as well as others, than many sports clubs do not identify with the wider voluntary sector.

**Treasurers**

2.41 The vast majority of clubs (more than 95%) were found to have a designated treasurer. The only exceptions to this tended to be very small clubs, or clubs which operate on a very informal basis (such as badminton or hill walking clubs).

2.42 In 42% of cases, treasurers were found to have an accounting or book-keeping qualification. There was found to be a strong relationship between the size of a club and the likelihood of the club’s treasurer having such a qualification. For example, nearly 70% of
large clubs were found to have a qualified treasurer, compared to 34% of small, and 27% of very small clubs.

**Concerns about policy and legal issues**

2.43 A total of 429 clubs reported concerns or difficulties relating to some aspect of either their legal status, or some aspect of legislation. These concerns were found to be in the following areas:

- Insurance.
- Child protection.
- Charitable status, tax and VAT issues.
- Legislative changes.

**Insurance**

2.44 The most commonly mentioned area of concern was insurance (identified by just under 200 clubs, or about 15%). There were two main issues raised in relation to this:

- The cost of insurance.
- Difficulties in finding appropriate insurance.

2.45 Some sports considered “dangerous”, such as equestrian and winter sports reported high levels of fees, but this was also identified as a problem by a number of less active sports, such as angling and bowling.

2.46 For some clubs, the concerns expressed were quite specific. Some clubs, for example, noted that they had concerns about the cost and effectiveness of public liability cover relating to events hosted by the club. Others noted a more general concern with costs and the appropriateness of cover. It was noted by some clubs that some governing bodies provide public liability cover to clubs, and that this can represent a significant saving.

**Child protection**

2.47 The second most commonly expressed concern was in relation to child protection (mentioned by 188 clubs or 13%). This issue was also raised by most of the case study clubs in one form or another. Virtually all local authorities and local sports councils raised issues about child protection, and the impact which it was seen to have on clubs’ administration and capability to recruit volunteers. A small number of clubs reported objections to the entire current child protection regime, but these were very much in the minority. Each of the case study clubs, where child protection policy was raised as an issue, were nonetheless clear that the committee and members were strongly supportive of the principle and practice of child protection.

2.48 A large number of clubs across a wide variety of sports reported having a child protection policy in place. In most cases (where information was provided) this was found to be a specimen policy prepared by a governing body. Similarly, a large number of clubs across a wide range of sports identified that they had appointed a child protection officer or coordinator.
2.49 One of the key concerns of some clubs (including three of the case study clubs) was a perceived difficulty in obtaining what was considered to be a **definitive** view on child protection policies. It is worth noting that, although Children First provides a single source of information on child protection (“Child Protection in Sport”), few clubs appeared to be aware of this. Related to this, committee members in two of the case study clubs noted that they had found contradictions in advice provided by different agencies. For example, the committee at one club noted apparently conflicting views being provided by:

- Three governing bodies for sports which committee members were involved with.
- A school board which two members of the committee sat on.
- The relevant local authority.
- A national voluntary organisation working with young people.

2.50 Some clubs reported specific concerns relating to Disclosure Scotland checks. Committee members from three case study clubs reported that they had tried to obtain clarification on disclosure issues, but with little apparent success. (Most of the committee had attended child protection training run either by a governing body or local authority.) These problems were echoed by some local authority sport development staff, who also had concerns about the lack of clarity about some aspects of the legislation.

2.51 As an example, one case study club had attempted (unsuccesfully) to obtain a definitive view from governing bodies and their local authority on the point at which a parent who ferries children to and from games becomes required to obtain a Disclosure Scotland check (also raised by a local authority respondent as a grey area).

2.52 The second main child protection concern identified by respondents related to the perceived bureaucratic nature of the systems involved. Each of the case study clubs, and around 30 respondents overall (as well as a high proportion of local authorities and local sports councils), mentioned the administrative difficulties caused by the fact that staff, committee members, coaches and volunteers have to obtain separate Disclosure Scotland checks for each sport they are involved in (as well as, in many cases, for their main employment). One committee member at a case study club identified that they had had to have six Disclosure Scotland checks carried out in the last two years in relation to sport, representative roles and employment.

2.53 The final broad area of concern about child protection was described as being the “urban myths” surrounding the issue. Committee members of two clubs (independent of each other, and from different sports), suggested that some ordinary members had indicated to them that they would not continue to provide volunteer assistance as they were concerned that they would be sued for touching a child injured in the course of play. Another case study club noted that a member had refused to take an injured child to hospital in their car until a second member (summoned by telephone) had arrived to accompany them. Some respondents (as well as case study clubs) suggested that these concerns were leading to the loss of some volunteers, and making it more difficult to recruit new volunteers.

**Assistance available in relation to child protection**

2.54 A good deal of assistance was found to be available to clubs in relation to child protection, although the extent to which clubs may be aware of this is unclear. For example,
the development of child protection procedures is described in detail on the Help for Clubs website, as well as the websites of various governing bodies. Sample materials are available for download from a number of places. Each of the accreditation and development programmes identified earlier in this section also cover child protection. At a more specific level, child protection is also integral to coach education across each of the four home countries. There is also copious advice available through child protection committees, from VDS, which manages disclosures on behalf of the voluntary sector, and from Disclosure Scotland.

**Charitable status, tax and VAT issues**

2.55 Around 100 clubs expressed concerns about charitable status, tax and VAT issues. Among the issues raised in relation to this were:

- Frustration felt by clubs unable to obtain charitable status, and the impact of this on their ability to raise funds.
- A concern among some of the small number of registered charities that requirements of this were considered to be bureaucratic (and a concern among clubs not yet registered that this would be complex, and that external assistance would be required to obtain, and maintain this status).
- A perception held by some registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs that this status is not well understood, particularly by potential sponsors. One case study club (with a membership largely comprised of young people) noted that a major national company had refused to provide sponsorship on the basis that they were not a “registered charity”.
- A view among some clubs that the benefits of registration as a Community Amateur Sports Club appeared to them to be minimal compared to the work involved.
- A view among some clubs that the current VAT regime does little to support small clubs (for example in terms of the level of the de minimis limits).

**Legislative changes**

2.56 The final group of expressed concerns in this broad category related to legislative changes. Although a small number of clubs expressed a concern about the weight of legislation, and the difficulty posed for volunteers in keeping pace with this, the main concerns expressed (albeit by relatively small numbers) were with specific pieces of legislation and/or new policies.

2.57 The concerns relating to child protection were outlined earlier. The other legislation and/or policy changes identified by clubs as a concern (in various ways) included the potential costs of clubs complying with the access requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and the potential impact of the Smoking, Health and Social Care (Scotland) Act 2005 on club premises (mentioned by a number of bowling and golf clubs).

2.58 Some clubs also mentioned facing difficulties with health and safety, gaming and licensing, employment and environmental legislation. One club mentioned having difficulties with by-laws in force on Loch Lomond.
2.59 One club (a bowling club) identified that it had, as a matter of policy, tried to introduce pending legislation as soon as the basis of its implementation was made clear by the relevant government department (and well before the date at which it was due to be introduced formally). This had included both child protection and disability discrimination legislation. A small number of clubs noted that they had introduced a ban on smoking in advance of the March 26th 2006 implementation date.

**Equalities issues**

2.60 Overall, just over half of all clubs (730, or 51.9%) suggested that they took steps to promote equality in their club. In terms of the approach taken by individual sports, the picture was very mixed. Of the sports with a large number of respondents to the survey, only a minority of football, rugby, athletics, badminton and curling clubs reported that they promoted equality. Interestingly, a large majority of both bowling and golf clubs, as well as cricket and tennis clubs, suggested that they *had* taken steps to promote equality.

2.61 Detailed consideration of the responses from clubs suggests that, in virtually all cases, the “promotion” of equality actually represents either simply the removal of barriers to equal access to facilities (whether for social activities, or in terms of available playing times) or a view that the club is “open to all”. More than 400 clubs provided explanations of this nature (although there were few examples given of the ways in which this is done). The principle of an “open access club” is one of the requirements for registration as a Community Amateur Sports Club, and this may have provided the stimulus for more clubs to consider this issue and implement changes, for example relating to equalising access to facilities.

2.62 Seven clubs mentioned taking steps to make their facilities accessible to disabled people, one of which also mentioned links to a local disability equality group. One club (a swimming club) was found to have made posters available in community languages.

2.63 Around 90 clubs mentioned having either an equalities policy, or equalities provision of some kind within their constitution. One club (a bowling club) indicated that it would not play matches against clubs which discriminate against members. One football club indicated that it had run an event for members to promote anti-racism and anti-sectarianism. A small number of clubs identified the use of concessions as a means of promoting equality.

2.64 It is worth noting that there were virtually no differences between clubs in Scotland generally and clubs in the sportscotland target area in terms of whether or not they had taken steps to promote equality. Clubs in areas of deprivation were slightly more likely than other clubs to report measures to promote equality.

2.65 Clubs were also asked to identify instances of sectarianism. Only 50 clubs (around 3%) indicated that they had had any experience of sectarianism while playing or in social settings. The bulk of the incidents related to verbal abuse, with very few examples of threats or violence.

2.66 In relation to sectarianism, perhaps the most interesting finding was that the geographical coverage of sectarian incidents was much broader than many respondents clearly assumed it to be. Similarly, it was clear from some respondents that they considered this to be only a “football” problem, whereas the survey identified that only around a quarter of incidents were related to participation in, or watching football. The extent to which this is a
problem for any sport is moot, but it is clear that sectarianism can impact on clubs in almost any sport but the numbers are very small.

**Assistance available in relation to equalities**

2.67 **sportscotland** recently launched an equalities initiative (the “Equity” Standard), paralleling one run in England for some time. This was launched in Autumn 2005, and came too late to have any impact on this research.

2.68 A small number of local authorities (for example, through the Active Glasgow programme) also provide advice on equalities issues, and the promotion of equalities is also a part of accreditation programmes, also run by local authorities. At present, the numbers of clubs participating in these programmes appears to be low.

**Membership issues**

2.69 This section summarises the findings of the survey relating to:

- The size of clubs.
- Categories of membership.
- The areas clubs draw their members from.
- Trends in membership.
- Concerns about recruitment and retention.
- Measures to attract new members.
- Measures to help retain existing members.

2.70 A total of 1,358 clubs provided details of the number of their members.

**The size of clubs**

2.71 As might be expected, the span of numbers of members was considerable. The smallest club (a canoe club) reported having one member, while the largest (a sailing club) had just under 2000 members. As the table below shows, the survey identified a significant number of very small clubs (arbitrarily set as those with 25 or fewer members). A total of 10 clubs reported having 10 or fewer members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of members</th>
<th>%age of all clubs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over 500</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-500</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-100</td>
<td>609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 and under</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.72 As might be expected, virtually all of the largest clubs (those with in excess of 1000 members) were golf clubs. The remaining very large clubs included a multi-sports club, an indoor bowling club and a sailing club.
2.73 In terms of the sportscotland target local authority areas and areas of deprivation, there were no discernible difference in the size of clubs in these areas and clubs elsewhere in Scotland.

Categories of membership

2.74 The vast majority of clubs (more than 90%) reported having either no or relatively few social members, or having no separate categories of membership. (The practical effect of this will be to slightly understate the number of non-playing members, as committee members and some others, for example parents, may be described simply as “members” by these clubs).

2.75 A total of 97 clubs (out of about 1200 clubs which provided information) reported that at least 50% of their members were social or non-playing members. As would be expected, these were, in virtually all cases, clubs with social facilities. The table below sets out the sports where more than 5 clubs reported having more than 50% social members.

Table 9. Clubs with more than 50% non-playing members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Number of clubs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sailing</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.76 It is worth bearing in mind that, while most golf clubs reported having between 10% and 25% non-playing members, due to the sheer size of some of these clubs, the actual number of people covered by this category is very large. The club with the largest number of non-playing members (865) was a bowling club. Of those with more than 500 non-playing members (9), four were rugby clubs.

2.77 Among those clubs providing information about their membership, the total number of members was about 226,000. Not all clubs reported the number of players and non players, but among those that did, the total number of players was 182,700 and the total number of non players was 34,100. Players represent about 85% of all members in this sample of clubs.

Catchment areas from which club draw members

2.78 Most clubs are locally focused in terms of drawing their membership. The table below summarises clubs’ own estimates of the distances from the club representing the area from which approximately 80% of members are drawn.

Table 10. Catchment area from which clubs draw members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Number of clubs</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2 miles</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 2 and 5</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 5 and 10</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.79 The table shows that about three quarters of all clubs draw their membership from with 10 miles or less of the location where the club usually plays or meets.

2.80 As might be expected, there is a strong relationship between the geographical size of the authority and the catchment area of clubs. The table below identified the local authorities with more than 60% of clubs having a catchment area of five miles or less (i.e. clubs with members drawn from a very small area).

Table 11. Catchment area of membership (by local authority – cut off 60% of clubs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority</th>
<th>less than 2 miles</th>
<th>two to five miles</th>
<th>(up to 5 miles)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orkney Islands</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Renfrewshire</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falkirk</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dundee</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renfrewshire</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Dunbartonshire</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Ayrshire</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.81 With the exception of Orkney (where distances on the mainland, from which most clubs draw members, are relatively short), each of the local authorities with high numbers of very local clubs are densely populated, largely urban areas.

2.82 This is also reflected in the findings relating to the sportscotland target area. Overall, the six target local authority areas have about 20% more very local clubs than the average for the rest of Scotland. Given the urban nature of the sportscotland target area, this is not surprising.

2.83 As would be expected, clubs operating in areas of deprivation are generally more locally focused than clubs elsewhere. Overall, about 53% of clubs in these areas draw members from a catchment area of 5 miles or less, compared to about 43% elsewhere. Again, given the urban nature of most of these areas, this is not surprising.

2.84 There is also a strong relationship between the size of club catchment areas and sports played. As might be expected, nearly 85% of bowling clubs draw their membership from a narrow area. The bullet points below illustrate the sports where more than 50% of responding clubs indicated that they draw members from a catchment area of 5 miles or less:

- Bowling.
- Tennis.
- Table tennis.
- Squash.
- Hill walking.
- Indoor bowling.
- Shinty.
- Badminton.
• Martial arts.
• Football.
• Basketball.
• Short mat bowling.

2.85 Among the other larger sports, nearly half of cricket clubs, and around a third of rugby and golf clubs reported drawing their membership from a radius of 5 miles or less.

2.86 In terms of five year trends, the table below sets out the numbers of clubs reporting that membership had risen, stayed the same or fallen:

Table 12. Trends in membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trend in membership</th>
<th>Number of clubs</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stayed the same</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.87 The table suggests that slightly more clubs have increased the size of their membership than have faced declining membership. The proportion of clubs which have increased their membership is very similar to the 1999 survey, however, the number whose membership has declined is higher. In the 1999 survey, 26% of respondents had faced a decline in membership over the previous five years, compared to more than 32% in the current sample.

2.88 Interestingly, clubs in the sportscotland target area were more likely that those in other areas to have enjoyed increased membership. In the sportscotland target area, more than 38% clubs had seen an increase in membership, compared to just under 33% in the remaining local authority areas. It is also worth noting that slightly more clubs in the sportscotland target area reported a decline in membership.

2.89 In terms of areas of deprivation, there was found to be no difference in the numbers of clubs reporting an increase in members compared to elsewhere. There was, however, a considerable difference in the number of clubs reporting a decline in membership. More than 38% of clubs in areas of deprivation reported a decline, compared to about 32% in other areas.

2.90 Due to the relatively small numbers of clubs in some sports, it would be unwise to present a ranking of all sports in terms of the numbers of clubs reporting either growth or decline. It is worth, however, setting out the findings for those sports where more than 30 clubs responded:
2.91 Perhaps the most striking finding in the table is that in three of the four largest sports (bowling, golf, and curling) a lower than average number of clubs reported that membership had increased, and a higher than average number of clubs reported that membership had declined. The number of bowling clubs which reported a decline was, as can be seen from the table, more than 50%. The problems facing bowling clubs will be raised at various points throughout this report.

**Trends in membership by size of club**

2.92 Using the size bands set out above, it is interesting to compare the trends in membership by size of club.

**Table 14. Trends in membership (size of clubs)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size band</th>
<th>Increased</th>
<th>Decreased</th>
<th>Stayed the same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very small</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.93 Overall, the findings are consistent with those in the tables above. In general terms, larger clubs were slightly more likely to report a decrease in membership, while medium and small clubs were slightly more likely to report an increase.

2.94 It is interesting to note that more very small clubs showed a decline in membership than showed an increase. To some extent, this may be due to the pressure faced particularly by smaller, largely rural bowling clubs, but the issue actually affects clubs across a range of sports. Very small clubs tend to be particularly vulnerable to membership fluctuations (particularly in terms of achieving a level of income from a small number of members which is capable of meeting both fixed and variable costs).
Trends in membership by age

2.95 The table below is arguably a matter of some concern. Overall, nearly 43% of clubs reported that the average age of their members had increased in the last five years, compared to only 17% where it had decreased. These proportions are similar to those found in the 1999 survey (where 40% of clubs reported an increase in average age, and 15% a decrease).

Table 15. Trends in the age of membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trend</th>
<th>Number of clubs</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stayed the same</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.96 It is clear from the table below that the trend in the increasing age of members has been particularly marked in some of the larger sports.

Table 16. Trends in the age of membership (larger sports)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Increased</th>
<th>Stayed the same</th>
<th>Decreased</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bowling</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curling</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.97 The issue of aging membership was raised by around 100 bowling clubs in their responses. Most of these clubs indicated that this was considered to be a threat to their continued existence. As will be set out in more detail later, there are a number of examples of bowling (and curling) clubs working with schools to try to address the participation of young people. The table also suggests that both golf and curling (among the largest sports in terms of participation) also face an ageing membership base.

Concerns about the recruitment of new members

2.98 Around 60% of clubs identified that they had concerns about either recruitment or retention. Among the larger sports (those with 30 or more respondents), as the table below shows, it was only among gymnastics and football clubs that a minority expressed concern in this area.
Table 17. Numbers of clubs expressing concerns about recruitment and retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Number Expressing Concerns</th>
<th>Number not expressing concerns</th>
<th>Total responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%age</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curling</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.99 The number of rugby, bowling and curling clubs expressing concerns about recruitment and retention is striking, not least as these are three of the largest sports in Scotland by level of participation. It is also worth noting that clubs participating in many of the smaller sports also expressed concerns about recruitment and retention.

2.100 About two thirds of local authorities, a third of local sports councils and governing bodies, as well as virtually all sportScotland partnership managers believed that sports clubs faced problems with recruitment generally, and with specific groups in particular.

Concern about recruitment of specific groups

2.101 Around 45% of clubs indicated that they faced difficulties in recruiting women, compared to around 31% which mentioned issues with recruiting men. Many clubs, and respondents in local authorities and governing bodies identified young women, particularly those in the 16-18 age bracket, as a particular problem. One club noted:

"Women 15-20s are a problem. School sports can put kids off more than encourage them. Acquiring skills rather than winning, or playing a specific sport is important."

2.102 Slightly more than half of clubs (52%) suggested that they had faced difficulties in recruiting young people. This issue was identified by clubs playing most sports, but by a very high proportion of bowling clubs.

2.103 About a quarter of clubs mentioned difficulties in recruiting older people and about a third identified families.

2.104 The number of clubs which reported that they faced difficulties in retaining members was generally slightly lower, except in the case of retaining young people (where the numbers of clubs mentioning this were similar). It is interesting to note that local authorities, local sports councils and governing bodies, where they believed sports to be facing
recruitment difficulties, also identified young people and women as the key groups with which clubs face retention problems. Most clubs which reported a difficulty in recruiting members also suggested that it was difficult to retain members.

**Perceived reasons for difficulties faced in recruitment or retention**

2.105 More than 800 clubs provided views on why they faced difficulties in recruiting or retaining members. In summary, the main reasons given for these difficulties were:

- Cost.
- Public perceptions.
- Competition.
- Facilities.
- Players leaving for work or study.
- Lack of support among schools.
- A lack of coaches.

2.106 Other issues identified by local authorities and others included:

- General unwelcoming attitudes among some clubs.
- Particular attitudes in some clubs to young people.
- Infrastructure problems, such as poor public transport and a lack of parking.

2.107 One local authority also identified public order issues in the vicinity of sports centres as potentially discouraging membership.

2.108 As noted above, cost was among the most commonly cited reasons for difficulties in recruitment and retention. This issue was identified by nearly 200 clubs covering most sports. Golf clubs, as well as some other “high initial cost” sports (such as ice hockey and equestrian sports) were slightly more likely to identify this as an issue than other sports. Among the cost issues identified by clubs were:

- Increases in clubs’ costs being passed on to members in the form of increased subscriptions or match/game fees. Among the increased costs mentioned were:
  - Increasing hire charges for sports facilities (mentioned by a high proportion of clubs dependent on local authority sports facilities, particularly football clubs and badminton clubs).
  - Increases in maintenance costs for clubs with their own premises (mentioned by a high proportion of golf and rugby clubs).
  - Increasing coaching charges.
  - The cost of match officials.
  - Increasing travel costs for clubs within a national league structure (for example, rugby clubs and some football clubs).
- Overall increases in the cost to members of playing sports leading to a perception that some are assumed to be playing fewer sports, or, in the specific case of golf clubs, to be consolidating memberships in one, rather than two or more clubs.
• The increasing cost of equipment for some sports (for example, sailing, sub-aqua, ice hockey and golf clubs, as well as most sports involving young people).
• The increasing cost of insurance for some sports (mentioned, for example, by some equestrian clubs).

2.109 One local sports council identified that the increasing need for commitment from young people competing at advanced level (for example in swimming) can mean that cost is a considerable burden for some families.

2.110 Clubs in a small number of sports suggested that public perceptions of their sport were, at least in part, to blame for the problems faced in attracting new members. A cricket club, for example, cited “unhelpful comments” by an MSP which had been reported in the national news media. A large number of bowling clubs identified the image of their sport as being a particular barrier to recruiting young people and a gun club noted:

“Target shooting is apparently perceived as ‘non-P.C.’ or wrongly as a bunch of ‘gun nuts’. The opposite is true – it’s a very safe, disciplined sport.”

2.111 Several clubs, local authorities and others identified a concern that some clubs, and some sports may be seen as intimidating to beginners. This was described by a sportscotland partnership manager as being due to:

“...perhaps perceptions of elitism, of fear of one's own lack of ability, inhibits youngsters particularly but also adults from even trying to join a club.”

Another respondent suggested that:

“Perceptions of what clubs are is the problem. Competitive, male, expensive.”

2.112 Nearly 150 clubs cited competition for members as a key factor in difficulties faced in recruiting or retaining members. Competition was found to take three main forms:

• Competition between clubs playing the same sport: this was identified as an issue by some golf clubs, but also by football and rugby clubs, which suggested that they had lost members to other clubs in their area (usually, but not always, to clubs seen to offer “better” opportunities).
• Competition with other sports: this was mentioned by clubs from a variety of smaller sports particularly in terms of being seen to have to compete with football in terms of attracting young people.
• Competition with other activities: this was seen to be a particular issue in terms of recruiting and retaining young people, many of whom were considered to be more likely to play computer games or engage in other leisure activities than play sports.

2.113 One island-based local authority suggested that:

“There is such a great variety of sports now available so choosing is difficult. Clubs fight for available members”.

33
One respondent from a martial art noted that:

“Competition with other, better-supported clubs makes it difficult for a smaller sport like this. Women have been drawn away, disappeared in recent years. Hard to say why.”

2.114 Nearly 60 clubs suggested that the quality of facilities was an issue in terms of difficulties in recruiting or retaining members. This was identified by clubs playing more than 20 sports. A small number of 9 hole golf clubs suggested that one of their key problems was that members leave to join 18 hole clubs (having become members while on the waiting list for a larger club). Facilities issues facing clubs across a range of sports are explored in more detail later in this section.

2.115 A small number of clubs also suggested that they faced difficulties in gaining access to facilities at times appropriate to members. One curling club, for example, indicated that it could only access ice between 10am and 12 midday, and that this had significantly limited its ability to recruit new, and particularly younger members. The club noted, however, that, as a result of this, it had had to become very flexible in terms of dealing with illness and childcare emergencies as these arose.

2.116 In some cases, the nature of “competition” was found to be more complex. A membership-based golf club cited not only competition from other clubs, but also:

“the increase in driving ranges and two for one voucher schemes means that many people think twice about paying £500 pa for club membership.”

2.117 About 40 clubs, mostly based in rural areas, also identified that players may be lost to clubs as they leave to go to university, or move to new jobs. This was identified as an issue by clubs of most types operating in rural areas. This was much less likely to be mentioned by clubs based in urban areas.

2.118 Some clubs identified a lack of support for their sport by schools as a problem in terms of recruiting particularly young people. This was mentioned by, for example, hockey, cricket and rugby clubs. One cricket club suggested that:

“There’s not many youngsters coming through as only a few schools now play cricket in Aberdeen.”

2.119 In some cases, this was tied to a concern that some schools are too focused on football. A small number of clubs (largely, but not exclusively bowling clubs) mentioned that young people have a negative perception of their sport. Conversely, a hockey club suggested that, as most schools in that area have Astroturf pitches, and a development officer is also based in the area, “a lot of hockey is played in schools”, and is “well coordinated”. This suggests that there is a good deal of variation across the country in terms of the interaction between schools and sports clubs.

2.120 The final issue mentioned by 10 or more clubs here was a lack of coaches, or a lack of volunteers. Again, this issue was raised by clubs playing a variety of sports.
Measures designed to attract new members

2.121 Although a small number of clubs (across a range of sports) reported that they had ceased marketing as they could not cope with current demand (and operated waiting lists), about 60% of clubs reported that they had undertaken some form of marketing activity relating to the recruitment or retention of members. This was found to take a number of forms, including:

- Concessionary fees.
- Events.
- Initiatives to discount or waive fees for new members, and the provision of free tuition or coaching.
- Leaflets, websites, advertising and other promotional activities.

2.122 Many clubs were also found to have undertaken work specifically to attract junior members. This is summarised later in this section.

Concessionary fees

2.123 Just under three quarters of clubs (more than 1,000) were found to provide concessionary fees to one or more groups. This is summarised in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children / young people</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older people</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed people</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People on low incomes</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled people</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone parents</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees of specific companies</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.124 It is likely that at least some of the clubs which do not offer concessionary fees to children and young people simply do not have any members in this age group. A bowling club, reacting to a survey of members which had identified more senior than ordinary members, reported obtaining agreement to harmonise fees at a single level for all members.

2.125 The main “other” groups to whom concessions were offered by some clubs were new members, and lifetime members.

Events

2.126 The majority of clubs reported carrying out some form of marketing in relation to recruiting new members and the most common example of this identified was the promotion of events, for example open days, “come and try days” and open competitions. In some cases,
it was noted that events were promoted at the level of towns or areas, and involved a range of clubs. Such “sports fairs” could be promoted by individual clubs, groups of clubs or by local authorities or local sports councils. Other examples of this included sports forums (involving local or national personalities) and a multi-sport dinner.

2.127 In one of the case study areas, an exhibition was mounted to promote sport generally, in part through showcasing the careers of some of the international players produced by clubs in the town. This was seen to have had some impact on levels of participation in sport.

2.128 Many clubs also indicated that they (or their members) take part in local events, for example, gala days and agricultural fairs to promote the club and attract new members. Some clubs (particularly in rural areas) reported using community notice boards, or displaying signs (either on club property or on common ground) with a recruitment message about the club. (In some cases, these signs were also found to carry spectator information, usually the date and time of the next home game.)

**Initiatives to discount or waive fees for new members, and the provision of free coaching**

2.129 A number of clubs (for example, a number of curling clubs, bowling clubs, tennis and squash clubs) reported providing free tuition or coaching to new members. In most cases, this was found to be available to both young people and adults (where the club itself had members in both groups). One golf club, as a result of free tuition, reported doubling its junior membership from 50 to 100, and having a waiting list of a further 75 young people. One club (a squash club) reported using the “Fitkids” programme as a way of subsidising free coaching for young people in the sport.

2.130 An example was identified of an athletics club which had, in effect, created a new “brand”, as a mechanism to attract members in a different age group. The club, long established in competitive athletics for young people, had recognised that adult recreational runners would not associate themselves with an “athletics club” per se, and, therefore, established a “runners’ club” with a separate identity. This has been successful in attracting new members, and, in the view of the club, has allowed it to become more aligned with the local community.

2.131 Among the other initiatives identified by clubs as being directed towards the recruitment of new members were:

- Providing reduced levels of fees in the first year.
- Waiving joining fees, or waiving fees previously paid either to join, or remain on a waiting list.
- Providing benefits to prospective members on a waiting list (particularly mentioned by golf clubs).
- Targeting former members with information about re-joining.

**Leaflets, websites, advertising and other promotional activities**

2.132 About 400 clubs reported having produced marketing materials of some kind. Leaflets were mentioned by most clubs, but some had also produced posters, or newsletters with an intended distribution beyond club members.
2.133 Only about 100 clubs were found to have a website. This is likely to be an underestimate, as some sports have, at a national level, implemented a central approach, providing a dedicated webpage for each member club. The most commonly mentioned example of this was the site operated by the Scottish Rugby Union (although it should be noted that some rugby clubs were clearly unaware of this in making their response).

2.134 Some sports, most notably golf, also benefit from promotion by the private sector and by Visit Scotland (albeit that this is directed towards tourists, rather than to local residents per se).

2.135 More than 200 clubs reported that they provide information to local newspapers and local radio. This was most common in rural areas, and urban areas away from the cities (where access to newspapers and radio is more difficult). Examples of this were found across a wide variety of sports. A similar number of clubs were found to pay for advertising (usually in the local press). In some cases, this was found to be directly related to seeking membership (particularly golf clubs), while in other cases, the relationship was less direct, with a focus on raising awareness of the club. One club (a badminton club) reported that it had placed an advert for new members on a website run by their governing body, and that this was considered to have generated a number of enquiries.

Measures to attract junior members

2.136 Although a small number of clubs reported that they had abandoned junior sections as a result of child protection concerns, it is interesting to note that some clubs have taken an opposite view, and have recently established junior sections. Clubs identified this as a mechanism both to broaden their membership base, and to ensure the sustainability of senior teams through attracting young players.

2.137 A number of examples of clubs creating junior sections were found in bowling, as well as among cricket clubs. One small village cricket club noted:

“When starting the youth system at our club, the rules laid down by Cricket Scotland seemed daunting (qualified coaches, child protection, first aid etc) but with this structure now in place, the club is growing. We are now a community club instead of a group of guys who played cricket in the middle of an unaware community”.

Another cricket club identified that it had recruited 53 new (junior) members as a result of establishing a junior section and training three new coaches.

2.138 A number of clubs in traditionally boys’ sports were found to have targeted girls as part of their recruitment efforts. One basketball club reported that it had recruited women coaches specifically to provide a more appropriate training environment for girls (although matches may be mixed). One local sports council identified the benefits of games being adapted for young people, for example rugby, mini-golf and tri-golf as well as mini-tennis.

2.139 About a hundred clubs were found to be working directly with local schools in some way to promote their sport. In some cases, it was identified that this was mutually beneficial, in that the school, for example, was given access to coaches which it would not otherwise be able to access (or afford). A wide range of examples of this were identified. One of the case
study clubs, for example, was found to provide both coaching and access to facilities to a range of local schools. This approach was viewed by the club as having been successful, in that it had been able to attract a steady flow of young members into the club.

2.140 A number of examples were identified of clubs which had worked with schools to place their sport on the primary curriculum. A number of both bowling and curling clubs were found to have worked with schools in this way. As noted earlier in this section, both sports are facing an aging membership base. Examples of similar joint working with schools were also identified among cricket and rugby clubs. Some local authorities and governing bodies were also very positive about links with schools, particularly through the Active Schools Coordinators. One local authority suggested that:

“The recruitment of youngsters is improving - recent media attitude and exposure is helping but clubs must modernise, have good relationship with "Active Schools" personnel.”

2.141 Some clubs were found to provide support to young players to help defray the cost of the sport. A number of clubs mentioned, for example, providing an equipment loan scheme (for example, cricket clubs and ice hockey clubs). Some sports, particularly football, reported providing most of the equipment which young players require, usually on the basis of fundraising or donations.

2.142 An example was found in two case study clubs (replicated in other clubs) of an equipment sharing scheme whereby, as young people outgrow equipment (in this case, football boots, socks and shorts), these are placed in a central pool and can be “inherited” by younger members.

2.143 Finally, as part of a national initiative, one island-based rugby club was found to have secured support from the Scottish Executive to allow a small number of young players to fly from an outlying island to matches (accompanied by their parents). The club also noted that national funding had allowed schools in the islands to increase the overall level of sport played, and that this was having an impact, not only on rugby, but also on other sports.

Assistance available

2.144 Many of the examples set out here mirror those provided in the main websites and publications designed to assist clubs. Help for Clubs, as well as the “Running Sport” series, are both available to all clubs. A number of governing body websites also provide advice on recruiting members. It is also worth noting that some local authorities have, or are running campaigns to promote physical activity, much of which is directed towards participation in organised sport.

Measures to help retain existing members

2.145 More than 200 clubs provided examples of measures taken to help retain existing members (both adults and young people). Among the measures found to have been used were:

- Bulletins, newsletters and other forms of communication with members.
- Social and other events.
• Involvement of ordinary members in management.
• Access to coaching.
• Inclusive selection policies.
• The establishment of “fun”, or satellite teams and incentives for “non-elite” members.
• Links to senior clubs.
• Excellence programmes.

Bulletins, newsletters and other forms of communication with members

2.146 Perhaps surprisingly, only about a third of clubs were found to provide a newsletter (or similar) to members. A good example identified through the survey was of a swimming club which had developed an e-mail list of all its members, and used this both to deliver information about events and general information about the club. (This approach clearly is more viable in sports with a high proportion of young members.)

2.147 Although many clubs (for example, most golf and bowling clubs) produce a members’ booklet, containing, for example, fixtures and important telephone numbers, one case study club identified that it had taken this concept further. The club was found to have developed a members’ booklet, containing both a coaching record and advice on issues such as diet and coaching methods, as well as a statement of club policy in relation to dress, language and the wearing of (professional) team colours. The club indicated that this booklet was issued to all players on an annual basis.

Social and other events

2.148 It is worth noting the comments of one case study club which suggested that, in their view, the key issue in retaining membership was to make members feel “valued” and “part of the club”. This was evidenced in this club (as in many others) through the provision of both social and sporting events, some aimed at players, while some were aimed at non-playing members and non-members.

Involvement of ordinary members in management

2.149 Some clubs reported taking a proactive approach to involving members in the management of the club. One club (an angling club) indicated that all of its committee meetings were open to members, as a means of ensuring both that members remain involved in the management and operation of the club, and that the decisions of the committee were transparent. Another club (a martial arts club) was found to have taken a conscious decision to involve young people in the management of the club. The club identified that it had derived benefits from this in terms of building ownership and commitment (as well as through expanding its membership base).

Access to coaching

2.150 In some cases (including one case study), clubs reported attempting to address retention issues by, in effect, “adding value” to a players’ subscription. The most common examples of this were through the provision of free, or very low cost tuition or coaching on an on-going basis. One case study club was found to provide a “soccer school” to young people aged up to 8 years, which operates two nights each week, and which is staffed by
qualified coaches and volunteers. The club noted that, over the period the school had been in operation, the number of children progressing to older age groups had increased, and the club had had to create additional teams for both boys and girls.

2.151 Clubs across a number of sports identified that they provided free or subsidised access to coaching qualifications, in part as a means of retaining members, but also as a means of further developing the club.

2.152 One club (a table tennis club) suggested that becoming members of a local league had assisted the club to retain members through this providing access to professional players to provide coaching for six weeks (as well as providing a focus for young players). The club also suggested that this approach had allowed it to save money through a discounted purchase scheme.

Inclusive selection policies

2.153 Many clubs for young people operate a rotational selection system. One case study club, for example, operates a policy through which all players who are available play at some time in each game. This approach is agreed in advance with other clubs in the local area, and is seen by the club concerned to be a key aspect of its recruitment and retention of increasing numbers of young people. (It is also worth mentioning that the club believes that “better” players also support this approach, and that there are few examples of young people leaving to join more traditionally “competitive” clubs). It was also noted that clubs both “lend” and “borrow” players as required in order to make sure that the optimum number of teams can be fielded to allow as many players as much playing time as possible.

The establishment of “fun”, or satellite teams, and incentives for “non-elite” members

2.154 A further mechanism used by some clubs, most commonly those involved in competitive sport, is to develop “social” or “fun” teams. This approach was particularly evident in clubs where players require to be very fit, such as rugby, squash, swimming and athletics. One club (a squash club) suggested that:

“Sport should be for fun, not just for champions!”

The club runs a ladder system for young players, and uses a range of prizes as an incentive, not only for competitive success, but also for, for example, politeness and umpiring, as well as “fun” issues such as best miss-hit shot.

2.155 A similar approach was also found to have been taken (albeit in a slightly different form) by some basketball clubs. Some have established what are, in effect, satellite clubs, in some cases based in other locations, both to cope with increasing demand, and to facilitate the rotational selection system which guarantees competitive basketball to all young members.

2.156 A rugby club, based in an island area, took a slightly different approach, in setting up a local league, with parish-based “clubs” partly drawn from its own members, in order to provide competitive sport to as many players as possible, without facing the potentially insurmountable barrier of the cost of playing clubs on the mainland. It is worth noting that the club has a total of around 500 members, drawn from a total population of around 20,000.
2.157 One local sports council also identified a benefit in this approach in that, given the limited time available in many sports, this prevents conflicts in relation to skill levels with advanced players not being forced to play with beginners.

Links to senior clubs

2.158 A small number of clubs for young people expressed concerns that some young people may be lost to sport due to being “pushed” too early to clubs operating a competitive selection approach. This was identified by one case study club, and by other clubs which responded to the survey. This was viewed by the clubs concerned as a tension between sporting excellence (as evidenced, for example, by senior football clubs wishing to sign players at an early age) and sustaining participation over a longer period. Conversely, one rugby club identified positive benefits from becoming, in effect, a “feeder” team for a larger club. In the view of that club, this had given them access to superior facilities and equipment than would have been possible as a free-standing club.

Excellence programmes

2.159 One of the case study clubs was found to have developed an excellence programme for young people covering two sports. This has involved the employment of coaches, and investment in facilities. The club, based outside the central belt, has also had to invest heavily in terms of the cost of transporting players to national competitive events, coaching events and national squad sessions. In the view of the club concerned, the success of the young players is helping the club on a wider basis to be recognised as a centre of sporting excellence, and to recruit and retain additional members (not only among young people).

Funding issues

2.160 A total of 1,359 clubs provided information about funding.

Sources of income

2.161 The sources of income accessed by clubs are summarised in the table below:

Table 19. Clubs’ sources of income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of income</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual membership fees</td>
<td>1180</td>
<td>83.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar and catering</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match or game fees</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day tickets, pay and play etc.</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other grants</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales, merchandising, promotion</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renting out of facilities</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching and instruction fees</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other membership fees (e.g. life)</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lottery sports fund | 123 | 8.7
Spectator receipts | 66 | 4.7
Sale of assets | 32 | 2.3

Membership fees

2.162 There was a marked variation between sports in terms of the extent to which clubs reported having particular types of income. For example, while clubs playing most sports identified that they charged annual membership fees, this was found to be much less common (less than 50%) in the case of football clubs, martial arts clubs and slightly less common (less than 75%) in the case of gymnastics and badminton clubs. Although no explanation was sought in relation to this, it may be that at least three of these sports are largely played by children and young people (at least in terms of the clubs responding) and the fourth is organised largely on an informal basis.

2.163 A total of 96 clubs reported that they were entirely reliant on annual membership fees. A further 39 (making 136 in total) were reliant entirely on membership fees and the fees paid by players on training and/or match days.

Fundraising

2.164 Although 699 clubs reported receiving income from fundraising, this may be an underestimate. Clubs in the sportscotland target area were found to be slightly less likely to raise money by fundraising than in other areas.

Sponsorship

2.165 Nearly 600 clubs reported receiving some form of sponsorship. As might be expected, some sports, such as football, golf, hockey, cricket and rugby (and, to an extent, bowling) were more likely to attract sponsorship. Sponsorship appeared to take a number of forms, including:

- Advertising as sponsorship (for example through named holes on golf courses, shirt sponsorship and pitchside hoardings). Clearly, this is only an option for some sports.
- Sponsorship involving no direct advertising (although this may be little different in practical terms to fundraising).
- Sponsorship of tournaments. This was most common in both golf and bowling, as well as in smaller sports such as triathlon, tennis and squash.

2.166 A number of clubs, however, were less positive about sponsorship. Clubs in rural areas, and in small towns, reported that finding sponsorship could be difficult. It was also noted that it could be time-consuming and frustrating. One club noted that:

“[this town] ... has a pathetic record when it comes to sponsorship. As an example, out of 500 letters written to companies, we had not one response.”
2.167 There was found to be no difference in the proportions of clubs from thesportscotland target area and other areas in terms of the likelihood of having raised sponsorship.

2.168 A small number of clubs also stressed the need for clubs to be professional in their approach to sponsorship. For example, one case study club (a club in a rural area) noted that all of its first team home matches are sponsored by local businesses (as are other teams’ matches) and that the club had sought advice on putting together a “sponsors’” package (including lunch, being accompanied by committee member, meeting players and being presented with the match ball). It was noted that the club takes this approach:

“as seriously as we take playing the match”,

and that this had paid dividends, with sponsors supporting the club on a year to year basis.

2.169 As part of a discussion with another case study club, a committee member working in the private sector suggested that most of the letters received by the company were poorly written, and did little to address either how the company could benefit from the arrangement, or what the sponsorship money, if granted, might be used for. These letters were described as “begging” letters, and would be considered very unlikely to generate a positive response from the company.

Grants

2.170 A total of 325 clubs reported receiving grants of some form, including 123 which had received National Lottery funding. This represents less than a quarter of all clubs responding to the survey. The clubs reporting receiving grants were spread over 63 separate sports. An assessment of the sports played by clubs receiving grants suggests that none did significantly better than others. In a small number of cases, for example, swimming and gymnastic, nearly 50% of clubs had received grants, but this was unusual.

2.171 Around 10% of clubs in thesportscotland target area reported receiving Lottery Sports Fund grants, as well as 20% which had received other grants (compared to 8% and 18% in non target areas). This suggests that clubs in the target area are slightly more likely to have received grants than those elsewhere, but the level of the difference is very small.

Revenue earning activities

2.172 A total of 315 clubs indicated that they operate a bar or café open to non-members. Nearly 900 clubs indicated that they organised social activities open to non-members. This included virtually all the clubs with social facilities, particularly bowling, golf and rugby clubs. A number of clubs indicated that this was a source of revenue (although it is worth noting that some clubs indicated that local charities could use the facilities free).

2.173 In some cases, the sports club is the main, or in some cases the only social facility in the local area. It was also suggested that some clubs could, in effect, over-extend themselves, through trying to run too many social events, or by promoting events which make a loss. A small number of clubs raised the issue of cross-subsidisation, where the bar either subsidises other activities, or, in a very few cases, where other activities have to subsidise the bar or
events programme. Some clubs (as will be noted later) regard events and their bar operation as a means of contributing to the social fabric of their area.

2.174 One case study club indicated that it had previously operated a licensed bar, but that this had operated at a loss. The committee took a decision around three years ago not to renew the license, but instead to serve soft drinks. It was noted that social events remained well-attended, and that these activities now made a revenue contribution to the club, rather than having to be cross-subsidised from other activities. The club also indicated that the change from licensed to unlicensed premises had led directly to a rise in the number of children, young people and families using the club, and particularly in their attendance at social events.

**Diversification**

2.175 Some clubs reported, in effect, diversifying their activities. This was largely confined to clubs with social facilities, or with space which could be used for other purposes. A number of golf, bowling and rugby clubs indicated that their facilities could be made available for weddings, birthdays and other social events (although in some cases, it appears that a member has to make and supervise the booking).

2.176 In some cases, clubs indicated that they had let (or, in a small number of cases, gifted) the use of facilities to other clubs, or other sports. For example, one of the case study clubs had created a multi-use space which is now used by an aerobics group, and is being marketed to other groups. Another of the case study clubs recognised that a gym developed for member clubs could also be used by members of the public, and this now represents an income stream to the club. (It is also worth noting that, allied to the opening of the gym, the club also let space to a local beauty therapist, again generating income.)

2.177 A number of clubs (particularly larger clubs) indicated that their facilities were made available to other clubs (and, in some cases, social groups) for committee, or public meetings. One cricket club, for example, indicted that, in the off season, their club house is regularly used by clubs from a number of sports for committee meetings, member meetings etc.

2.178 A small number of clubs reported renting out what are, in effect, surplus assets to other clubs. In some cases, the “asset” was ground (for example part of a rugby ground let to a football club). In one case, a football club indicated that it let some of its changing facilities to other clubs.

**Concerns about funding**

2.179 Clubs were asked to indicate which aspects of funding, if any, they had difficulties or concerns about. Some indicated that their concerns were general. One case study club suggested that:

> “Ultimately, our sustainability depends on the ability to meet costs. Things like Scottish Water charges that cripple us for minimal use.”

2.180 A total of 685 clubs provided information about their concerns relating to funding. This is summarised in the table below:
Table 20. Clubs’ concerns about finance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finance Concerns</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Availability of grants</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying for funding</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying funders</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall level of income</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding conditions</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash flow</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial planning</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of loans</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business planning</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The availability of grants

2.181 As it might be expected, the most commonly expressed concern related to grants and applying for funding.

2.182 The main concerns, expressed by more than 500 clubs in various forms were related to access to, and obtaining grants. Clubs identified issues in three main areas:

- Identifying potential funders and obtaining information.
- The application process, seen as complex and bureaucratic. Some clubs suggested that they would require outside help to even apply for funding.
- The management of grants, also seen as bureaucratic and time-consuming.

2.183 A small number of clubs also identified concerns about the conditions which may be applied to grant funding, as well as making a more general criticism that some grants do not provide 100% funding. In common with many organisations in the wider voluntary sector, some clubs also raised a concern that funding is very difficult to obtain for day to day running costs.

2.184 Some clubs also noted that it was difficult to obtain feedback from some funders about applications which were turned down. One sailing club noted:

“If a grant application is refused, all the reasons for refusal should be stated so that time is not wasted putting in another application only to be refused again.”

2.185 A small number of clubs indicated that there was no help available to them through local authority sources. Although only mentioned directly by a small number, this is a more widespread issue, and was raised in a number of the case study visits. The perception of some clubs appears to be that pressure on local authority funding is increasing, and that sport may not be seen as a high priority in some areas. (It would be fair to say that this is not the case with all clubs, as many do receive support.)

2.186 Around 20 clubs also indicated that, in their view, it was difficult to obtain Sport Lottery funding. Again, this is likely to be an underestimate, as it seems likely that most clubs will not have tried to obtain funding. One tennis club noted that:
“Much of the documentation received is voluminous and detailed as well as taking time to consider - needs to be focussed and targeted better.”

2.187 One additional issue also mentioned in this context is that a small number of clubs play sports which are not recognised by sportscotland. One club noted in its response that:

“sportscotland will not recognise [this] as a sport hence preventing any further real development, which is not acceptable.”

2.188 It is worth noting that Local Sports Councils tend to take a less restrictive approach to the definition of “sports”, accepting self-definition as the basis of membership.

2.189 As noted earlier, a small number of clubs (including one of the case study clubs) suggested that lack of awareness of the status of “Community Amateur Sports Club” may make raising funding more difficult. There were also concerns expressed by some clubs that the mandatory 80% rates relief which applies to Community Amateur Sports Clubs was “too little”, and that some local authorities had chosen not to apply the 20% discretionary relief, leaving clubs with significantly increased costs.

2.190 About 50 clubs, in comments provided, suggested simply that more information was required about funding. Although there is a good deal of information available about funding through Local Sports Councils, local authorities, governing bodies, the Help for Clubs website and the CVS network, much of this may be effectively invisible to many clubs.

2.191 It was clear from the case studies (and from wider work with voluntary organisations) that some clubs develop an expertise in applying for funding. It is a simple fact that some clubs (regardless of sport, and to some extent, size) are much more successful than others. In discussion, it was clear that, in these clubs, either one, or a small number of volunteers had, over a period of time, developed an expertise in making funding applications. One advantage identified by two case study clubs was that the process of applying for funding over an extended period had allowed a “bank” of material to be created, which could then be re-used for fresh applications.

2.192 A further issue raised by one club was that, once clubs become known to funders, they are more likely to be approached with information about forthcoming grant programmes, and may be invited to, for example, seminars and workshops which clubs may not otherwise hear about.

2.193 It is also worth noting that some of the case study clubs had been successful in applying for funding from “non-traditional” sources, particularly health and social inclusion funds, for example, relating to youth justice and drugs.

Financial planning and cash flow issues

2.194 About 200 clubs mentioned difficulties in financial planning or in managing cash flow. Among the issues raised by clubs were a lack of financial skills available (and, as noted earlier, most smaller clubs do not have a financially qualified treasurer).
2.195 It was found that many clubs struggle due to a limited playing season, restricting income at other times. Some case study clubs identified that a range of social activities were promoted in the closed season to try to retain members’ interest, and to ensure a turnover in bar and catering revenues. It is clear from the experiences of some clubs (for example, some bowling clubs), that it is very difficult to cover costs over the winter period (or the summer period for, for example, rugby clubs) through revenue from bar and catering activities (as well as events).

2.196 Many clubs also pointed to increasing costs relating, for example, to:

- The cost of hiring facilities.
- The cost of water rates (which appears to be a particular source of frustration to some clubs, given that even small levels of usage attract what are perceived to be high charges).
- The cost of equipment and maintenance.
- The cost of league fees.
- The cost of match officials.
- Rent costs.
- Insurance costs (as noted earlier).
- Rising subscription fees, particularly to governing bodies.

2.197 Finally, in this context, a number of clubs expressed concerns about the potential impact of the forthcoming ban on smoking in public places upon the income from social activities.

2.198 Relatively few examples were identified of clubs taking innovative approaches to the management of finances.

2.199 A small number of clubs identified that they had increased their subscriptions, specifically as a mechanism to ensure the sustainability of the club. One athletics club noted that this had been agreed by members, and was managed so that there was no loss of membership. The respondent noted that:

“We took the view that if it's too cheap it's not appreciated. We're still a lot cheaper than a child-minding service.”

2.200 As noted earlier, one bowling club removed a concessionary fee rate for senior members when it became clear that this group was in the majority among members.

**Assistance available relating to funding**

2.201 There was relatively little assistance found to be available to clubs in relation to the management of funding. The exception to this is the SCVO website, which (under “money”) contains a huge amount of both information and advice on effective management practices. As will be set out later, however, virtually no clubs mentioned SCVO as a source of assistance.

2.202 Much of the assistance available relating to grants is of a signposting nature, rather than “hands-on”. The Help for Clubs website, for example, directs clubs to various sources of
funding. sportscotland has published a “Guide to Funding for Sports Projects”, which is largely a list of funders. There is also a publication in the Running Sport series.

2.203 Some local authorities still operate small grants programmes, and, as noted earlier, some assistance is usually available to help complete applications. Most governing bodies, and local authority staff would be able to advise on capital projects, and, at that level, many funders may also provide funding for feasibility work, and perhaps for the development of the application.

2.204 Very few sports clubs appear to have had any contact with the CVS (Councils for Voluntary Service) network, yet part of their remit is to provide advice and information on funding. For example, assistance with Awards for All (probably the easiest grant for sports clubs to access) is provided by CVSs on behalf of Awards for All Scotland. Assistance with the various National Lottery schemes for which sports clubs are eligible was found to be available through sportscotland (in some cases, where sportscotland is the distributor) and the Big Lottery Fund itself (for, for example, the Active Futures programme).

Facilities issues

2.205 Virtually all respondents provided information on their access to facilities and the facilities-related issues faced by clubs. It is recognised that clubs which own, or which have exclusive access to facilities, may face issues which are different to those faced by clubs which rely on renting facilities (whether from local authorities or other clubs).

Access to facilities

2.206 A total of 1,075 clubs, or nearly 77%, reported having access to a clubhouse (or similar). The sports where more than 10 clubs reported having no regular access to a clubhouse were:

- Football.
- Curling.
- Badminton.
- Cycling.
- Swimming.
- Athletics.
- Equestrian.
- Angling.
- Rugby.
- Martial arts.
- Basketball.
- Bowling.

2.207 One hockey club noted that, in its nine year existence, it had been unable to play a single home game due to lack of any facilities in the players’ home town. All “home” games are played at a shared facility around 15 miles away. One football club identified a specific concern with its facilities, as follows:
“Each year we don't know for definite our home playing field. We just have to wait and see what we are given by local authorities.”

2.208 It is interesting to note the views of some clubs where more than one club, or more than one section, operates using the same facilities. One club, involving tennis and squash, noted that demand for the two sports was cyclical, and that tennis was currently “more popular” than squash, reversing the status of the sports in the early 1990s. The point made by the club in relation to this is that it is not always easy to forecast demand accurately. It was also noted that the current success of Andy Murray in professional tennis may lead to more demand being placed on tennis facilities.

Ownership of facilities

2.209 The table below sets out the numbers of clubs which own, or have a lease of 5 years or more on various facilities related to playing their sport.

Table 21. Number of clubs which own or have a long lease on facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Number of clubs</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plays / participates</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stores equipment</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices / trains</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to play</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialises</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.210 There is a strong relationship between the sport played and the likelihood that a club will own, or have a long term lease on facilities. A large majority of golf, bowling, rugby, cricket, tennis and squash clubs reported owning, or having a long lease on facilities. Conversely, most football, gymnastics, canoeing, cycling, athletics and badminton clubs reported that they neither owned, nor had secure long term access to their facilities. These findings are as would be expected. The pattern is continued among other sports, and is replicated (with minor variations) for each of these categories of facility.

2.211 Although the ownership of facilities used by renting clubs was not explored in this study, the 1999 sportscotland research (summarised in Section 1) found that, in most cases, the local authority, either directly or through individual schools, was the landlord. In a small number of cases, clubs reported that they were tenants of other clubs.

Concerns about facilities

2.212 A total of 805 clubs (57%) indicated that they had concerns or difficulties relating to aspects of their facilities. This is summarised in the table below:
Table 22. Numbers of clubs with concerns about aspects of facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance / repairs</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of facilities</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability of facilities</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of facilities</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term access</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security of facilities</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness of facilities</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.213 It is interesting to compare the views of those clubs with long-term security of access to their playing facilities with other clubs. The table below illustrates the percentage of clubs in each group expressing concern, or facing difficulties with each of these issues.

Table 23. Numbers of clubs with concerns about facilities (by whether or not club owns or has long lease on assets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Own / long lease</th>
<th>Not own / long lease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of facilities</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness of facilities</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security of facilities</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of facilities</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability of facilities</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term access</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance / repairs</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.214 The table illustrates that there is a virtually identical level of concern among the two groups of clubs about the basic quality of facilities. Clubs with no long term security are, in general, more concerned about issues such as availability, appropriateness and cost, as well as, not surprisingly, long-term access. Clubs which own their own facilities are, again as might be expected, more concerned about maintenance and repair issues.

2.215 Overall, there was virtually no difference between clubs in the sportscotland target area and clubs in other areas in terms of their concerns about any category of facilities.

The rising cost of facilities

2.216 The issue of rising costs was raised by a large number of clubs which rent or hire facilities. This was mentioned specifically in relation to local authority facilities, but also in relation to the much smaller number of private sector facilities available.

2.217 A small number of clubs identified that, in their view, they were being forced to pay for more space than they required (for example, a whole hall rather than 2 courts, on the basis that the operator was unable to secure a compatible use for the remaining space). In a small number of cases, clubs which rent space from other clubs also identified increasing costs as an issue.

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8 This sums to more than the total number of clubs, as some expressed concerns in more than one area.
Quality and appropriateness of facilities

2.218 Concerns about the quality and appropriateness of facilities were raised (in various forms) by more than 200 clubs. Although this group encompassed many sports, more football clubs expressed concern than clubs from other sports. One basketball club noted that:

“The facilities available to play basketball in [this area] are very poor. They do not meet the necessary league requirements and are very expensive.”

2.219 This issue was also raised by two case study clubs, one of which used school facilities, the other local authority facilities. Most local authorities and local sports councils also raised concerns about the quality of facilities.

2.220 Amongst the issues raised by clubs, local sports councils and local authorities were:

- The quality of pitches / courts / greens (in terms of the nature of the playing surface).
- Inadequate screening of playing facilities.
- Poor management (in terms of, for example, excluding dogs).
- Drainage.
- Incompatible uses, for example where rugby matches are allowed to take place on football pitches.
- A lack of maintenance of all-weather facilities (for example relating to exposed seams).
- A lack of choice in some areas (for example, few all-weather surfaces, or a lack of suitable grass surfaces).
- Pitch or court marking.
- The quality of changing facilities.
- The condition of toilets.
- Maintenance of the general areas surrounding pitches.
- The lack of availability of secure or good quality car parking.
- A lack of security, meaning that players and spectators may be subject to antisocial behaviour.

2.221 The concerns of one youth football club were summarised in the following way by a club secretary:

“The parks they play their games on are full of holes and dog excrement, with dirt bikes going across.”

2.222 Some clubs which own their own facilities also reported a range of problems. As well as cost and maintenance issues, some identified that demand had led to their outgrowing current facilities. One case study club, for example, identified that its present site was not capable of allowing expansion to meet current demand from members and schools. The increase in demand was considered to have been exacerbated by the lack of maintenance of council facilities, meaning that more school groups, and more young people generally were seeking to use the facilities of the club. The inability to expand was seen as a longer term threat to the sustainability of the club.
**Variations in facilities across the country**

2.223 It is clear from all sources that there is a significant variation in facilities available and in the quality of facilities across Scotland. This issue was raised by clubs, governing bodies and local sports councils about a variety of sports. In some areas, indoor sports were considered to be well provided for, in other areas, outdoor sports. Some sports, such as, for example, cycling and athletics, as well as hockey, were considered to be poorly provided for at a national level, with teams having to travel significant distances to find suitable facilities. It was noted that two curling rinks have closed in recent times, placing more pressure on ice in other rinks.

2.224 Some local authorities noted that sports have to “make do”. Badminton was mentioned in this regard, with a reliance on church or town halls in some areas. Some sports (as well as local authorities) also noted the lack of availability (or poor quality) of some private sector and local authority gym and weight training facilities.

**Access to local authority facilities**

2.225 A further issue raised by some clubs, including two case study clubs, related to the ways in which local authority-run sports facilities manage the use of spaces shared between two or more clubs. The issues raised included:

- Exclusive or near exclusive access rights to some facilities (for example, all-weather pitches, or pitches with screening) being granted to single clubs.
- Incompatible activities being forced to share a common space. (An example of this was a step aerobics class sharing a large games hall with a basketball coaching session. The noise from the aerobic class – where the instructor used a portable amplifier – meant that the basketball coaches could not give audible direction to players in open play.)
- Lets being cancelled at short notice, often with no call being made to warn the clubs concerned, for example, due to unplanned use of facilities for school events.
- Apparently arbitrary changes to scheduling, with club lets being changed with no explanation.
- Facilities for some sports being withdrawn at little or no notice (for example, the removal of a long-standing cricket square in one of Aberdeen’s public parks).

2.226 Some clubs also mentioned unhelpful attitudes being shown by staff of the facilities concerned, and also suggested that notified repairs may not be carried out in a timely manner. A rugby club for young people noted that they have a:

"... constant battle with school to provide what we feel we have paid for. We’re still waiting since July for a decision over the resurrection of rugby posts."

2.227 Some local authorities expressed a concern that government and national lottery funding had had the effect of raising participation levels in some sports to the extent where
local facilities struggled to cope. One suggested that there was a need for more capital investment to help address the demand issues seen in some areas.

2.228 Finally in this context, an issue raised by some clubs and local authorities was the fact that many schools are closed for extended periods, and even when nominally open, may have only short evening sessions available.

**Examples of investment in facilities**

2.229 A number of clubs provided examples of the benefits of investment by schools and local authorities in the development of facilities.

2.230 Two athletics clubs, for example, were strongly positive about the investment made by Glasgow City Council in outdoor facilities at Scotstoun and indoor facilities in the East End. As noted earlier, investment by schools in both East Lothian and Scottish Borders in all weather surfaces has led to an increase in activity in less popular sports. Two gymnastics clubs identified facilities at Falkirk as being “excellent”. Two football clubs in Glasgow identified the redevelopment of Petershill’s ground as a community facility as having the potential to make a significant contribution to football in the city outside the senior leagues.

2.231 A case study club illustrated a community-wide approach being taken to addressing problems with facilities. Following concern expressed by committee members of local football clubs about the state of council-operated pitches, a small group of volunteers carried out a review of these facilities, and made a series of recommendations to the local authority. While some of these were actioned, it was clear to the clubs concerned that the council could not afford to carry out all of the work required. The clubs then agreed to seek funding for a feasibility study to support the development of a community club, which could bring together all of the town’s football teams, and create a shared facility. Following the feasibility study, all bar one of the teams agreed to take this forward. The community club has now developed new pitches, new floodlit and enclosed all-weather training facilities, as well as new changing and social facilities. A total of 9 staff are employed by the club, and more than 30 teams use the facilities. While the “community club” has a separate identity, each of the member clubs has retained its own identity, membership and revenue streams.

2.232 In another case study, an example was provided of a local school and local clubs working together to develop new facilities to address problems facing a number of sports (which had been identified as having led to declining membership). The basis of the agreement reached between the school and local clubs was that each has access to a new all-weather area on a managed basis. The area itself was designed following a consultation which identified the needs of both the clubs and the school. There was a strong view that this development would assist local clubs to initially stem, and then reverse the loss of membership.

**Assistance relating to facilities**

2.233 Relatively little was found by way of assistance with facilities issues. Most local authorities (and trusts where these operate facilities) provide a list of venues, often with letting policies. The Help for Clubs site provides very basic information, primarily geared towards the needs of new clubs.
**Staffing issues**

2.234 A total of 449 clubs reported having full or part-time paid staff. This represented a total of nearly 3,000 posts.

**The roles of paid staff**

2.235 Paid staff were found to fall into six main categories:

- Management and administrative staff.
- Bar and catering staff.
- Maintenance and ground staff.
- Players.
- Coaches.
- Supervisors / leaders.

2.236 The data provided by clubs on the breakdown of posts by these categories was patchy, but the table below sets out the number of clubs and the number of staff identified.

*Table 24. Numbers of staff employed*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of staff</th>
<th>Number of clubs</th>
<th>Number of staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management and administrative</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar and catering</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>1625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance and ground staff</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors / leaders</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.237 As expected, there was found to be a strong relationship between the size of the club and the employment of management, maintenance and bar staff. Golf clubs represented, by some margin, the largest proportion of clubs with staff (although a majority of bowling clubs reported employing bar and catering staff).

2.238 Coaching staff were found to be spread over a wide range of sports, including larger sports such as golf, football and rugby, but also many smaller sports. Coaches were found to be employed by clubs playing as many as 33 separate sports. The highest proportions of clubs employing coaches (where the sport had sufficient returns to make such an analysis reliable) were in tennis, gymnastics and swimming. It is interesting to note that 12 very small clubs (those with 25 members or fewer), and 60 small clubs (those with 26 - 100 members) reported employing coaches. Clubs in the *sports* scotland target area were slightly less likely to employ coaches, but the difference was little more than 1% overall.

2.239 Professional players were found to be concentrated in a small range of clubs, with golf, football and cricket accounting for about 90% of those identified.
Concerns about staffing issues

2.240 Of the 449 clubs which reported employing staff, 115 (about 26%) reported concerns about recruitment and retention of staff. 84 clubs expressed concern with recruitment, and 36 with retention. More detailed concerns are summarised in the table below:

Table 25. Clubs’ concerns about staffing issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff concerns</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to specific skills</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal / procedural demands (e.g. child protection)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management / supervision</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Induction / training</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment of expenses</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of employment policies</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting equality and diversity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total clubs employing staff</td>
<td>449</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.241 A total of 35 clubs identified that the cost of staff was a concern to them. It is worth noting that a small number of clubs also identified that the time involved in recruiting staff was seen to be a problem in cases where the management of a club consisted largely of volunteers. Although only 15 clubs mentioned this directly, this is likely to be an issue for many more.

2.242 One of the case study clubs was found to have employed a full-time manager as part of a wider development plan for the club. Both members and committee members identified this as one of the key factors in the current success of the club. It was noted that the presence of a manager has allowed club facilities to be used more intensively than before. Members suggested that they would previously have been unlikely to attend the club on a casual basis. It was also noted by members that the number of unaccompanied children and young people using the club had increased considerably as a result of having a staff member on hand. The increased use by young people was also cited as a factor in the competitive success of the club.

Training for staff

2.243 Slightly over 200 clubs reported providing induction training for staff, and 239 provided other forms of training to staff.

2.244 One of the case study clubs (a golf club) was found to have taken a structured approach to staff training through participating in the national Investors in People programme, run by Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. This had, in the view of the club, brought wider benefits in terms of communication with staff, as well as allowing the club to perform more effectively as a business. The club is now using Learn Direct as a mechanism to secure further training for staff.

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9 Seven clubs identified that they had current difficulty to fill vacancies.
The role of coaches

2.245 Many clubs were very positive about the role of coaches within the club. One case study club, for example, cited the benefits which could be derived from a good coach, not only in terms of the skills (and competitive success) of individual members, but also in terms of improving the profile of the club.

2.246 Some clubs were found to have invested a considerable amount into coaching. One case study club (a large football club) reported having around 70 qualified coaches associated with the club, working with children of all ages. Other clubs were found to make access to coaching available to all players. Some clubs aimed at young people reported that all young people, on attaining the appropriate qualifying age for their sport, would be expected to become a qualified coach.

2.247 It is clear, however, that some clubs face problems in relation to coaches. These were found to include:

- A shortage of qualified coaches in some sports, particularly coaches qualified at above basic levels. One club (a table tennis club) reported that it had had to cut back to one club night a week due to a lack of coaches in their area.
- A frustration for some clubs that coaching is sport-specific. Two clubs suggested that, as much of the material for basic coaching qualifications is standard across sports, more acknowledgement of prior learning could be made by governing bodies (through granting exemptions from some parts of coaching qualifications), with the benefit that more coaches could be trained in a short time (and at a lower cost).
- A shortage of courses for coaches in some sports. One case study club reported that it was forced to “import” trainers from England to run a coaches’ programme, due to a lack of qualified instructors locally.
- Difficulties in finding funding to pay coaching costs.

2.248 As noted earlier in this report, it is clear that some clubs face a dilemma in the employment of coaches. Some suggested that there is a “temptation” to allow coaches only to work with the best players, but that this would not, in their view, contribute to the wider sustainability of the club.

2.249 One respondent noted that:

“Lack of capacity to expand can lead to a ‘closed door’ favouritism of catering to the elite - or at least can be perceived this way. Clubs can have a hard time accommodating all levels - access and cost and available time.”

It is worth noting that not all clubs agreed with this, and some, including two case study clubs, considered that the success of the club in membership terms was at least in part due to the work of the coaches with elite players leading to competitive success for the club.

2.250 There was found to be a great deal of assistance available for clubs and individuals in relation to coaching. This includes both funding and general information.
**Assistance with general staffing issues**

2.251 A great deal of information was found to be available for clubs. Many books, leaflets and CD-roms available on staffing matters were identified, and the main Help for Clubs site, as well as a number of local authority and governing body sites also provide framework policies and even forms for downloading.

2.252 Assistance with advice on staffing issues was found to be more complex. This is likely to be available from some governing bodies, and from the CVS network, but, in common with both voluntary organisations and small businesses, for more detailed information and advice, clubs may require to retain a solicitor.

**Volunteer issues**

2.253 More than 1,000 clubs reported having access to volunteers. The total number of volunteers in clubs identified by this research was 13,723. These figures are likely to be an underestimate, as some clubs were unable to provide a detailed breakdown.

**The roles of volunteers**

2.254 Using the same categories used earlier to describe paid staff, volunteers were found to carry out roles in the following areas:

*Table 26. Numbers of volunteers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of volunteer</th>
<th>Number of clubs</th>
<th>Number of volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management and administration</td>
<td>1013</td>
<td>7705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar and catering</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>2049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance and ground staff</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>2650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>4242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors / leaders</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>1328</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.255 The other main areas in which clubs identified volunteers being involved were:

- Organising or running events.
- Officiating at matches / tournaments.
- Providing marshalling or security at events.
- Collecting entrance monies, selling programmes etc.
- Developing marketing or other materials.
- Providing transport for players.
- Providing professional services, such as accounting or legal advice.

2.256 A number of clubs also identified that members, whether or not they would consider themselves as “volunteers”, assisted in a range of ways, including fundraising.

2.257 Volunteers were found in clubs representing every sport contained within the sample. The numbers of volunteers varied greatly between clubs, and was largely independent of both the size of the club, and the sport played. There was virtually no difference between the
sportscotland target area clubs and clubs in other areas either in the overall number of volunteers, or in the roles in which they were deployed. In terms of absolute numbers, bowling clubs (which represented the highest single category of returns) identified the largest number of volunteers.

The management of volunteers

2.258 Fewer than 20% of clubs (around 280) were found to have formal arrangements in place to manage volunteers. In the overwhelming majority of cases, it was suggested that this was carried out through the committee, or through a nominated committee member (usually the member responsible for the activity requiring volunteer input, or the club secretary or chairperson). As far as can be ascertained, no clubs responding to this survey had appointed or nominated a volunteer coordinator.

2.259 A number of local authorities and sportscotland partnership managers were critical of clubs’ lack of direction and planning relating to the management of volunteers. One suggested that:

“Volunteers are often used as child care as the leaders don't know how to best utilise and don't have a programme. Development is not on the agenda, not planned for.”

2.260 It was also suggested that many clubs do not undertake succession planning in relation to volunteers, often until it is too late, causing difficulties in terms of sustaining activities. Some local authorities (supported by other respondents) also suggested that clubs do not take up all of the training opportunities available to volunteers.

2.261 One of the case study clubs had, as part of a wider review, carried out an audit of the skills available to the club through volunteer involvement. This allowed volunteer effort to be channelled into projects more effectively than had previously been the case (when committee members had only their personal knowledge of members to draw on).

Volunteer Rugby and “Investing in Volunteers”

2.262 Although not mentioned by any rugby clubs responding to the survey, the Scottish Rugby Union (SRU) and Volunteer Development Scotland were found to have cooperated to develop a volunteering strategy for the sport. The aim of the programme is described as:

“To assist clubs recruit, train and retain volunteers in sufficient numbers to ensure the efficient and effective operation of clubs and the steady growth of the sport”.

2.263 The programme sets out a seven-step programme from both a strategic and practical perspective. It is perhaps stating the obvious that the seven-step programme itself could be transferred to any sport with virtually no amendment.

2.264 It is worth noting that VDS has also recently launched an accredited standard “Investing in Volunteers”. Clearly, the standard was announced too late to have been considered by clubs in this research.
Policies relating to volunteers

2.265 More than a half of all clubs (56%) reported having policies in place for managing volunteers. In a majority of cases, these were either found to be non-specific, or were not specified by the clubs concerned. Examples of policies cited included the “constitution” or the “memorandum and articles”, but only 15 clubs reported that they had a volunteering policy in place. A further 14 indicated that they had recruitment and selection guidelines in place covering volunteers. Two clubs mentioned having a policy and procedures manual covering volunteering. Two further clubs were found to offer job descriptions for volunteering posts.

2.266 Around 400 clubs mentioned holding insurance for volunteers. A small number of clubs indicated that this was, in their view, expensive and not easy to obtain.

2.267 In terms of other policies, among the clubs which provided details, child protection was by some margin the most commonly mentioned. Around 600 clubs identified either that they had a club-specific policy in place, or followed the national policy of their governing body.

2.268 Among the other policies relevant to volunteering identified by clubs were:

- A vulnerable adults policy.
- Health and safety policy.
- Code of conduct / terms of reference.
- Disciplinary procedures.
- Data protection policy.
- Ethics policy.
- Financial procedures.
- Maintenance procedures.
- Fire protection policy.

Concerns relating to volunteers

2.269 A total of 174 clubs identified that they had some concerns or problems as a result of policies and procedures relating to volunteering. About 90 clubs provided details of the issues which they faced and, in a large majority of cases, these were again related to child protection. The issues clubs face relating to child protection were summarised earlier and will not be rehearsed again here.

2.270 Only a very small number of other policies were mentioned, including issues relating to health and safety and liability in the event of an accident. One club also identified data protection as an issue.

Difficulties in securing volunteers for administration roles

2.271 Around 30 clubs (in virtually all cases, clubs with social facilities) noted difficulties in securing volunteers for management, particularly committee roles. This is likely to be a significant underestimate of the level of concern about this issue. It was also raised in each of the case study visits and by a number of local authorities and local sports councils.

10 In each case, fewer than 10 clubs mentioned these policies.
General difficulties in recruiting volunteers

2.272 The main problem identified by clubs relating to volunteers was recruiting and retaining sufficient volunteers to meet club needs. This was identified by 539 clubs (39%) as an issue. One athletics club noted:

“A decline in the number of volunteers seems to be a widespread problem facing all sorts of organisations. There is also a continuous increase in the red tape and legislative barriers that discourages new folk from getting involved.”

2.273 Some local authorities noted that the recruitment of volunteers appears to be becoming more difficult for all voluntary organisations, not just sports clubs.

2.274 As noted earlier, there is a view prevalent among some clubs that child protection issues have made the recruitment of volunteers worse than before.

2.275 Among the other reasons clubs offered for difficulties in recruiting volunteers were:

- The time commitment involved.
- The cost (to the volunteer) of involvement.
- Competing priorities in terms of work and leisure.
- In some cases, the unsocial hours or poor location of the club.

Pressure from other commitments

2.276 One local authority identified what it described as “burnout” among volunteers in small communities, where community members tend to be involved in a wide range of activities, of which sport is only one. Another local authority noted that many volunteers in rural and island areas are drawn from “mobile” professions (e.g. police, teachers and health workers), and hence may be lost to the area when moving jobs. Another local authority noted:

“Volunteers are out there, waiting to help, but often don’t know where to go – the Council wants to develop a programme to manage the numbers and issues.”

2.277 It is worth noting that a number of clubs working with children noted that a child leaving usually meant the loss of a volunteer as well.

Other issues facing clubs in the recruitment of volunteers

2.278 Among the other issues with volunteers identified (albeit by relatively small numbers in each case) were:

- The time required of management committee members or staff to recruit and manage volunteers.
- Difficulties in providing adequate, or sufficient training, and of keeping training records up to date.
• The cost to the club of volunteers in terms of insurance, expenses and training.
• Difficulties in supervising volunteers, particularly where this has to be done by coaching staff.

One local authority, however, suggested that:

“Clubs usually only look within the club for help - this limits resources, causes burn-out amongst repeat members, entrenched approach, inflexible.”

The benefits of volunteers

2.279 Clubs were invited to identify the benefits of the involvement of volunteers and these were identified in a range of areas, including:

• The basic survival of the club.
• Expanding the range of sports available.
• Cost savings.
• Being able to carry out capital projects.
• Social benefits.

2.280 A range of benefits to the volunteers were also identified.

Volunteers’ contribution to the basic survival of clubs

2.281 By far the single largest category of benefit identified (by around 500 clubs) was that the club would not exist without volunteer input. One noted that “volunteers are all we have”. Some clubs qualified this in terms of access to specific skills (such as coaching) or in terms of filling posts (with committee roles most commonly mentioned). It was also suggested that some roles (for example, transportation and supervision of young people, and some coaching roles), could not be filled other than through the involvement of volunteers. As noted earlier, one of the case study clubs identified that more than 70 volunteer coaches were involved each week in supervising training and matches.

Expanding the range of sports, or age groups

2.282 A small number of clubs suggested that the involvement of volunteers had allowed an expansion of the range of sports on offer, or the number of teams available to members. This last point was stressed by one case study club in the context of allowing its policy of all players being provided with competitive sport each week to be realised. Relatively few clubs focused on competitive success as a result of volunteer involvement. One club suggested that the use of volunteers allowed coaches (presumably both paid and volunteer coaches) to concentrate on a smaller number of players, but this was unusual.

Cost savings

2.283 Nearly 300 clubs mentioned that they made cost savings as a result of involving volunteers. The cost saving role was mentioned most commonly by clubs with social or other communal facilities (for example, bowling and rugby clubs). About a fifth of the clubs which identified cost savings identified that this had allowed them to offer coaching which they
could not otherwise have afforded. A small number of clubs tied the involvement of volunteers and cost savings to allowing a lower fee than would be possible otherwise.

**Capital projects**

2.284 Some clubs identified that both minor and major projects had been undertaken purely, or very largely through volunteer input. One rugby club, for example, identified that its new clubhouse had been constructed entirely by voluntary labour. A shinty club suggested that the cost of its new clubhouse had been greatly reduced by volunteer workers. A bowling club noted that the cost of the installation of an irrigation system had been reduced by more than £500 by members carrying out works themselves. More than fifty clubs identified that volunteers had undertaken building, repair and maintenance works (and this is likely to be an underestimate). One club noted that:

“A lot of people doing a little makes a big difference”.

2.285 A number of clubs suggested that the involvement of volunteers with specific skills to supplement the work of committees had been beneficial, for example in terms of planning and managing projects, and dealing with external organisations.

**Other benefits from the involvement of volunteers**

2.286 A small number of clubs identified wider benefits arising from the involvement of volunteers, for example:

- Bringing together older and younger people.
- Providing role models for young players.
- Developing wider links with the community.

**Benefits to the volunteers**

2.287 Benefits for volunteers were also identified by a small number of clubs, including the gaining of work experience, and the acquisition of personal skills in areas such as communication and self-confidence.

**Assistance available to clubs on volunteering issues**

2.288 Although few clubs mentioned receiving assistance on volunteering, a considerable amount of assistance was found which could help clubs. Both the Volunteer Development Scotland and Volunteer Scotland sites contain a good deal of advice and information about practice issues. As noted earlier, the SRU/VDS volunteering strategy and seven point plan appears to provide a ready-made approach for any club or sport.

2.289 VDS has also set up a “learning zone” (which is used by the SRU programme) but which is also available to other voluntary organisations. This provides basic on-line training for staff or committee members involved in the management of volunteers.

2.290 At a local level, there are currently 42 Volunteer Centres, which, while primarily serving individuals who wish to volunteer, also provide a good deal of information of use to
clubs recruiting volunteers. The Volunteer Centres are also likely to be a significant source of potential volunteers for clubs.

**Links and joint working**

2.291 Relatively few examples were identified of clubs undertaking genuine joint working. There were many examples of clubs cooperating, for example, in terms of sharing assets, or in terms of planning fixtures to avoid clashes (as well as, at a relatively minor level, lending stock when supplies run short, or shirts to avoid colour clashes). There were also many examples of clubs sharing premises. The most common examples of these were in the cases of summer and winter sports, usually cricket and rugby, but also cricket and football or hockey. There were a number of examples of tennis and squash clubs either sharing facilities, or having come together to form a single club. Examples were also identified of clubs sharing some facilities with youth or children’s teams.

2.292 Some examples were found of golf clubs cooperating both with each other and with local tourist boards and accommodation providers to develop both day and short-break packages. One of the case study clubs was found to participate in such a scheme, involving a number of clubs and a number of local hotels. The club views this as a success, particularly in terms of attracting business during weekdays, and in the off-peak season, when demand from members is lower.

**Links to the community**

2.293 More than 400 clubs identified links with their local community, and the benefits that these were seen to bring to the club. Among the examples offered were:

- Taking part in local events.
- Contributing to local charities.
- Contributing to the work of local schools.
- Providing opportunities to young people.
- Links with local businesses.

**Local events**

2.294 The most commonly community mentioned link was that clubs take part in local events. In some cases, these were found to be sport related, but in other cases, to have a wider focus. Among the events identified were:

- Highland games.
- Fetes.
- Gala days.
- Open days (for example at local authority sports centres).
- Agricultural fairs.
- Civic weeks.
- Farmers’ markets.
2.295 A number of clubs identified that part of their contribution to these events was to lend either their premises or equipment to event organisers. In other cases, clubs also mentioned providing volunteers for, for example, staffing stalls or stewarding.

**Contributions to local charities**

2.296 Around 100 clubs identified making contributions to local charities, for example through direct donations, or through permitting the use of facilities for events. In a small number of cases, clubs also indicated that they provided members to local representative groups, such as town or village forums, or community councils. A very small number of clubs also noted that they had taken part in local community planning (or similar) exercises.

2.297 Some clubs noted that they provided placements both for local schools, and for local social work services to support court mandated rehabilitation programmes.

**Links with schools and opportunities for young people**

2.298 More than 200 clubs identified that they provided assistance to local schools. This assistance was found to take a number of forms, including:

- Supplying coaches.
- Supplying volunteers for a variety of purposes.
- Lending equipment.
- Making facilities available (often free of charge).
- Providing advice.
- Running “come and try” type events.

2.299 Around 30 clubs (across a variety of sports) indicated that they promoted events specifically for local schools, or for young people’s teams. Examples of this were found in, for example, cricket, hockey, athletics, football, rugby, cricket and golf, as well as some smaller sports.

2.300 It was also found that sport development officers (where these exist) make links between clubs and schools. For example, in one of the case study areas, a cricket development officer had developed strong links with each of the local primary and secondary schools, ensuring that the sport was offered as an option. Clubs also participated in this through providing volunteer members to assist with coaching. Various local cricket clubs were also found to have benefited through the recruitment of players.

2.301 In some cases, clubs reported having developed specific links with individual local schools. For example, a number of bowling and curling clubs reported that they had been successful in working with primary schools to introduce children to these sports. Conversely, one of the case study clubs noted that it had found it very difficult to get access to local primary schools.

2.302 In some areas, both clubs and schools cooperate as part of structured local planning. For example, in one of the case study areas, the local high school, local authority and all clubs in a town had cooperated in the development of a sport development plan. This set out the needs of not only the clubs, but also the school, and identified that investment in the school could be instrumental in meeting the needs of local clubs.
2.303 One club (a youth football club) identified that it had taken a broad view of its role, and particularly its role in promoting citizenship (as well as promoting sports participation). It was noted that:

“Our club successfully runs youth development programmes that provide physical activity and workshops tackling social issues.”

Links with local business

2.304 Apart from sponsorship, relatively few clubs reported specific links with local or national commercial organisations. As noted earlier, about 40% of clubs reported receiving some form of sponsorship, the vast majority of this coming from local or national business sources.

2.305 A small number of golf clubs (as noted earlier) were found to work in partnership with local businesses to develop marketing initiatives. Some clubs (again mostly golf clubs, but also some other sports, such as sailing and shooting) identified working with corporate clients to promote the use of club facilities for team building etc.

2.306 In a very small number of cases, clubs identified that they had negotiated deals with local businesses for discounts for members, but these were rare.

The benefits of links with the local community

2.307 Clubs were very positive about their links with the local community. The most commonly mentioned benefit was in providing the opportunity to community members, particularly young people, to play sport. A range of health benefits were also identified, particularly in the context of young people, but also, in some sports (particularly bowling), for older people. A number of clubs made explicit links to government policies in relation to physical activity and childhood obesity.

2.308 More than 200 clubs mentioned the social and friendship benefits of clubs. A number of bowling clubs also noted that the club represented an opportunity for otherwise isolated older people to socialise. One bowling club noted that:

“... the club helps bring together people of different ages and outlooks in life. It is satisfying to watch a 10-year old having a meaningful conversation with an 80+ when ordinarily they would not have had any kind of contact.”

2.309 A small number of clubs (and two of the case studies) also identified that sport can have an impact on community spirit, and community cohesiveness. In some cases, this was identified in the context of the clubs’ contribution to community events, but also in the context of sporting success providing a “boost” to local areas.

The economic benefit of sport to local communities

2.310 Finally, in this context, around 500 clubs (across all sports) were able to identify economic benefits arising from the club. These benefits were found to include:
• Purchases from local suppliers (with some clubs identifying a specific club policy favouring local suppliers).
• Providing employment (As noted earlier, the clubs which took part in this survey were found to employ around 3,000 people.)
• Encouraging visitor expenditure (for example, through the purchase of hotel rooms, refreshments etc).
• Expenditure on transport.

2.311 Clubs in rural areas were, generally, more positive about economic benefits than clubs in urban areas.

Problems with local communities

2.312 Only a tiny number of clubs identified any problems with their local community. These were found to encompass:

• Noise issues.
• Parking problems.
• Views among some licensees that clubs offer unfair competition.
• Complaints about floodlights.

2.313 As might be expected, a small number of clubs also identified issues relating to vandalism, the attitudes of some local residents and a perceived lack of support from some community members.

Support issues

2.314 Clubs reported accessing support and assistance from a wide range of sources, including governing bodies, local authorities and local sports councils.

Support from governing bodies

2.315 As might be expected, the most commonly cited source of support was governing bodies. Just over 90% of clubs indicated that they were affiliated to the relevant governing body.

2.316 Examples of the forms of assistance obtained from governing bodies included:

• Information on grants.
• Business planning advice.
• Child protection information.
• Advice on setting up junior sections.
• Advice about making links with clubs in other countries.
• Help in finding clubs against whom to play competitive matches.

2.317 As noted earlier, some clubs had participated in structured development programmes, operated by a range of governing bodies. Some clubs also identified assistance available through, for example, the development of framework policies (for example, equalities, health and safety and employment policies).
2.318 A number of clubs identified that their governing body was a good source of advice about coaching and general good practice issues. A small number of clubs which had carried out capital projects also identified that their governing body had been a source of advice and information on technical, legal and project management issues.

2.319 Some clubs were also very positive about the support from Sport Development Officers. An example was provided by one rugby club of the difficulties it expected to face as a result of the loss of a Development Officer:

“We have recently lost the services of the Rugby Development Officer who served our area due to council withdrawing funding. The club, with the support of local sponsors and the SRU (hopefully) require to employ a Development Officer to undertake coaching sessions in schools and to co-ordinate events. Few schools are proactive – a Development Officer is essential.”

Support from local authorities

2.320 Many clubs also identified that they had received information and support from local authorities. In most cases, this was either from a sport development staff member, or, increasingly, from a member of staff dealing with child protection. (As noted earlier, some clubs suggested that there was, on occasion, conflicting advice being given by local authorities and governing bodies). Clubs in some areas also suggested that local authorities had run training courses for management committees and volunteers on a regular basis.

2.321 As noted earlier, a relatively small number of clubs identified that they had received financial assistance from local authorities.

Assistance from other bodies

2.322 Around 100 clubs mentioned receiving information or assistance from local sports councils. Much smaller numbers (less than 20 in each case) reported receiving information or support from the following:

- sportscotland.
- Local leagues.
- Local enterprise companies and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.
- Private contractors.
- Inland Revenue.
- Visit Scotland.
- Chambers of Commerce.
- Sport specific magazines.

2.323 In the case of golf clubs, secretaries also identified that they received information and peer support through various associations, some of which are UK, rather than Scottish-based.

2.324 Perhaps surprisingly, very few clubs reported receiving support from SCVO nationally, or from Councils for Voluntary Service or Volunteer Centres locally.
Areas where support is seen to be required

2.325 Clubs responding to this survey identified a range of types of information or assistance they felt was required. This is summarised in the bullet points below. Just under 140 clubs suggested simply that “more” information was required, without being specific. In some of these cases, this was linked to the need for more web-based information (although many clubs were concerned about the trend towards this method of delivery).

2.326 The main areas in which more information or support was seen to be required were:

- Help with various issues related to funding (mentioned by the largest number—more than 200 clubs), including help with attracting sponsorship.
- Help with the development of facilities.
- Help with developing links to schools and to young people.
- Help with publicity/promotion (especially among smaller sports).
- Assistance in various ways with coaching, including improving the supply of coaches in some sports, and improving the supply of training for new coaches.
- Advice on child protection and other legislation.
- Information about the services and work of sportsScotland and other support providers.
- Access to training for staff and volunteers.

2.327 A small number of clubs suggested that more assistance was required with both rates relief, and with water rate charges. Similarly, a number of clubs suggested that “more” could be done to make insurance affordable for clubs.

2.328 Two clubs suggested that they needed less, rather than more information. A squash club noted that:

“Much of the information, advice and guidance received is irrelevant - less would be better.”

The potential impact of data protection on the provision of assistance

2.329 One specific issue which arose in carrying out the research which is relevant to these information needs was related to data protection. Some local authorities and Local Sports Councils appeared to take a very strict interpretation of data protection, which serves to limit the range of information which can be passed to member clubs (or clubs whose details are held). Some Local Sports Councils reported balloting members to identify which clubs would be prepared to have their details passed, and which would not. In at least two cases, it appeared that, although this was designed to prevent unsolicited approaches by sporting goods companies (and similar), the way the surveys had been worded would also mean that, for example, sportsScotland, Councils for Voluntary Service or the Office of the Charities Regulator may not be able to get access to membership lists, even where the communication could be advantageous to the clubs concerned. (It is also worth noting that a number of local authorities and Local Sports Councils initially refused to supply lists of clubs for this research, citing data protection, although all eventually cooperated on being presented with the opinion of the Information Commissioner that this would not breach the Act). These
issues clearly have implications for meeting the needs which have been identified in this report.

Overview

2.330 All of these findings have identified a wide range of issues affecting local sports clubs in Scotland which will impact, in some cases, upon their longer term sustainability. The findings raise a number of key issues for the development of local sports clubs in Scotland, and have a number of implications for the provision of advice and support in the future.

2.331 The final section draws together some of the overall conclusions and examples of suggested ways of overcoming some of the constraints and difficulties.
SECTION 3: KEY ISSUES, GOOD PRACTICE AND POINTS TO NOTE

3.1 This final section summarises the key issues arising from each strand of the research, drawing together the main findings and their implications in a number of areas, as follows:

- Structural and management issues.
- Membership issues.
- Funding issues.
- Facilities issues.
- Staffing issues.
- Volunteer issues.
- Links and joint working.
- Support issues.

Structural and management issues

3.2 The vast majority of sports clubs in Scotland are voluntary organisations, yet are different in many respects from non-sports organisations in other sectors such as social welfare or health. For example, only a very small number of sports clubs are registered charities, due to stringent legislative provisions within the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990 which, in effect, excluded sport as a charitable purpose unless it was combined with other purposes. The designation Community Amateur Sports Club was introduced to ameliorate the impact on sports clubs of not being eligible for charitable status (although clubs did qualify for some other benefits). The Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 introduced a new regime for the regulation of charities in Scotland and will come into effect in April 2006. One of the key effects of the reform of charity law will be that sports clubs will, from April 2006, be eligible to apply for charitable status (assuming they satisfy other criteria).

3.3 It is also interesting to note that most sports clubs appear to have little or no contact with the wider voluntary sector, nor with support organisations such as Councils for Voluntary Service, nor Volunteer Development Centres.

3.4 One of the key issues underpinning sustainability (as identified in the literature review) was that clubs have to operate in a business-like manner and should be run with this in mind. This has been recognised by many organisations throughout the voluntary sector, and a great deal of assistance has been made available through local authorities and the CVS network to support the development of both business planning and good governance. Structurally, it is clear from the survey that some of the best examples of clubs which are prospering (both in business and sporting terms) are being operated in a way which is similar to many small businesses, with appropriate planning and accounting practices in place.

Key findings arising from the research

3.5 The key findings from the research in relation to structural and management issues are:
A majority of clubs surveyed in this research were found to be **unincorporated associations**. This appears to be true even for clubs employing staff and owning assets.

Few clubs are, at present, **registered charities**, although this will increase from April as the law changes.

Some clubs expressed concerns about perceived limitations of **Community Amateur Sports Club** status, and the fact that it is not widely recognised among potential corporate sponsors.

Few clubs reported having established **trading subsidiaries** (largely due to the relatively small size of their turnover).

Relatively few sports clubs were found to have **business plans** or **sport development plans**.

Some good practice examples were identified of clubs which had undertaken **root and branch reviews** of their operation.

Many clubs reported difficulties in **securing volunteers** to join management committees and act as office bearers.

There appears to be little **training** undertaken for management committee members or office bearers. Few are likely to have business or financial training.

Only about 40% of clubs reported having **treasurers** with any form of accounting or book-keeping qualification. Even among larger clubs, only 70% reported having a qualified treasurer.

Some governing bodies promote **club development programmes**, which appear to be very well regarded by those clubs which have taken part. These deal not only with sport development, but also with aspects of the management of the club.

A number of local authorities, and some governing bodies, are now offering **accreditation programmes** for clubs, usually supported by a development officer. The Angus Club Excellence (ACE) Programme in Angus, for example, was mentioned positively by a number of clubs from that area.

Similarly, some local authorities provide **training for office bearers** in voluntary organisations. Some clubs were found to have taken advantage of these (although the main area for external training in the last year appears to be child protection).

The availability of **training, club development and accreditation programmes** varies greatly across Scotland, and between different sports.

Clubs have concerns about **insurance**, both from a cost and appropriateness point of view. Some governing bodies provide insurance on a group basis but it is quite likely that some clubs in other sports will not be adequately insured, as one of the key concerns expressed was a “lack” of information.

The issue of **child protection** is clearly one which is provoking considerable concern among clubs. Many issues arose in the course of this research. While some clubs are basically opposed to the current legislative approach, most are strongly supportive, but are clearly struggling with its implementation. Few clubs appeared aware of the “Child Protection in Sport” service being offered by Children 1st.

There is concern among clubs about **conflicting advice** being given by local authorities, governing bodies and others such as schools.
• The current practice of requiring multiple disclosures is a cause of considerable annoyance to many involved in sport, as well as being an administrative burden for the clubs and individuals concerned.

• Most clubs have difficulty in keeping pace with relevant legislative changes. Some, such as the forthcoming smoking ban, are widely publicised, and clubs are being targeted by local authorities and others, but it is likely that there will be a good deal of relevant legislation which clubs may be unaware of.

• Few clubs appeared to have any real conception of equalities issues. It is likely that many will have come to this simply as a result either of local authority funding pressure or the need to be “open” to register as a CASC. The sportsScotland equality initiative, launched in Autumn 2005 was too late to have any impact on the clubs participating in this research.

Suggestions for action

3.6 The findings suggest a number of actions relating to structural and management issues on the part of clubs or those involved in the development of sport.

Promoting the Assistance Available Locally and Nationally to Clubs

• As a general point, it is clear that sports clubs may be missing out on a good deal of assistance as they do not identify themselves with the wider voluntary sector. Assistance on a range of issues is available through the CVS network, and from SCVO (as well as Volunteer Development Scotland and a range of other organisations). It is suggested that sportsScotland, in association with SCVO could consider making clubs more aware of the assistance available through mainstream voluntary sector resources. Amongst the mechanisms for this may be a new Working Group (currently the Target 10 Working Group) and the recently appointed Regional Volunteer Development Officers. There may also be a role for the Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils SALSC and local authorities to take this forward at a local level.

Encouraging Clubs to Consider their Legal Status

• Clubs which own assets or employ staff and which are unincorporated associations should be encouraged to consider whether another form of organisation may be more appropriate to their needs. Assistance in relation to these issues is available through governing bodies and Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS). There is a good summary of the considerations involved on the Help for Clubs and SCVO websites.

Making Clubs Aware of Changes in Charitable Status

• From April 2006, sport will become an acceptable charitable purpose, and clubs will be able to apply for registration as charities. It is not clear what the impact of this will be, but there will be at least some demand from clubs which will require to be satisfied. There is a great deal of information about the changes to charity law on the SCVO website, and information is also available through the CVS network. At present, the Help for Clubs website is somewhat out of date, and is being updated to reflect changes in legislation.
There would be merit in sportscotland working with SCVO to further promote workshops to governing bodies in those sports were there is likely to be a demand for registration.

Promoting the Development and Use of Business Plans

- While there appears little need for very small clubs to have a business plan, it would appear to be sensible that any club employing staff or owning assets should at least have a rudimentary plan. Assistance in developing business plans is available from a number of sources, including governing bodies, Councils for Voluntary Service and the “Running Sport” series as well as through Help for Clubs. There may be merit in promoting a basic “framework” business plan for clubs to use, particularly those owning assets or employing staff.

Developing a “Business” Module for Clubs

- There appears to be a number of different management development initiatives available for sports clubs. Clearly, there is a need for the “sport” content of these to be tailored to the needs of individual sports, but some clubs suggested that there is a good deal of common ground in relation to the “business” content (as well as, for example, wider issues such as equality and consultation). There may, therefore, be merit in drawing together a standardised “business” module for sports clubs (perhaps in association with SCVO) which could be used across sports. Material from the “Running Sport” series could be used or adapted. A benefit of this is that it could be made available on a free standing basis to clubs in sports where the governing body does not presently offer assistance of this type.

Promoting Training

- Some local authorities reported providing training for office bearers in voluntary organisations, as a means of promoting good governance. The uptake by sports clubs appears, from the survey of local authority staff, to be lower than would be expected. There may, therefore, be merit in encouraging clubs to take up this training wherever it is available.

Promoting Awareness of Support with Child Protection Measures

- The issue of child protection is clearly having some impact on clubs. In some cases, it is evident that committee members are concerned to an unnecessary degree, and the emergence of “urban myths” appears to be impacting on volunteer recruitment. Sourcing advice on child protection does seem unnecessarily complicated, and open to some interpretation. Children 1st provides a single source of information to clubs (“Child Protection in Sport”), but many are clearly unaware of this. There would be merit in sportscotland, with Children First, taking steps to make all clubs aware of the advice and assistance available. The current links on Help for Clubs is to a newsletter and the main Children 1st website, not to the Child Protection in Sport website. The Children 1st website has no direct link on its home page to the
“Child Protection in Sport” service and the page is not necessarily easy to find. It is suggested that, if the Child Protection in Sport is to become the main source of information and advice, both the Help for Clubs and Children 1st websites could be updated to make information on the service easier to find.

Promoting Awareness of Help for Clubs

- The Help for Clubs website was mentioned by only a tiny number of clubs (and no respondent mentioned the Club Update newsletter as a source of information). In the specific case of legislative changes, the Club Update and Help for Clubs website appear to be an ideal vehicle for delivering information, but more clubs will need to be made aware of the resources’ existence before they are fully effective (although it is recognised that, since the survey was completed, more marketing of the site has been undertaken by sportscotland).

Membership issues

3.7 The overall picture in relation to membership is mixed. Some sports, for example, curling and bowling are facing considerable pressures, and it seems likely, on the evidence presented here, that at least some clubs in these (and some other) sports will either have to merge or face closure. The picture for some other sports is more positive.

3.8 Overall, while it is impossible to be definitive purely on the evidence of the clubs responding here, there may have been some overall decline in participation in the five years since the last sportscotland research. The basis of this view is that, even though more clubs reported increases in membership than reported a decline, the sports where a decline was indicated tended to be sports played by higher numbers of people. In general terms, it is sports played by smaller numbers of people which are showing increases in membership. Participation may also be increasing in less organised sports.

Key findings arising from the research

3.9 The key findings from the research in relation to membership issues are:

- Clubs playing some sports appear to be facing considerable pressures in terms of declining membership. This, in turn, is likely to undermine their sustainability in the medium to long-term.
- Clubs in a number of popular sports are facing problems due to the aging of the current membership base. Bowling is the most obvious example of this.
- Small clubs are particularly vulnerable to fluctuating membership, as are clubs which cannot draw from a wide community base (such as those in rural areas, or small towns).
- Most clubs in most sports appear to be very local in terms of the catchment areas from which members are drawn. This also makes them vulnerable to social or demographic changes, and particularly to competitive pressures. A number of smaller golf clubs, for example, were found to be facing pressure from new courses, and from new ways of playing the sport.
• Many clubs reported difficulties in recruiting women and young people, as well as, in some cases, people from minority ethnic communities. Disability sports organisations also reported difficulties in recruitment. Girls aged 10-15 and young women were identified as particular groups which clubs struggle to recruit.

• Some clubs are facing pressures from demand, and are, effectively closed to new members.

• Although many clubs expressed concerns about recruitment or retention, the literature review suggested that few clubs plan their recruitment strategy, and that this may be, at best, ad hoc. There was little evidence of planned recruitment strategies from the survey, although there were a number of good practice examples identified in terms of clubs attempting to integrate with their local school’s curriculum.

• A range of reasons were offered for why clubs struggle to recruit, including cost, public perceptions, competition, facilities, players leaving for work or study, lack of support among schools, and a lack of coaches. Other issues identified by local authorities and others included unwelcoming attitudes among some clubs, attitudes in some clubs to young people and infrastructure problems, such as poor public transport and a lack of parking.

• Some clubs were found to have developed innovative or interesting approaches to tackle at least some of these issues, including free or reduced membership, schemes to defray the initial cost of equipment, specific assistance for young people (through discounts, and the use of recycled kit), making links with schools and other organisations, marketing initiatives (such as leaflets, websites and the promotion of events), as well as making investment in facilities.

• It is clear that many clubs are struggling to retain some groups of members, again, particularly young people.

• Some clubs have undertaken a range of activities designed to retain members, including promoting social events, provided access to coaching developing teams relevant to the ability and commitment of members, and, at the other end of the scale, developing excellence models for young players.

• Some clubs have tried to make their operations more transparent, through involving ordinary members more in decision-making processes and committee meetings.

_Suggestions for action_

3.10 The findings suggest a number of actions relating to membership issues on the part of clubs or those involved in the development of sport.

_Support with Recruitment Issues_

• Recruitment is clearly an area where some clubs in some sports are struggling to maintain their sustainability. There is some assistance available through Help for Clubs, but this is perhaps a little limited, and could be expanded to include more suggestions on ways both to recruit and retain members.
The Promotion of a Structured Approach

- It is clear from the literature that few clubs, even when struggling for members, take a planned, structured approach to recruitment. The Help for Clubs website has a useful summary of what could be covered by this. There is, however, not a great deal of evidence that this is being used.
- Although directed towards recruiting volunteers, the SRU/VDS Volunteer Rugby programme gives an example of how a structured approach can be developed, which has the potential to be successful. The development of a similar structured approach to recruiting members would be relatively straightforward, and could represent one possible way of providing clubs with a means of planning member recruitment.

Support for Sports with Ageing Membership Profiles

- Some sports are clearly facing worse problems than others. Bowling, curling, and to some extent rugby appear to be facing difficulties (although this will vary across Scotland). The Scottish Executive and sportscotland may wish to consider specific initiatives in conjunction with these governing bodies to promote the sports to young people. There are already some good examples, for example of working with schools.

Funding issues

3.11 As noted earlier, sports clubs, in common with other voluntary organisations, must at least cover their costs. In reality, this is rarely enough, as clubs need to generate a surplus to invest in, for example, facilities, or to cover repairs and replacements. Clubs are clearly facing increased costs on a number of fronts, but are in the classic “Catch-22” situation of being pressured by other clubs, other sports and other activities, and, therefore, being unable (or feeling unable) to raise fees.

3.12 Ironically, sports clubs as a whole may be less vulnerable financially than some other parts of the voluntary sector due to this “lack” of reliance on grant funding. Much of the wider voluntary sector faces considerable difficulties due to annual funding, short notice withdrawal of support and difficulties in finding continuation funding.

3.13 It is clear that many sports clubs exist with little or no external funding support. Many clubs reported frustration that they did not appear to have access to information about grants. This is a view held consistently across the voluntary sector. It is also clear that many clubs appear to struggle with fundraising and sponsorship, and a large majority have limited opportunities for earning trading income. These issues are, in some respects, tied to the lack of planning in other areas (outlined elsewhere in these conclusions). Clubs which appear to be successful generally are also successful in accessing grant funding, and in raising sponsorship. All (bar one) of the clubs which participated in case studies were clearly very successful in securing external funding. It was also obvious that these clubs were well-organised, with a clear direction, a business plan and a regular review of their financial situation.
Key findings arising from the research

3.14 The key findings from the research in relation to funding issues are:

- About 10% of clubs which responded to the survey were dependent solely on annual membership fees and match or game fees paid by members. This group is clearly at considerable risk from fluctuations in membership.
- Even among clubs with other sources of income, a majority have annual membership fees as their main source of income. Again, this group is vulnerable to fluctuation in membership.
- Many clubs appear to find raising money difficult. More than 500 clubs indicated that they had concerns about accessing grants.
- It is clear from the literature review, and some anecdotal evidence, that at least some of these difficulties are due to the inexperience, or lack of skills among committee members. As noted earlier, committee members tend to receive little training, and support on accessing external funding is not always easy to identify. Members may also be unaware of the fact that they lack necessary or desirable skills.
- Some clubs have developed considerable expertise in accessing external funding, often through experience, and through concentrating efforts in one person, or a small group of people. It is clear from the experiences of the wider voluntary sector, and from some of the clubs surveyed here (as well as the case study clubs) that the best predictor of securing funding is having secured funding in the past. As many sports clubs struggle to get any external funding, few are likely to enjoy this position without some level of external support.
- Clubs with revenue-earning capacity are largely concentrated in sports where there are also concerns about recruitment. For example, by far the largest proportion of clubs with social facilities are bowling, golf and rugby clubs, and while experiences at an individual club level vary, overall clubs in these and other sports may, in the long term struggle to operate these social facilities profitably. The overall impact of the forthcoming smoking ban is hard to gauge, but it is likely to hit social clubs – particularly those clubs which have no regular source of income in closed seasons.
- Some clubs were found to have diversified their activities, but these have been largely confined to clubs with either excess ground, or large clubhouses which can be let to external groups.
- There were very few examples identified of clubs cooperating to any extent. A small number of mergers were identified (for example between two Edinburgh cricket clubs), and some examples of ground sharing. Overall, however, there are likely to be many clubs which could go down this route, in part or in full, which have not yet considered this.

Suggestions for action

3.15 The findings suggest a number of actions relating to funding issues on the part of clubs or those involved in the development of sport.
Support to Clubs to Operate in a Business-Like Way

- At a basic level, it seems unlikely that many clubs will be successful in securing external funding in the absence of becoming better organised and more business-like. For this reason, the initiatives suggested earlier in terms of business planning and developing skills will also have an impact in terms of funding.

The Legal Status of Clubs

- Becoming a Community Amateur Sports Club can bring benefits for clubs which trade, or which have assets (through rates relief and exemption from corporation tax to a reasonable level). At least the same benefits will apply to registered charities (although there is also something of an increase in the regulatory burden). The suggestion made earlier that sportscotland and its partners could promote the attaining of charitable status, and provide support to clubs to work towards this, would have wider benefits in a number of areas, including rates and tax relief, and, to some extent, ensuring that clubs become better organised in order to achieve registration.

Developing Assets

- It is also worth noting that many clubs appear not to consider external funding, either because they assume that they will be unsuccessful, or, arguably, because of a lack of vision about how investment in the club could assist wider sustainability. While it would be irresponsible to promote unsustainable investments, evidence from this report shows that sensible, prudent investments can make a significant contribution to the prospects of some clubs. It is suggested that a section on “developing assets” could be added to the Help for Clubs site. The current information on facilities is more relevant to new clubs.

Accessing Funding

- There is, currently, relatively little help available to clubs (or to many other voluntary organisations more widely) in terms of accessing funding. This is a consistent criticism by voluntary organisations across most sectors. There are examples from other parts of the voluntary sector of funders working with organisations to help them identify their funding needs, and in due course, apply for funding. The use of roadshows is now widespread, and has been used as a way of extending the reach of some funders into areas where, previously, there had been little external funding provided (for example, ethnic minority – led voluntary originations). Some clubs appear to be much better at securing funding than others. The lessons from these clubs are fairly clear – clubs which are successful are well-organised, run as businesses and develop an expertise in this area. ¹¹ For this reason, it is suggested that

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¹¹ One club noted that it would be absurd to assume that, for example, a cricket club could survive long without a specialist wicket keeper, yet clubs assume that a committee member with no experience or skills will be able to make a successful application for funding.
sportScotland could enable workshops to be run which are designed to help clubs develop these skills. It is worth noting that these events would also be likely to be supported by funders.

- It is suggested that, as well as measures to improve that access to clubs to general funding, there is a need for a central resource to provide advice on how to access, for example, EU funding, as well as other sport-specific funding (advice on which is less likely to be available through mainstream sources). Information on these funding sources is already available through Help for Clubs, but this could be expanded. It is suggested that the Scottish Executive and sportScotland investigate the best mechanism for the delivery of advice and direct assistance on funding (from these sources and more generally), building on the information available through the CVS network and Help for Clubs.

Assistance to Access Other Funding Strands

- Some clubs have illustrated by exception a more general point raised in the literature review, that sports clubs tend to have quite narrow horizons when considering funding. Some clubs, as noted in the report, have been successful in securing health and social justice funding. Clearly, to cope with this, clubs have to at least have some measure of business organisation. It is suggested that development bodies could do more to promote other funding strands to sports clubs.

Lack of a Recognised Governing Body

- Although strictly outwith the remit of this report, some martial arts clubs face difficulties due to the lack of a recognised Governing Body, and that, although they can access training, workshops and materials, there is a need to make them aware of this.

Facilities issues

3.16 It is clear from the findings that both clubs which own their own facilities, and rent these from local authorities, face problems with their facilities. At a wider level, sports facilities are under pressure from both housing development and other priorities for funding. The lack of investment in sports facilities in some areas was identified in various ways by many clubs. Conversely, it is also clear that considerable investment is being made in sport in some areas (by clubs and local authorities).

3.17 It is also worth noting that a number of clubs indicated that they were actively working with housing developers and planners to try to have sports facilities either built into developments, or at least to have some contribution by the builder to facilities in the area. In one case, for example, a cricket club noted that its ground had been relocated by a housing developer.
Key findings arising from the research

3.18 The key findings from the research in relation to facilities issues are:

- Only about half of the clubs surveyed as part of this research have long-term security of access to their playing and other facilities.
- Overall, more than half of all clubs indicated concerns about facilities. These concerns were slightly different for clubs which owned their facilities to those who rented or hired them.
- Clubs appear to be facing rising costs across a range of areas.
- The main area of concern for clubs is the quality of facilities. These concerns take a number of forms, including concerns about maintenance, incompatible uses, drainage, changing rooms and other facilities.
- These concerns covered most sports and all areas of Scotland in some form (although football clubs were perhaps the most likely to voice concerns).
- Some clubs which own their own facilities are clearly constrained by the lack of money to invest in maintenance and upgrading.
- In some areas, there are concerns about the ways in which facilities are managed, for example in terms of granting exclusive access, lets being cancelled at short notice and a general lack of communication with clubs.
- Some clubs identified facilities simply being withdrawn.
- Some clubs which operate in school premises clearly feel that this is a source of difficulty, although this is not the case for many other clubs.

Suggestions for action

3.19 The findings suggest a small number of actions relating to facilities on the part of clubs or those involved in the development of sport.

Audit of Facilities

- Two good examples identified in the case studies involved groups of clubs coming together to audit facilities in their towns, and make recommendations on addressing the problems. In both cases, significant progress has been made in putting new facilities in place. This model is one which could be replicated in other areas. In both cases, the groups concerned received support from public agencies. The development of local needs audits may be one way in which local authority investment in facilities could be channelled to support those projects agreed by local clubs to be most needed. sportscotland could consider a specific funding stream to support activity of this type.¹²

Planning Gain

- The area of planning gain appears to be an area in which there is some possibility of securing investment in sports facilities. sportscotland should consider how best to support local sports councils, and individual clubs, in pursuing these opportunities.

¹² A national facilities audit is due to be published by sportscotland in May 2006.
Staffing issues

3.20 A minority of clubs currently employ staff, and those that do tend to be concentrated in a narrow range of sports. The exception to this is coaches, who are employed across a wide range of sports.

Key findings arising from the research

3.21 The key findings from the research in relation to staffing issues are:

- The bulk of clubs do not employ staff. Few small clubs (as expected) employ staff.
- The largest number of staff are involved in ground maintenance and bar and catering work. Relatively few staff were found to be employed in management roles. Golf clubs represented a high proportion of all clubs with staff.
- Relatively few clubs identified having concerns about staffing, beyond the issue of affordability.
- A number of clubs (echoing points made by the wider voluntary sector) noted that it is very difficult to obtain funding for administration and other core staff. It is generally easier to obtain funding for staff to carry out a specific initiative (for example a coaching programme, or a programme with young offenders).
- Some examples of the benefits of employing staff were found in case study clubs which had, for example, created new areas of activity, or new revenue streams through channelling volunteer efforts.
- A bare majority of clubs employing staff appear to provide training to these staff, either induction training or ongoing skills training. Some good examples were found in the survey of the use of, for example, Investors In People and Learn Direct, as well as contacts made with colleges.
- Although coaching is a growth area, some clubs in some sports reported difficulties in finding an adequate supply of coaches, and in securing the training of club members wishing to qualify.

Suggestions for action

3.22 The findings suggest a small number of actions relating to staffing issues on the part of clubs or those involved in the development of sport.

Increasing the Level of Assistance Available

- There is basic help available for small businesses or voluntary organisations in relation to employing staff. The Help For Clubs website contains advice and checklists, but was described by one club as “daunting”, specifically in terms of the comments about the range of legal issues clubs face. The site contains a good deal of useful information, for example, sample job descriptions and terms and conditions, but stops short of providing any information about legal issues (although Basketball Scotland produces a useful summary leaflet). It is suggested that, while sportscotland cannot
provide legal advice, more extensive coverage of the issues and sources of advice would be helpful for clubs.

Mainstream Voluntary Sector’s Sources of Support

- Clubs could be encouraged to make more use of Councils for Voluntary Service and local authorities in securing information about staffing issues. JobCentre Plus is also a good source not only of potential recruits, but also of advice on process issues. The SCVO website contains a considerable amount of information about staffing issues, and could be more actively promoted to sports clubs.

Training for Staff

- Some clubs made suggestions about training for both staff members and coaches which are worth considering.
  - In relation to staff, a number of clubs identified that, while colleges offer sports administration as an HND or degree level qualification, there are many administrators who would benefit from what is, in effect, continuing professional development. Some (along with committee members) are able to secure this through wider club development programmes, but some clubs suggested that a programme of workshops, or distance learning, could be developed on a non-sport specific basis and offered to any clubs.
  - In relation to coaches, some clubs noted that some coaching certificates are sport-specific, even though at least a proportion of the material taught is (or could be) common to all sports. It was suggested that more use could be made of common modules, which would provide partial exemptions to coaches in one sport seeking to qualify in other sports. Alternatively, it was suggested that UK-level initiatives to produce generic coaching qualifications could be advanced in Scotland. These approaches could have the benefit of both reducing costs to clubs and individuals, and speeding up the flow of new coaches in some sports. The issue of generic coaching is currently being considered by the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC).

Volunteer issues

3.23 The survey identified a total of nearly 14,000 volunteers working across all sports, and in clubs of all types and sizes. (The total number of volunteers currently active in sport is estimated to be around 150,000.) Across the voluntary sector generally, organisations are reporting increasing difficulties in recruiting volunteers, and this pattern is repeated among sports clubs.

Key findings arising from the research

3.24 The key findings from the research in relation to volunteer issues are:
• The numbers of volunteers varies greatly by club, but there is no particular pattern evident in terms of either sport or area. Some of the variation will be due to differences in understanding across clubs in terms of what constitutes a “volunteer”. For example, some clubs may not regard management committee members as volunteers in the same sense as, for example, people ferrying children to matches.

• Most clubs appear to have a relatively unsophisticated understanding of the value of volunteers. The most commonly cited benefit (other than basic survival) was that this allowed clubs to keep their costs down. Some clubs also identified the benefits available through expanding the range of sports available, and the fact that volunteers carry out much of the maintenance and upgrading in clubs which have access to facilities. Few clubs identified the skills volunteers can bring to a club, the various roles they can play and the contribution they can make to the sustainability of the club. Very few clubs identified the benefits to the volunteer.

• Few clubs appear to be taking a structured approach to the recruitment and management of volunteers. Similarly, few reported having volunteering policies, and none reported having a specific coordinator. In most cases, it appears that volunteers are managed alongside other aspects of the operation of the club. For example, a bar coordinator would manage a pool of volunteers, as would team captains (for example in terms of transport) or convenors of any of a number of different types of sub-committees.

• Although not mentioned by any clubs, the SRU/VDS Volunteer Rugby programme represents a good example of a structured approach to the recruitment and management of volunteers.

• Relatively few clubs appear to have policies of direct relevance to volunteers in place. By some margin, the most common policy cited was in relation to child protection.

• There is little evidence of development activities for volunteers, except those involved in coaching activities.

• About a half of all clubs responding to the survey provide some sort of induction for volunteers, but this is likely to be very limited, and seems unlikely to be followed through.

• One example was identified of a club which had carried out a skills audit among volunteers, which had been made available to team captains, committee members and convenors of various activities.

• Some clubs provide volunteers with a “pack” similar to packs developed (in some clubs) for players.

• Around 40% of clubs surveyed identified difficulties in recruiting volunteers. A range of reasons were offered for this, including the cost of participation to the volunteer, the time commitment and competing priorities. It is also worth noting that many clubs consider that child protection issues, and particularly Disclosure Scotland checks, are having an impact on recruitment.

• Some clubs also noted the time commitment required from those supervising volunteers, and the costs to the club of supporting volunteers.

• In some areas, the pool of available volunteers is limited (for example, rural and island areas) and clubs in these areas may face some specific difficulties.
(although some examples of clubs with large numbers of volunteers from these areas were also identified).

- Very few clubs mentioned **working with Volunteer Centres**, and none mentioned Volunteer Development Scotland.

**Suggestions for action**

3.25 The findings suggest a small number of actions relating to volunteer issues on the part of clubs or those involved in the development of sport.

**The Benefits of a Structured Approach**

- It is clear that few clubs could survive without volunteers, yet most appear to take a very unstructured approach to working with volunteers. For the most part, however, this appears to work, and the issues clubs raised were not generally with the *management*, but more with the recruitment of volunteers. That said, some of the clubs identified through the research as performing well appeared to take a more structured approach to the management of volunteers (as well as other activities). The section on volunteers on the Help for Clubs website is among the most extensive on the site, and provides good practice advice on management issues. The section does, however, cover information for volunteers **and** for clubs, and could perhaps usefully separate the “why volunteer” section.

**Awareness of Help Available**

- Initiatives being undertaken between VDS and sport governing bodies, involving the development of volunteering policies, management approaches and stimulating recruitment are clearly at an early stage, and very few clubs are aware of any help available to them. In the meantime, it is suggested that **sportscotland** could, with VDS and local sports councils, promote the work of Volunteer Centres.
- It is suggested that **sportscotland** and VDS could jointly promote the use of the VDS website, and particularly the distance learning materials (which would serve at least to give a basic grounding in issues to committee members or staff managing volunteers).
- VDS has recently announced an “Investing in Volunteers” accreditation. This could be promoted to some sports clubs, which could, assuming the award is attained, serve as exemplars for other clubs.

**Links and joint working**

3.26 Clubs clearly exist within the framework of a local social, educational and business community, and it appears that few face any particular difficulties with that relationship (other than some clubs facing “bad neighbour” issues). Many clubs appear to have strong links with the community, and believe that they provide an essential opportunity to community members for both recreational and social activities.

**Key findings arising from the research**
3.27 The key findings from the research in relation to links and joint working are:

- While some clubs are clearly not part of their local community, **most are**. Some (particularly those with social facilities) may provide the only “social club” in some areas.
- Clubs also recognise the **benefits they can bring to all ages**, but particularly to young people and older people, in terms of providing the opportunity to engage in physical activity. The role of clubs in addressing government policy objectives in health and physical activity are also well-understood (although it is perhaps surprising that so few clubs appear to target health sector funding successfully).
- The main **direct contributions** made by clubs appear to be in terms of supporting local events, and supporting local charities.
- Although only 200 clubs identified **links with schools**, the real level is likely to be higher. Most clubs appear to recognise the dual benefit involved. Schools have access to coaching, volunteers and often facilities, while clubs are able to introduce young people to their sport at an early age. There were some good examples identified through the research of schools and clubs working together to develop shared facilities.
- **Links to local businesses** were found to be less strong. Most clubs saw businesses in terms of sponsorship. None mentioned business as a source of volunteers. None of the clubs mentioned, for example, Scottish Business in the Community, and only a tiny number mentioned Chambers of Commerce (generally only in the context of securing advice on legal and other issues).
- There were very few examples of **joint working** between clubs except at a very basic level. Some clubs, for example, groundshare, while some may cooperate in the recruitment of coaches.
- An example was identified in one area where **all clubs had come together** to develop a plan for sport for the town. This model is now understood to be being introduced in other areas. In another area, all of the local football teams cooperated in an audit and subsequent development of a new facility.
- Examples were also identified of some sport-specific area groups, for example in cricket and bowling, where clubs come together to discuss common issues, and, in some cases, to develop **forward development plans** for the sport in that area.

**Suggestions for action**

3.28 The findings suggest a small number of actions relating to links and joint working on the part of clubs or those involved in the development of sport.

**Links Between Sport and Local Business**

- It is suggested that more could be done to promote links between clubs and local businesses, for example through Scottish Business in the Community.
Local Sport Audits

- The example of one area provides a good model which more areas could follow in terms of carrying out an audit, identifying clubs’ views and developing an action plan (with the participation of the local sports councils, schools, the local authority and elected representatives). Although this model is being rolled out in other towns in that area, it does have wider relevance. As suggested earlier, 

Support issues

3.29 It is clear that clubs derive most of their support from two main sources, governing bodies and local authorities. The extent of help seeking from, and support provided by other providers is relatively small.

Key findings arising from the research

3.30 The key findings from the research in relation to support are:

- The extent to which clubs access support from governing bodies and local authorities appears to vary across Scotland, and across sports. Some governing bodies appear to provide more support than others.
- The extent and nature of support from other bodies varies greatly, and it can be assumed that, in many cases, the decision on who to seek support from may be a function of which agencies are known to the staff member or committee member charged with addressing the issue.
- The main issues with which clubs identified requiring support were, as might be expected, funding and child protection policies. About 10% of clubs simply said that more information should be available about most topics.
- Few clubs identified using the Help for Clubs website.

Suggestions for action

3.31 The findings suggest a small number of actions relating to support on the part of clubs or those involved in the development of sport.

Awareness of Assistance Available

- Apart from governing bodies and, to an extent, local authorities, most clubs appear to have only limited knowledge about where to seek support, particularly support for more complex issues, such as legal issues or employment issues. It is also clear that the support provided by both governing bodies and local authorities does vary, leaving an unknown number of clubs with a potential difficulty in identifying where to get help. The Help for Clubs website is a useful resource, but does not appear to be well-known to clubs. It is suggested that sportscotland should consider undertaking a widespread marketing campaign for the site, in conjunction with governing bodies.
• It is suggested that an “information for clubs” booklet be produced, to complement the information on the Help for Clubs website, recognising that many clubs still do not have access to the Internet.

Regular Dissemination of Good Practice

• The regular dissemination, on a proactive basis, of good practice information and examples, as well as information about relevant legislation and other key issues could enable clubs to obtain and share information more readily.

Overview

3.32 This report has provided a detailed account of the range of issues affecting local sports clubs in Scotland which affect their sustainability. It is clear that many clubs face a number of problems, and the research suggests several areas and issues for which advice and support could be provided or targeted, in order to help to tackle some of these difficulties. It is also clear that some clubs have identified various forms of good practice which have been successful in contributing to their own sustainability, and these can be shared with others.

3.33 The findings of this study should help to inform all of those involved in the development of sport in Scotland in the future, and will also form the basis of the preparation of some information for clubs.

3.34 It is clear that local sports clubs are a vital part of the fabric of community life in Scotland, and bring a range of social and economic benefits to local communities.
# APPENDIX 1: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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<td>“Bringing Communities Together Through Sport and Culture”</td>
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<td>Department for Culture, Media and Sport</td>
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<td>Sport England (1999b)</td>
<td>“The Value of Sport to the Health of the Nation” London. Sport England</td>
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## APPENDIX 2: CLUBS WHICH RESPONDED (BY SPORT)

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### APPENDIX 3: CLUBS WHICH RESPONDED (BY LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA)

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13 One response was received from a club in Berwick which is a member of a Scottish – based governing body and plays in a Scottish league. Given that the focus of this work is on sustainability, it was decided to include the club’s response. It is not included in this table.