



'Harlow to K2 and Beyond': The Sport and Leisure Legacy Project 2016



The National Lottery Sports Fund

by David Carpenter, Director, Lottery Sports Fund, 1994–2003

Background and Factual Overview

As a funding source, the National Lottery Sports Fund has had a significant role investing in Sports Centres in England over a 21 year period.

According to Sport England's (www.sportengland.org) Active Places register, there are 4,714 Sports Halls in England at the current time. The National Lottery has had a significant investment involvement in over 450 local projects, 10% of the total. That figure rises to over 600 projects if you look at bigger Centres that include Sports Halls and wider facilities, and approximately 1,200 (25% of the total) if you take into account refurbishment and renewal, which has been the focus of more recent years. In financial terms, Sport England at February 2016 has distributed £4.1billion of Lottery funding since 1995, of which just over £1billion has supported Sports Centre projects.

A National Lottery where sport was a significant beneficiary had been mooted for many years. There were good examples overseas in Scandinavia, New Zealand, Canada and some of the Australian states. In policy terms it was seen as a way to increase funding to 'good causes', such as sport, that were always in the 'twilight zone' when it came to public spending decisions.

In Great Britain there was little prospect of a National Lottery being introduced during the 'Thatcher Years' but, as John Major – a self-confessed sports fanatic – ascended the political staircase, the chances of a Lottery became a reality.

Legislation was introduced into Parliament in 1993 and, despite considerable opposition from religious and anti-gambling groups, the National Lottery Act 1993 duly got onto the Statute Book.

Sport was one of five 'Good Causes', deriving approximately five pence in the pound from every National Lottery ticket sold. Government and the then Department for National Heritage (subsequently the Department for Culture, Media and Sport) were telling the potential distributors of Lottery funding, including the then GB Sports Council, to expect an extra £60million per annum. How wrong could they be!!!

I was fortunate enough to undertake a worldwide Study Tour in 1993, and all consulted told me to expect at least £250million per annum for sport alone. And so it proved, the first full year income was £297million!

The National Lottery commenced on 19th November 1994. The DNH/DCMS had not a clue, burdening the 'Distributors', and applicants, with onerous regulation and financial controls, spurious information requirements, and not permitting any form of soliciting for individual strategic projects. That said, it did not stop the more astute Sports Council Regions from developing their own strategic priorities and encouraging applicants to

submit a bid. The South West was a notable example, generating significant new Sports Centre provision in many market towns in the Region. They were, in fact, so successful that we were forced to apply a 'gentle brake' after about three years as we were also obligated by law to distribute the funds as evenly as possible throughout England.

The Lottery Fund was introduced against a background of falling local Government capital spending and in the early years, 1995-1998, it re-stimulated the market and resulted in many local sports centre schemes that had remained dormant for some years coming forward and being matched by newly-allocated partnership funding. Over time, a lot of new strategic schemes were developed and came forward, mainly from schools and local authorities, alongside literally thousands of other projects championed by the voluntary sector, some very ambitious, some very small but nonetheless locally important.

In that early period a wide variety of notable schemes, for example, included the original Bolton Lads & Dads (now Girls) Project; Barking Abbey School; Whitechapel Sports Centre; Manchester Commonwealth Pool; East Anglian Sports Park; Moseley School in Birmingham; Selwyn Jones Sports Centre in St Helens; Smiths Park on North Tyneside; Huddersfield Community Stadium; the Robin Park development in Wigan; the Westgate development in Newcastle, and North Kensington Amenity Trust.

After the initial surge of applications during the first five years of the Lottery Fund, other sources of funding perhaps started to supersede its importance in terms of sports centre provision, and the Fund diversified into providing stimulant funds for the hugely successful high performance programmes, the English Institute of Sport, school sport co-ordinators, the Active Sport programme that became the fore-runner of the County Sports Partnerships, the Millennium Youth Games and Major International Events. For Sports Centres, Building Schools for the Future, the Private Finance Initiative, and the New Opportunities Fund for PE and Sport (another £750million of Lottery funding!) became much more relevant. But the Lottery Fund remained very active and relevant, for example, to the initial development of Specialist Sports Colleges.

A full list of supported projects over 21 years can be found at www.lottery.culture.gov.uk

David Carpenter, March 2016

[My thanks to Alison Selfe and Brian Whaley at Sport England for their contributions to my Legacy Project articles on the National Lottery Sports Fund.]



**'Harlow to K2 and Beyond':
The Sport and Leisure Legacy Project 2016**

The National Lottery Sports Fund

**by David Carpenter
Director, Lottery Sports Fund, 1994–2003**



Impact, Trends and the Future

My associated article on the National Lottery Sports Fund outlined the factual background to the Fund over the past 21 years. How would I summarise the contribution of the Lottery Sports Fund to sports centre development over 21 years? And what of the future?

First and foremost, I think that the Fund has made a positive contribution, a 'step change' in some policy areas, with a very large number of sports centre projects that have had significant impact on local communities, and on individual people locally.

In the early days of the Fund, a lot of significant strategic projects were supported in the major cities and rural market towns.

This then trended into more support for projects on education sites, particularly Specialist Sports Colleges offering curricular, extra-curricular and community use on either a casual or booked basis.

Universally, what was originally often a basic sports hall unit with changing accommodation developed into centres with other, often extensive, 'lifestyle' support facilities, driven partly by demand and partly by the need for financial sustainability.

More latterly, provision has been influenced by Sport England's development of the Optimum Sports Hall, the first example being St Mary's in Hull, their guidance documentation such as 'Developing the Right Sports Hall and, on the ground, major examples such as Orford Jubilee Park in Warrington, Lancashire.

When the Lottery Fund began, almost all of the sports centre projects were being managed by an internal team. Now almost all are with a Leisure Trust or private sector supplier, often on long term contracts that also cover maintenance, renewal and regeneration.

Designs that have reduced 'life cycle' cost, are environmentally more sustainable, use improved building materials and offer more natural light, are to the fore.

Future funded schemes are likely to come under intense scrutiny by Sport England, in respect of key criteria for the new Government Sports Strategy; and by Local Government, in terms of making new provision in a policy area that remains discretionary. Health, Wellbeing and Physical Activity agendas will heavily influence future provision.

In summary! The Lottery Fund has had a huge influence over 21 years. But when it comes down to looking at involvement with sports centres, perhaps the influence has been less than some other policy areas. True, the Fund has had an involvement with almost 25% of the current stock of Sports Centres. True, it has also been involved with

many key developments in both cities and rural market towns over 21 years. Investment has resulted in 'lifestyle' experiences and improvements for many local people, of all ages.

But, on a pessimistic note, although the Fund has been and continues to be welcome and significant for sport, it has not been able to keep pace with the total sector deficit in terms of replacement and renewal. The simple fact is that many sports centres are either at or reaching the end of their natural life. A figure of £1billion per annum on a rolling basis is probably required to address the issue.

According to Sport England there are still more sports centres being opened than closed at present, but that is unlikely to continue in the current public sector environment which is set to get even tougher over the next five years to 2021.

David Carpenter, March 2016

[My thanks to Alison Selfe and Brian Whaley at Sport England for their contributions to my Legacy Project articles on the National Lottery Sports Fund. Their views are not necessarily my own.]

