

Argyll and Bute Council
Sport and Physical Activity
Strategy
2005 – 2008

Interim Review

February 2009



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The Brief

In March 2008 Slainte Ltd was asked by Argyll and Bute Council's Sport and Leisure Services division to carry out a review of the Council's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy which had been adopted in 2005.

The review was to identify how well the strategy aligned with relevant current national strategies; how effective it was at delivering its stated actions and outcomes; and was to offer guidance on how the strategy should be amended to meet the area's needs, and national priorities, over the period 2008-2014.

The result would inform the development of an Action Plan for the next five years, which will be set in a standard measurement framework that would align with overall Council measurement.

1.0 Visions and Main Aims of 2005-08 Strategy

Vision

The Strategy is intended to maximise the opportunities for people of all ages and abilities within Argyll and Bute to participate in sport and physical activity. By doing this we aim to contribute to the good health, improved quality of life and social inclusion of all our citizens and communities.

Aims

1. Raise lifelong participation levels in sport and physical activity in Argyll and Bute
2. Promote active lifestyles through the unique qualities of the natural environment of Argyll and Bute
3. Recognise potential to enhance sporting opportunities for the population by developing coaching and raising standards
4. Promote and support voluntary and community involvement in the provision of sport and physical activity
5. Encourage the use of sport and physical activity as a means of achieving social inclusion
6. Improve health and well-being by developing sport and physical activity as an integral part of Community Planning

2.0 Executive Summary

2.1 The 2005-08 Strategy links well with national programmes and strategies, particularly such as Active Schools and Curriculum for Excellence.

2.2 There are a number of national and sectoral strategies which impinge on sport and physical activity and the complete picture is somewhat confusing, making it difficult for local delivery agents to align with the national picture.

2.3 The Aims and target outcomes of the 2005-08 Strategy indicate an inclusive and comprehensive approach to sport and physical activity which touches all dimensions of the local community and active visitors to the area.

2.4 The Strategy identifies a large number of target outcomes (115). Although this provides a specific “roadmap” for the direction of the Strategy, many of the outcomes are difficult to measure and the identification of a limited number of Key Performance Indicators, related to the outcomes, would allow for easier assessment of the achievement of the Aims.

2.5 There are significant key indicators that show that the overall delivery of the strategy is successful.

- The development of Stramash as an independent Social Enterprise and its success in winning several national awards for excellence
- The establishment of a number of activity programmes that are providing opportunities for all sectors within the Argyll community
- Specific programmes to develop the leadership potential of young people in Argyll
- All Argyll and Bute schools are Health-Promoting
- Active Schools extra-curricular programme has expanded 85% (primary) and 62% (secondary) between 2005 and 2008
- 500 volunteers recruited to support Active Schools programme
- Argyll and Bute sits in the top quartile of Scottish local authorities in terms of monthly participation in sports (source: Sportscotland)
- 24% of adults in Argyll and Bute undertake some form of sports-related voluntary work against a national average of 14% (source: Sportscotland)
- the explosion in coaching awards gained (from 47 in 2005 to 350 in 2008)

2.6 Argyll and Bute has an enviable range of natural resources including sea and inland waters, mountains and woodland which provide maximum opportunity for participation in outdoor activity for both locals and visitors.

These natural resources attract a number of major national and international sports events which not only showcase Argyll and Bute to the wider world but also bring significant economic benefit.

2.7 It is a major concern that the Argyll and Bute Community Plan 2007-17 almost totally ignores sport and physical activity as a key mechanism for delivering Vibrant Communities and, in the case of one of the national strategic objectives, a Scotland that is Healthier.

2.8 Overall, the Strategy shows a good vision of how to deliver national and local objectives in relation to Sport and Physical Activity with the result that the people of Argyll and Bute are being given, and are responding to, many more opportunities to participate in health with beneficial personal and social impacts.

3.0 National and Local Context

3.1 Nationally, the over-riding context is a concern over the lack of physical activity being undertaken by Scots which, combined with a generally poor diet, is resulting in poor health, high cost to the NHS for treatment and employers in absence, early death (particularly in poorer neighbourhoods), and serious concerns over a time-bomb of future obesity and ill-health in the generation currently growing through childhood.

3.2 These concerns have resulted, over the period 2002 to 2007 in particular, in a number of physical health and activity strategies being produced by a number of bodies with an interest in health and/or activity. There appears to have been no attempt to encourage a common approach, for example, that the strategy to promote cycling would be clearly aligned with the national strategy on physical activity. This has made the national picture unnecessarily confused and, for delivery agents such as local Councils, difficult to identify how best local delivery can be best aligned with national strategy.

3.3 The bridge between national and local is being channelled through the Single Outcome Agreement structure, between Scottish and local Government, and through Community Planning as the body that is seen as representing the grass-roots and promoting and monitoring delivery of appropriate activities.

3.4 The Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership does not appear to consider sport and physical activity a priority since the term “physical activity” does not appear anywhere in the Community Plan 2007-17 and “sport” is only used in a general aim to increase sport and culture facilities.

3.4 Health improvement appears, in the Community Plan, to be focused on achieving a reduction in substance misuse with no reference to plans for encouraging healthier lifestyles. Neither the Joint Health Improvement Plan nor the Council's Corporate Plan mention the role that sport and physical activity have to play in achieving a healthier Argyll and Bute.

3.5 The lack of inclusion of sport and physical activity in local strategic thinking is a major concern.

4.0 Summary of National Strategies

4.1 Strategies relating to sport are relatively specific and also refer to health improvement as one of the beneficial outcomes of participation. Strategies relating to active living and health improvement are generally NHS-focused or specific-interest and are harder to relate to the development of a local strategy.

4.2 Partnerships formed to co-ordinate and translate national policy into local delivery mechanisms (CPP and JHIP) show considerable room for improvement since they include few references to either sport or physical activity.

4.3 The introduction of the Single Outcome Agreement between Scottish Government and local authorities provides the opportunity to more closely align national strategy with what is delivered at grass-roots. Most of the strategies looked at are very poor at establishing baselines, measuring mechanisms and SMART targets.

4.4 Common themes that emerge from the national strategies are:

- The need for health improvement
- The need to encourage greater participation in exercise
- Infrastructure and facilities
- Access to opportunities
- All ages and ability levels
- Pathways, for volunteers, coaches, performers
- The role of the school
- Lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

5.0 Alignment with National Strategies

5.1 Given the number of national strategies that dip their toes in sport and physical activity the Argyll and Bute strategy does a good job of reducing this range and scope to 6 discrete and relevant Aims.

5.2 The principal strategy it requires to align with is the National Physical Activity Strategy, and Argyll and Bute's targets and actions cross-reference well with the national priorities. Examples are clear references to the role of the Community Planning Partnership and the Joint Health Improvement Plan in

delivering outcomes, and clear targets for increased physical activity which match the national targets.

5.3 There are a wide range and complexity of national strategies for general health improvement and active living. It is prudent for the Argyll and Bute strategy to place this within the context of the Community Plan and the Joint Health Improvement Plan, and to seek active representation of the SPA Strategy at a strategic level as a means of ensuring delivery of these multi-agency plans is consistent with the SPA strategy. Identifying key measurable targets that align with national targets should be sufficient to ensure the SPA is relevant in the national context.

5.4 Alignment with the National Strategy for Sport and the SportsScotland Corporate Plan is equally clear. Reference to shared goals such as encouraging excellence, facility development, coaching and volunteering pathways, and Active Schools is evident. The outcomes that would demonstrate achievement of these are generally, however, not specific and measurable. Targets for international representation by Argyll and Bute sportsmen and women would be an example of clearer measurement.

5.5 The Argyll and Bute strategy should make more of the opportunity to align with the National Dance Strategy, since the area is particularly strong in traditional dance (and also, in North Argyll, Ballet). There is no reference to Dance in the strategy although this activity is one of the pillars of physical activity. Development activity in the educational curriculum, in dance activity in the community and in pathways for dancers would be consistent with the SPA strategy and fit with key priorities of the Dance Strategy.

5.6 Although Play is also a pillar of physical activity, and there is no specific reference to play in the SPA, it is perhaps more difficult to have discrete targets in this regard beyond developing a local plan for facility development. Once the national strategy has been completed the wider issue can be addressed. However, it may be considered that to incorporate Play within the SPA would dilute the focus of the strategy and that this dimension is not appropriate for inclusion.

5.7 The Aims of the strategy clearly address key national priorities in active lifestyles and participation in exercise and sport, leading to improved health. Implementation methods such as developing volunteering are also identified and match national priorities. Some issues, such as Dance as an element, and perhaps Mountain-biking as a growing sport (with World-ranked performers born and living in Argyll), should be considered in planning specific actions and outcomes for the next phase.

5.8 Social factors affecting participation are also addressed, as is the necessity for a co-ordinated approach through mechanisms such as the CPP and JHIP. Although some national strategies have been formulated or reviewed since the SPA was drafted in 2003, the strategy is still largely relevant as the authority looks forward to the next phase.

5.9 In summary, Argyll and Bute's Sport and Physical Activity strategy is well aligned with the key national strategies

6.0 Comparisons with Other Local Authorities

6.1 **Culture and Sport Glasgow's** strategy document is strong on the city's cultural assets and includes sport as a dimension of culture, not as a distinct activity. It is strong on facilities and events, but also has strong participation threads such as free swimming for children at all Council pools. The action plan has some similarities with Argyll and Bute in focusing on participation; pathways; infrastructure; and optimising the "vibrant and distinctive" city (the local dimension). The document is now out of date; talking about making a decision on bidding for the 2014 Commonwealth Games several months after the bid had been won.

6.2 **Edinburgh City Council** refer to their document as the Sport and Physical Recreation Strategy and have the ambition of their city being the most active in Europe by 2020, thereby firmly committing themselves to the participation focus, with references also to partnerships, pathways, facilities and equity. This is also out of date (2002). Looking at more rural authorities gives a better direct comparison

6.3 **Dumfries and Galloway's** Leisure and Sport Strategy is dated 2001-05 and is sport-focused with out-of-date references to education.

6.4 **Highland Council** is currently engaged in consultation which is expected to result in a new strategy being developed. A strategy exists dated 2000, but this is rather non-specific about outcomes.

6.6 By comparison with their peers Argyll and Bute's strategy is imaginative, broad but detailed, and utilising the strengths of the area.

7.0 Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership

7.1 The CPP is made up of 26 partners representing every strand of life in Argyll and Bute – public, private, voluntary, agency, and all interest groups. It produces the Community Plan which is aimed at co-ordinating and focusing actions, resulting in reduced duplication and waste.

7.2 The aims and outcomes of the Plan are cross-referenced against the Scottish Governments five key themes, one of which is "Healthier". There are a number of outcomes which are regarded as "ticking" that box, but few have any relevance to a strategy for sport and physical activity. The closest refer to rural deprivation, regeneration and drug and alcohol initiatives and none relate specifically to physical activity or sport (except in the latter case in relation infrastructure rather than participation). The Health and Wellbeing Theme Group of the CPP has been responsible for the development of the Joint Health Improvement Plan.

7.3 It has to be concluded that the current Community Plan does not adequately address sport and physical activity issues in Argyll and Bute.

8.0 Joint Health Improvement Plan (2005-08)

8.1 The strategic priorities of the JHIP refer to issues such as alcohol misuse, coronary heart disease, mental health, social care and health care. There is a reference to national physical activity targets for both children and those over 17 years old and a reference to the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy as the means of achieving improvements. The baseline position, the target improvement and the measurement mechanism are not identified, meaning it is not possible to say when or if the outcome has been achieved.

8.2 Considering that the title include the words Health Improvement, it would have been reasonable to expect more content directed at encouraging and supporting increased physical activity, this being regarded as an essential component by the national strategies. The increased emphasis on active living at a national strategic level should result in the JHIP for the next three years giving a higher priority to this aspect of health.

9.0 Argyll and Bute Council - Corporate Plan 2009-2012 and beyond

9.1 Although sport and physical activity has a significant role to play in maintaining vibrant communities by supporting health improvement, keeping young people active and fulfilled locally and our citizens involved in volunteering it is not specifically mentioned in the Corporate Plan.

9.2 Similarly, the use of our natural resources for sport, leisure, tourism and confidence building could be a major area of economic growth as these resources are generally under utilised in Argyll and Bute, The creation of Stramash as a social enterprise highlights the economic potential of our outdoor environment for business growth and improved quality of life.

10.0 Argyll and Bute Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2003-08

10.1 **Introduction** - the strategy is anchored on three dimensions;

- promoting health and well-being through active lifestyles;
- facilitating pathways through sport;
- utilising to the full the unique natural environment of Argyll and Bute in designing and delivering the strategy.

In doing so it provides a local delivery mechanism for national priorities.

It clearly links its Vision and 6 Aims to the targets of Sport 21. The narrative explaining each Aim underpins in a logical manner the purpose and reasoning for each.

The Action Plan identifies specific actions intended to deliver the aim plus a timescale and outcomes that would flow from the action. However, the outcomes are not, in the main, quantified.

10.2 Aims - the six Aims are clearly developed to meet national priorities, with references to participation levels, active lifestyles, raising standards, voluntary involvement, social inclusion and improving health and well-being.

Aim 2 places this in the context of the unique qualities of the natural environment of Argyll and Bute and it is sensible that the strengths of the area should be utilised to the full. The narrative explaining each Aim is logical and makes specific reference to Sport 21 targets and to the national and local contexts.

10.3 Action Plan - the Aims are broken down into between four and six action areas, each with a range of intended actions (64 in total), timescales and intended outcomes. The actions are detailed and comprehensive, linking to national strategy outcomes and also to local circumstances and existing activities.

It is significant that the language of the actions appears to emphasise process as much as outcome, with words like review, assess, map, examine, identify, audit, investigate as prominent as provide, create, support, develop. The result is 115 intended outcomes, very few of which are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic, Time-bound) meaning that evaluation of success in delivery is made more difficult.

10.4 Recommendation: In the second phase of the strategy, with the processes of gathering information and identifying baselines having been achieved, it is recommended that the actions be more outcome-orientated.

11.0 Summary and Conclusion

On the basis of the evidence gathered to date, it is considered that 5 out of 6 Aims have been achieved:

Aim 1	Raise lifelong participation levels in sport and physical activity in Argyll and Bute	Achieved
Aim 2	Promote active lifestyles through the unique qualities of the natural environment of Argyll and Bute	Achieved
Aim 3	Recognise opportunities to develop pathways through sport by developing coaching, raising standards, providing and encouraging the development of high quality facilities and access	Achieved
Aim 4	Promote and support voluntary and community involvement in the provision of sport and physical activity	Achieved
Aim 5	Promote the use of sport and physical activities as a means of social inclusion	Achieved
Aim 6	Improve health and well-being by developing sport and physical activity as an integral part of Community Planning	Not Achieved

It is of obvious concern that the Community Plan, as the single most important delivery mechanism of the Single Outcome Agreement, makes no mention of how sport and physical activity will play a role in achieving Scotland's strategic objectives. Similar omissions are noted in the Joint Health Improvement Plan and the Corporate Plan which indicates that local strategic thinking does not place sufficient value to the benefits of sport and physical activity.

This is an area which will require improvement if the Council is to meet the aims of the Single Outcome Agreement.

There are significant key indicators that show that the overall delivery of the strategy is successful.

- The development of Stramash as an independent Social Enterprise and its success in winning several national awards for excellence
- The establishment of a number of activity programmes that are providing opportunities for all sectors within the Argyll community
- Specific programmes to develop the leadership potential of young people in Argyll
- All Argyll and Bute schools are Health-Promoting
- Active Schools extra-curricular programme has expanded 85% (primary) and 62% (secondary) between 2005 and 2008
- 500 volunteers recruited to support Active Schools programme
- Argyll and Bute sits in the top quartile of Scottish local authorities in terms of monthly participation in sports (source: Sportscotland)
- 24% of adults in Argyll and Bute undertake some form of sports-related voluntary work against a national average of 14% (source: Sportscotland)
- the explosion in coaching awards gained (from 47 in 2005 to 350 in 2008)

It is considered, however, that where non-achievement is recorded this is partly due to the difficulty of providing evidence of the achievement of outcomes due to the way they have been phrased and the lack of baseline comparators which would demonstrate and quantify improvement and/or achievement.

Many of the individual outcomes may, therefore, have been achieved but have not been measured as having done so.

11.0 Looking Forward

11.1 In considering what should comprise a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for the next period, 2009-14, a number of issues should be taken into account. These include:

- Outcomes should be measurable using data that is readily available from central sources or is being gathered anyway
- Key Performance Indicators should be identified which summarise the outcomes and give a clear indication whether the Aims are being achieved. There is no problem with having 115 target outcomes, but perhaps 12 KPIs could summarise these.
- Baseline data has to be available to track changes over the period of the Strategy
- Since Stramash has been born out of the very successful Council activity programme and is now a model Social Enterprise, it should be considered the preferred supplier of relevant services to the Council (subject to fair tendering procedures)
- Sport and physical activity has evolved significantly since 2005. This process will continue and the next strategy should both take account of the changes so far and anticipate the opportunities that lie ahead.
- Mountain-biking is a growth sport with young international performers in North Argyll and new trails such as near Lochgilphead. Adventure/extreme events are rapidly growing and the Coll Challenge is a direct result of this new appetite. The Bens of Jura Race represents an opportunity to offer this type of event as, perhaps, is the new Kintyre Way.
- Dance is somewhat underplayed in the 2005-08 strategy and could perhaps have a higher profile, given pockets of excellence such as Ballet West and the National Highland Dance Championships at Cowal Highland Gathering.
- There is talk in the Scottish Government of providing each schoolchild in Scotland with a week of outdoor learning during their education. This is some way off but the new strategy may wish to take account of the support the idea has gathered and how this might translate into future national policy, budget and actions.
- The Council is introducing a standard performance-measuring process and the measurement of the strategy should obviously align with this.
- The 6 Aims have proved relevant for the period of the last Strategy and could usefully be retained for the next.

The detailed review of the outcomes of the Argyll and Bute Council Sport and Physical Activity Review will be finalised by end of March 2009.

Appendix 1.

Sources of Information

Active Schools Network Year 3 Evaluation (2006/07)
Argyll and Bute Community Plan
Argyll and Bute Joint Health Improvement Plan
Analysis of Regional Variations in Sports Participation in Scotland (2006)
Sportscotland
Argyll and Bute Council Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (2005)
Argyll and Bute Council Sport and Leisure Services Annual report 2007
Being Well, Doing Well – a Framework for Health Promoting Schools (2004)
Scottish Government
Better Health, Better Care Action Plan
Curriculum for Excellence
Dance Strategy 2002-07, Scottish Arts Council
Delivering a Healthy Future – An Action Framework for Children and Young Person's Health in Scotland (2007) Scottish Executive
Developing a Physical Activity Strategy in Scottish Local Authorities (2007)
Health Scotland
Dumfries and Galloway Leisure and Sport Strategy 2001
Edinburgh City Council Sport and Physical Recreation Strategy 2002
Enjoying the Outdoors (2007) SNH Policy Statement
Glasgow's Cultural strategy Action Plan
Highland Sports Strategy (2000)
Highlands and Islands Transport Strategy (HITRANS) 2007
Health Scotland Delivery Plan 2007-08
Improving Health in Scotland – The Challenge
National Physical Activity Strategy (2003)
National Assessment of Local Authority Cycling Policy (2008) Cycling Scotland
National Transport Strategy
Paths For All/Paths For Health
A Performance Overview of Sport in Scotland (2008) Audit Scotland
Reaching Higher – National Strategy for Sport (2007) Scottish Government
Sportscotland Corporate Plan 2007-11
Taking Learning Outdoors (2007) Learning and Teaching Scotland
The Potential of Sport (Sportscotland)
Towards a Healthier Scotland (1999) Scottish Office
Woods for Health Strategy (2007) Forestry Commission Scotland
Ydance, Scottish Youth Dance