



8 Merus Court
Meridian Business Park
Leicester
LE19 1RJ

T: 0116 289 2956
W: www.gliding.co.uk

UK Sport
21 Bloomsbury Street,
London,
WC1B 3HF

16th August 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

FUTURE FUNDING OF ELITE SPORT CONSULTATION RESPONSE – ADDITIONAL DETAIL

Thanks for the opportunity to respond to your online consultation on UK Sport funding of elite sport. We'd like to add this additional comment that didn't quite fit with the questions that were presented online.

Gliding – grassroots sport through to international medal success

Gliding is a self-funded air sport governed by the BGA consisting of 80 self-managed gliding clubs within reasonable reach of most of the UK's population, serving some 7000 full members and around 17,000 temporary participants each year. The grassroots activity is supplemented by regional and very competitive national level competitions which provide a basis from which to select our international competitors. Gliding is a healthy outdoor sport that absolutely addresses many of the government's desired sporting outcomes, e.g. physical well-being, mental well-being, individual development, and social development. It's clear that the contribution to the nation's overall health has a positive economic value. The sport of gliding is an integral element of the UK general aviation sector, which government data identifies adds some £3bn annually to the UK economy.

The British Gliding Team has an excellent track record in international competitions. Full details can be supplied on request, but in the last year, British pilots took 6 of the 9 medals at the 2017 European Championships held in the UK and at the World Championships just finished in Czech Republic, the UK took Silver in the 20 metre two-seater class. Prior to UK Sport focussing entirely on Olympic medal success under its current strategy, the BGA received around £40K per annum which was put to excellent use in elite performance, talent identification and coaching.

The British Gliding Team attracts a small amount of sponsorship, but essentially all elite performance in gliding is self-funded. Since the withdrawal of Sports Council funding, it has been more difficult to provide coaching for national squads and teams and the attendance of coaches and other expert support at international events has almost completely ceased. The cost of participating at the elite level is such that some talented pilots have been unable to take up their places in the teams or even to participate at the talent development level, with the effect that members of the national teams may be 'self-selected' based on the ability to pay rather than merit. Naturally this significantly limits the opportunity to develop performance into medal wins and therefore limits inspiration. It is useful to look at good practice outside the UK. International participation by France and Germany, which differ significantly from the UK funding model for elite sport, benefit enormously from relatively modest public funding.

In terms of participation, the UK sporting landscape is incredibly diverse and should be considered holistically. The rich variety of sports available means that a large proportion of the population should be able to find a sport that suits them and in which they can participate or excel. Whilst Olympic and Paralympic Sport does periodically result in a 'national feel good factor', which of course delights the government of the day, we are not convinced that there is credible evidence that inspiring the public through Olympic success will lead to sustainable participation in those sports or the wider sporting landscape. We agree it's important to keep trying. But it's very important and more likely to lead to the widest participation if more sports can inspire and encourage through international success. UK Sport should fund as wide a range of elite sports as possible to achieve this.

How UK Sport can help

We understand that going forward, UK Sport expect to build on medal success and to help the government's sport strategy by creating inspiration through international success, and thereby encouraging participation. The online consultation suggests that UK Sport is still very focussed on Olympic sports that deliver medals rather than the wider sporting landscape. This includes some sports which have a relatively small participation base and are not well known as being easily accessible for grassroots participation. The government has stated that it will formally recognise UK (and home nation) performance in pinnacle World, European etc competitions as a priority alongside Olympic and Paralympic Sport to ensure success across international sport. Moving back to sport being the sum of the parts rather than exclusively Olympic or Paralympic, we believe very strongly that this should include sports such as gliding, which can, for a limited investment, deliver a significant number of medals at international events.

As we have seen before, a very small amount of the total UK Sport budget paid to Olympic and Paralympic sport can make a huge difference to gliding, and indeed many other sports.

How can UK Sport support this obvious need without diverting from Olympic and Paralympic success? We would like to list three areas for change:

- 1) We strongly suggest that the new UK Sport strategy could include a specific stream of funding previously used so effectively by gliding and other non-Olympic and Paralympic sports.
- 2) We believe that the definition of success may benefit from a rethink – simply measuring medals may not lead to the best support strategies. For example, it doesn't show strength in depth or provide for successful development of the next generation of medal winners.
- 3) Finally, we would like to see UK Sport work with governing bodies of the wider range of sports to publicise the sports and their successes and thus inspire the widest range of people into sport. UK Sport would of course have the added opportunity to publicise the additional successes in a wider range of sports as being at least in part due to their contribution.

The BGA would be delighted to engage in a bilateral with UK Sport to discuss this in more detail.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Pete Stratten', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Pete Stratten
Chief Executive Officer
07749 908444