

LONDON FORUM'S RESPONSE TO THE MAYOR OF LONDON'S SPORTS STRATEGY

Question 1: Do you agree with the overall vision and the three themes of this draft sport strategy? If not, why not? Is anything missing?

Yes, spectator sport, active participation and the workforce to facilitate these seem to cover all the bases. However, sport in state schools should be addressed, particularly the effect of the loss of playing fields.

Question 2a: Does chapter 2 (London: socially integrated through sport) identify the main issues that might impact on the role of sport to support social integration? If not, what is missing?

Sport which requires relatively large areas of land is predominantly located in outer London Boroughs. Access by public transport can be an issue, and for sports which require heavy personal equipment may not be appropriate.

Question 2b: How should the Mayor best work with partners to help remove barriers and help improve social integration through sport in London?

The quality of provision influences the level of participation. Rugby football on a sloping bumpy ground is a different proposition to playing at Twickenham. Bowls requires a high level of care and cricket more so – many ex-GLA pitches fell into disuse partly because the councils which took them over did not have the resources to maintain them to a necessary standard. Private cricket clubs traditionally relied on bar takings to maintain and upgrade facilities, and on volunteers to maintain the square. The increasing provision of social activities elsewhere (the night time economy) means that those who would have supported bar takings are less likely to do so, and a significant amount of cricket is played by the Asian community many of whom do not drink. The effect of this has been that Asian players may settle for a lower standard of pitches, so that there is less integration of different communities within teams than might have been the case.

Question 3a: What barriers to participation in sport should the Mayor focus on in order to increase participation in sport and so improve Londoners' physical and mental health?

We welcome the healthy streets initiative but this chapter should also address the planning powers of the Mayor and the need to protect playing fields from development.

Question 3b: How can the Mayor help to increase sports participation to improve the physical and mental health of all Londoners, but in particular, for those Londoners who are inactive, or who have poor access to sports activities/facilities?

Good public transport and attractive destinations – the healthy cities programme – is the essential first step.

Question 4: Does chapter 4 identify the main issues for creating a thriving sport sector in London? If not, what is missing?

What is missing is a recognition that many playing fields have been built upon and that building the necessary workforce to maintain them and facilitate their use is a secondary consideration.

Question 5: Do you think these are the right criteria for the Mayor's support of major sports events in London? If not, what should the criteria be?

The objectives should be clearer, (see the response to Q.6) and the disbenefits addressed.

Question 6: What sort of major sports events do you think should be held in London in future, and why?

All sporting events bring some benefit. Some enable people living locally to watch, when they could not afford to travel long distances. Others are run to maximise income and are out of reach to people on low incomes, but bring benefits in terms of attracting tourism. The main disbenefit is when tailoring public transport provision to meet the needs of those attending these events results in serious inconvenience to other businesses and personal activities. Events which require extensive road closures for extended periods need to be viewed with caution. People with disabilities can be trapped in their own homes and thus prevented from engaging in healthy activity.