

Kirkcaldy Area Sports Council's
Response to the Final Working Draft
A Sports Facilities Strategy For Fife

Kirkcaldy Area Sports Council (KASC) offers the following contribution to the consultation on the above document.

The document is stated as the Final Working Draft and we would like to point out items that may be added to the Strategy.

Under E.1 the statement concludes "to provide an overall framework that guides the future provision and development of indoor and outdoor sport and leisure facilities in Fife, ensuring all needs and aspirations are met". In section E.4 the statement is that "the focus of this strategy is on the remaining portfolio of 'council owned facilities.....", after the sports centres and swing pools mentioned in section E.3.

We certainly agree with the aim but fail to understand how Fife Council can expect to meet the aim of their own strategy when they have not consulted with the people involved in the sports that it directly affects.

Questions have been asked at various KASC meetings, and in correspondence, about the lack of consultation, and it would appear that the intention is to consult once the plans have been drawn up. Can we respectfully suggest that this is too late!

We feel that this Strategy fails on a number of points and should therefore be halted and an alternative strategy, that will realise the aim, be drawn up.

Recognizing the needs

We are constantly being informed by our members about the lack of suitable facilities which could be, and in our opinion should be, incorporated into any Sports Facility Strategy, but some minority sports have not even been considered. These include American Football, Off Road Motorcycling, Boxing, Canoeing and Water Sports.

Considering the aspirations

Many clubs are telling us the same thing. They have aspirations to develop and expand, but are restricted by their current situation and lack of provision. We feel Fife Council cannot possibly know what the aspirations of clubs and volunteer groups are, unless they actually asked. It seems reasonable to us, that the easiest way to do so would be to speak to the Sports Councils and consult on how some of these aspirations could be recognized. Again, we see this as a failing that we have not been consulted until the **final** draft of the Strategy.

Local considerations

Kirkcaldy which is Fife's largest town suffers from areas with complex social needs. This is borne out by the official Multiple Deprivation Indicators showing areas within the community including Kirkcaldy East, Levenmouth, Templehall and Linktown to be areas that need intensive support at all levels of Council policy.

It is therefore imperative that any Council Sport Strategy takes into account the health and wellbeing of these communities.

With the number of houses currently being built and with the Sports Facilities Strategy being planned over the next 10 years, any strategy needs to look at this and build to meet future needs and be looking towards expansion.

There are many instances within our following response that calls out for a multi sports facility. Kirkcaldy does not have a suitable council run Sports Centre. We feel very strongly that this must be addressed as a matter of urgency and priority.

The most obvious and topical concern we have, is the proposed replacement of the Kirkcaldy swimming pool. Whilst this is also offered for consideration here from those representing the needs of the swimming clubs, the KASC must address this foremost especially regarding the proposed location of the replacement pool in Kirkcaldy. We feel that if Tollbooth Street is developed, there will be no scope for any further expansion to the facilities, which somewhat goes against the strategy in terms of 'co-location' of sports facilities. We therefore propose that this plan should be halted and re-examined in light of a Sports Centre that includes a swimming pool within it for Kirkcaldy. We feel that there are still options to be explored with regards to site and financing, and also partnership working.

The situation of the three main centres of population prior to the implementation of the currently proposed strategy, i.e. Dunfermline, Glenrothes and Kirkcaldy, is as follows.

- **Dunfermline** – has a 6 lane 25 metre pool plus a 4 lane 25 yard pool both housed within a Sports Centre.
- **Glenrothes** – has a 6 lane 25 metre pool plus a tank and teaching pool all housed within a large Sports Centre.
- **Kirkcaldy** – has a 6 lane 25 metre pool plus a tank and a teaching pool with **NO SPORTS CENTRE**

If the current proposals were to be implemented the facilities would consist of:

- **Dunfermline** – will have a 6 lane 25 metre pool and a further 4 or 6 lane 25 metre pool and a refurbished Sports Centre.
- **Glenrothes** – will have an 8 lane 25 metre pool and a refurbished Sports Centre
- **Kirkcaldy** – will have a 6 lane 25 metre pool and **NO SPORTS CENTRE**

We further submit that Kirkcaldy, the largest town in Fife is now relatively even worse off than before. A 6 lane 25 metre pool does not provide management with flexibility for multiple uses. An 8 lane 25 metre pool will allow some flexibility and obviously 2 x 25 metre pools will allow full flexibility.

An 8 lane 50 metre pool can attract National Competitions and would provide full flexibility. A 6 lane 50 metre pool will not attract National Competitions but may attract District competition, but it would again provide full flexibility.

Consulting the people that matter

The Kirkcaldy Area Sports Council sought the views of all our member clubs and while we may have considered swimming initially because of the existing plans for the replacement pool, other sports have responded to the strategy, and their views are included below.

Swimming

Response submitted on behalf of swimming by FINS Swimming Club

As this sport is the subject of early implementation of the strategy it is important that this be examined as a matter of priority. Whilst it is good that facilities are being refurbished and renewed, the strategy does not meet the aspirations of swimming clubs.

Clubs are currently in discussion with Scottish Swimming, with Fife Council's involvement, to examine the possibility of employing a full time professional coach to assist with club development and coach a performance squad that will compete at the highest level of their capabilities.

To meet the 'needs and aspirations' of the Swimming community, a 50m pool is essential.

Nowhere in the strategy is there provision for a 50m pool. All major competitions are held in 50m pools and if the swimmers are to aspire to compete and become successful in National Competitions, then there is a need for a 50m pool. Swimmers currently have no choice but to travel to Stirling on a Sunday morning to avail themselves of this facility and with the inconvenience and financial burden of the travel, are only able to do this one day per week and this is clearly inadequate.

We object to the statement in the strategy under Swimming Pool Recommendations – 'Ensure that the new swimming pools in Dunfermline and Glenrothes meet minimum national standards for competition.'

We are not quite sure what is meant when you say 'national standards' but more importantly why should Kirkcaldy not be built to at least the same standard? It appears to us from reading the report that Glenrothes and Dunfermline are at the forefront leaving Kirkcaldy trailing behind as an also-ran. Third place is not giving respect to the people of Kirkcaldy and we believe this should be reversed and put Kirkcaldy, the largest town in Fife, in its rightful place.

As Kirkcaldy pool is to be completely rebuilt, is it not wise to invest for future generations, for our children and our children's children and create this new build to offer good potential for the 2012 Olympics, go the extra length and include a 50m pool in a new build multi-purpose sports centre?

Athletics

Response submitted on behalf of athletics by Fife Athletic Club

Kirkcaldy's only athletics track is situated at Balwearie High School. This track is often out of commission, particularly in winter months when flooding and frosting prevents its use. Edging on this track is in a poor state of repair, Lane 1 in the home straight is in a terrible condition and the whole track is deficient in base surfacing. The long Jump pits need to be boxed as this retains the sand and reduces damage by rabbits and other rodents.

There is a sub-standard supply of equipment available at Balwearie High School to support Athletics at Kirkcaldy's only Athletics Track.

The recommendations contained within the document for Athletics is to improve or replace the athletics track through the wider development of FIPRE in Glenrothes and to review access to sports halls to help expand after-school & club athletics and to support athletics development programmes.

There are no recommendations to improve or build new athletics facilities in Kirkcaldy, the largest town in Fife. An opportunity is before us to integrate a track within a multi-purpose sports centre and offer opportunities to our potential Olympians and Commonwealth Games hopefuls, we have to build them, create them, provide for them, our children are our future.

Roller and Ice Hockey

Response submitted on behalf of Hockey by Chapel Roller Hockey Club

It is disappointing that neither of these sports is given any significance nor indeed, in the case of Roller Hockey, any mention in the document.

Roller Hockey

There are seven clubs based in Fife with the addition of the Scottish National Teams who train and play in Fife. Between these clubs there is at least ten Fife Council facilities used for roller hockey on a regular basis. Regular representation has been made to Fife Council regarding a roller hockey facility yet there is absolutely no mention of the sport in the document.

There is a structured Scottish League based in Kirkcaldy for Under 10, 12, 14, 16 and 21 as well as senior teams playing on a recreational basis. As mentioned, all the Scottish teams (all age groups) train and play home games in Fife. Scottish National teams travel regularly to England to compete in Conference events and Club teams travel down south to compete in national finals.

Several Fife players were in the Scotland team who travelled (self funded) to the AAU Junior Olympics in Detroit in summer 07 and will again travel to Philadelphia this summer.

It is difficult for our players to compete at National and International level when we do not have a comparable facility - it is like the Scotland football team only being able to play five-a-side at home then be expected to travel to the world cup and play against Brazil!

It is certainly not lack of talent, with Fife players making up the backbone of the Scottish teams and several being selected for GB.

It is very difficult to host events when we have no suitable facility to invite teams to play at.

As a Club we have travelled abroad and had great hospitality but cannot ask these teams back to Fife as we cannot offer them a decent facility to play in.

We do not need an exclusive facility for roller hockey, a roller hockey facility can be multi purpose incorporating indoor football (5s or 7s), basketball, netball, roller skating etc. This is the model successfully used in other locations in the UK. The facility does not have to be expensive; a simple warehouse type unit fitted out with a suitable floor and perimeter boards.

Our vision is to have a suitable facility to host a roller hockey tournament at the time of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games. This could easily be in Kirkcaldy, incorporated within a Multi Sports Centre and would provide a massive boost for the Sport, bring in a great deal of revenue and raise Fife's profile internationally.

Ice Hockey

The Fife Junior Ice Hockey set up is the envy of most Clubs in the UK. It has supplied a continuous stream of players who compete at the highest level in the UK and represent Scotland and GB.

There is a fleeting reference in the document to ice hockey, it seems however, as an inconvenience to Curling. Curling is also a legitimate sport and it is recognised that Curling is a legitimate sport and also needs facilities. There is no response from the Curling Association in this document. Time and effort has been spent developing a junior development system in Ice Hockey that is one of the most successful in the UK.

It should be noted that Kirkcaldy Ice Rink was in fact built in 1938 not 1983 as stated in the report, perhaps a spelling error.

With Kirkcaldy Ice Rink being a privately owned and run facility there is a different need from roller hockey. A Council managed facility would make the sport available to a wider group of children and adults and would continue to allow Fife to export players and allow Fife to host tournaments both national and international.

The combination of building ice rinks with adjacent swimming pools using an extremely efficient heat recovery system is a tried and tested system with examples throughout the UK and Europe. As a new pool in Kirkcaldy is desperately needed, this is a great opportunity for Fife Council to invest in a state of the art multi-purpose sports facility in Kirkcaldy encouraging increased participation in our sports, attracting tourism and inward investment.

A copy of the report has been passed by Kirkcaldy Ice Hockey Club (Junior Development) to the rink owners (Mr Tam Muir) and it is hoped he will make contact directly with the Council.

Rugby

Response submitted on behalf of Rugby by Kirkcaldy Rugby Football Club

E.75

There are to our knowledge a few clubs who are struggling to field a team.

Poor quality with significant drainage issues also applies to schools eg Kirkcaldy High School is on a slope and frequently unfit for play.

We would suggest that consideration be given not only to the pitches but also to changing facilities, floodlights and the need for all weather facilities with G3 or G4 surface and access to indoor training areas on a regular basis

E.79

We doubt if this statement is correct. We know that Kirkcaldy RFC and Dunfermline RFC have more participants than North East Fife. We would accept this statement if it applied to schools only.

American Football

Response submitted on behalf of American Football by the Fife Fire American Football Club

It is disappointing that there is no mention of this sport in the document.

American Football is a growing sport in the UK. Competing directly with Soccer and Rugby is not an option; we cater for young people who want to get involved in something different. We are not supported in the education system as other sports are.

Although there isn't the same high demand to play as for example Soccer, conversely there aren't the same opportunities to play either. With an estimated 405 Soccer teams (E.104) available for participants to be involved with, there is only 1 organisation across the whole of Fife providing opportunities for young people to play American Football.

We have been operating out of the Beveridge Park since June 2006 with the help of Gordon Hynd and his team, and they have done as much as they can, but the answers to our problems can only be dealt with further up the ladder. In 2006 we had 1 team, a 5 a side junior version of the game played in round robin tournaments. We only had to host 1 tournament as opposed to a regular season of 8 home fixtures. This proved difficult to arrange and saw the tournament take place on 2 rugby pitches as the parks department couldn't mark out a simple 60x40 yard box so the games could be played on the proper regulation field markings. Apart from the embarrassment of being the only team in Scotland who had to "rough out" a pitch with marker cones, I had a difficult time convincing our Governing Body to allow the games to take place, explaining problems with pitch availability as unavoidable. With 320 pitches available (E.98) across Fife, we fail to see how difficult it can be to allocate 1 or 2 pitches for dedicated American Football use. Consider also that the American Football season runs opposite the Rugby season.

In 2008 we now have 2 teams that need to operate from a grass area, each of them need the proper field markings, 1 team needs goal posts, and of course both teams need suitable changing facilities. I concur with the findings in (E.102) and would echo concerns about the suitability of current pavilions.

Our third team, the flag football team, is about to launch as a community club based in Kirkcaldy High School, and will operate after school to accommodate the pupils from Dunearn, Valley and Torbain Primary Schools, as well as secondary pupils, who wish to continue their sport after our successful work with Active Schools.

The other major issue we face, and is similar to that of motorcycle clubs, is storage. Rugby Clubs by their very nature tend to be self sufficient as most have club houses and storage available. There tends to be an expected and accepted demand for storing Soccer nets, goal posts etc. within pavilions. We have no where to store our equipment which is expensive and delicate, and is presently being transported to training sessions in 2 cars. This is a very difficult way to operate, and is impacting on the quality time we can give to our players. Unloading and loading kit takes 30 minutes before and after practice, time that could be much better spent on the field with the team. As well as the logistical problems it brings, it is also very inconvenient for members of staff to have to double move everything each weekend. It also looks unprofessional to be operating out of the back of a car, when we are trying to raise the profile of the club and the sport. There is also a cost implication when we consider fuel costs to staff in transporting the kit, and that we need to hire a second changing room just to accommodate the safety equipment and training kit. This is doubling our weekly outgoings. As a small club operating on player subs, we can't afford the added expense.

We have looked into various options to help ourselves overcome the issues that face us. We had identified a potential option at Windmill Park in Kirkcaldy. We understand that this facility is due for repair this year. We would respectfully request for American Football to be seriously considered at this venue. Here is a facility that could be utilised again to alleviate some of the problems faced by us and teams like us. We would suggest that there is the possibility of extending the current pavilion buildings at Beveridge Park, Windmill Park and Randolph Park adding further accommodation to them that would allow a sport such as American Football to operate from.

We need support to ensure we are sustainable and can operate with parity to other sports and clubs in Fife. There is no room for any sport to be disregarded or considered any less because it is not as popular as certain other sports, or because there is a lack of understanding of a sport and its specific needs. The opportunity presents itself for Fife Council to invest in a state of the art multi-purpose sports facility in Kirkcaldy that would encompass this sport, encouraging increased participation in it and allowing it to be organised and operated easier and more professionally.

It is annoying, but somewhat unsurprising, that American Football is not included for consideration in the Sports Facility Strategy. Community Services have been aware of our existence and operation since 2006. We find this unacceptable, and will be looking for the sport to be included when this paper is finally considered.

Off Road Motorcycling

Response submitted on behalf of Off Road Motorcycling by the Kingdom Off Road Motorcycle Club

Kingdom Off-road Motorcycle Club (KORMC) are a community sports group established in 2002. We were constituted early 2003 and have since been providing services attempting to combat the increasing problems of anti social off road motorcycling and quad biking.

We were recognised for our efforts in 2004 when we won the Problem Orientated Partnership Awards and the year after we won the National Standing up to Anti Social Behaviour Awards. The main reason we achieved this recognition was that we used an effective strategy and made a significant impact - we reduced the effect of illegal anti social off road motorcycling. The most successful tactic used is the simplest; we recognise this leisure pursuit/sport as a positive activity (which is alluring to young and old). It is exciting, it will not go away, no matter how many fences/barriers are erected, no matter how many ASBO vehicle seizures are made, what we are doing is providing an accessible off road motorcycle track. For two successive years we had around 1000 rider members, in later years these numbers have reduced due to KORMC encountering obstacles in sustaining track provision. During this time we suggest we will have made significant saving to the public purse given that over 10 years ago "a single youth crime is estimated to average £2,100" (Coopers & Lybrand for The Prince's Trust, *Young People and Crime in Scotland*, June 1997, page 13.) We are keen to encourage these thousand riders to continue riding at legal tracks and not elsewhere illegally.

The often stigmatised motorcycle sports enthusiast needs empowered, assisted and given a voice in the consideration for sports provision in Fife. In Fife we have 15 swimming pools; 43 tennis courts; 36 Rugby pitches; 320 grass football pitches with a further 45 synthetic pitches. We have only one, under resourced, part-time off-road motorcycle track, which is run by dedicated volunteers, most having their own jobs giving up their free time at weekends to provide a sports service to the public. Our club and FCOMC, (100% voluntary community groups) can boast huge memberships. Surely these members of the public, sports enthusiasts, should be recognised or at least considered in the provision of sports investment and development. Well over a million pounds has been the suggested capital investment required to enhance football facilities; as a rapidly growing sport, we would require a pittance of this, a mere £10k could provide an outdoor track and for not much more an indoor track could go along way to rid our communities of the negative impact of off-road motorcycles and Quads.

A little investment in the right places will go a long way! Instead of spending huge funds (£50 million) on a "like for like" at Kirkcaldy swimming pool, Carnegie Leisure Centre and FIPRE at Glenrothes; listen to the public and hear what they are saying. We don't want a like for like, we want a 21st century sports centre for our 21st century sports incorporating an off-road motorcycle track (preferably indoor). This would be unique and attract thousands of sports enthusiasts across the UK, this is evidenced in our pilot project at the old steelworks in Methil. We want people to come to Kirkcaldy to use a modern multi complex sports centre.

Gymnastics

Response submitted on behalf of Gymnastics by Balwearie Gymnastics

Balwearie Gymnastics uses and hires facilities from Balwearie High School Community Use. It has been doing so since 1976 when centre run classes became club lead classes at the request of the Community Use facility.

The Club boasts a healthy membership of 330 members from and around Kirkcaldy consisting of gymnasts, from the age of 5 – 19 years, and coaches ranging from helper to class coach. It is one of the largest clubs in Scotland. The Club operates a waiting list system for entry. Intakes are taken at the start of each term. The waiting list is currently sitting at 75.

Balwearie Gymnastics is affiliated to Scottish Gymnastics and is a satellite club of the Fife Gymnastics Network.

Nineteen classes a week are delivered to girls and boys with the support of a volunteer committee.

The Gymnasium and Assembly Hall at Balwearie High School are used on a weekly basis for both recreational and developmental level classes. The Gymnasium offers typical school gymnastics equipment with the added plus of floor plates allowing competitive gymnasts some time to practise bar routines. The Assembly Hall is the facility where the majority of weekend classes are held with specialist equipment being set up and cleared away after use.

The Club owns the majority of equipment required to operate classes. Equipment costs are one of the largest costs to the club.

The Club is host to coach education courses endorsed by British Gymnastics. All coaches within the club are working within this qualification scheme. Again this is a high cost incurred by the Club. Grants are sought from Fife Council and Sport Tayside and Fife partnership.

The Club promotes competitions and displays, as well as social or fundraising events for all. It is about to embark on a school-club link with local primary schools in the surrounding community via the Active Schools Network whereby Club coaches will deliver a series of gymnastics sessions and offer information about the Club. This builds on the successful relationship the Club already has with Balwearie High School. Pupils from the school and the Club have been competing in national schools competitions for many years with great success. The Club feeds into the Fife Gymnastics Network and this gives gymnasts the pathway to access specialist facilities and coaching without having to travel too far, although gymnasts' parents still have to find the extra costs themselves. Travelling to Dunfermline three to five times a week can quickly become costly.

Currently, Fife Gymnastics Network training operates from Carnegie Leisure Centre, however, with the proposed refurbishment and changes to access times such developments may be endangered with a move to Bruce Street.

The Club wishes to expand to accommodate the local needs of the community whereby gymnastics provision for pre-school children to elite level is catered for. At present this is not possible due to the current access rights and facility constraints at Balwearie HS Community Use, although, the Club acknowledges the support it has and continues to receive from both the school and community use facility.

Ideally the Club requires its own purpose built facility. Such a facility would put an end to a lot of the issues it is currently facing. The club has looked into this, however, and without the necessary personnel and funding behind the project; it is a vision that may only stay a dream.

Proposals

1. Call a complete halt to the existing strategy.
2. Draw up a new strategy in consultation with key stake holders.
3. Engage the Sports Councils from the start.
4. Engage, as far as possible, with the main clubs involved.
5. Engage, as far as possible, with the general public.
6. Provide Kirkcaldy and Fife, facilities to be proud of. Doing the absolute minimum is not enough for the residents of Kirkcaldy and Fife.
7. Provide Kirkcaldy and Fife's youngsters, and adults, a sporting chance to compete meaningfully at the highest possible level with 2012 Olympics and 2014 Commonwealth Games in mind.
8. Investigate potential partnerships with Education and local companies and enterprises.
9. Investigate more innovative means of securing funding.

Conclusion

As well as the focus on current facilities and sports that use them, we feel Fife Council need to consider investment in non-traditional sports such as: Canoeing, Cycling, Mountain Biking, Motorcycling sports such as Motocross & Mini-bikes, Climbing, American Football and many others, who need facilities but are not considered in the current Strategy. We feel these are not so much minority sports, they are suppressed and under invested in, and so therefore they do not have the capacity for growth and expansion offering opportunities to potential sports enthusiasts.

We also feel that Fife Council are unaware of what the public actually need, and are considering provision for what they think the public needs.

Members of the KASC Executive Committee would welcome a chance to discuss the many items included in this response, and any other issues, with Fife Council Officers in depth, and hope to work together to realise a better and more specific Strategy to best serve the people of Kirkcaldy and Fife.

Yours in sport

Mark Bramwell
Chair, Kirkcaldy Area Sports Council