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Northern Culture
All-Party Parliamentary Group

Co-Chairs
Alison Hume MP & Lord Watson of Wyre Forest

Vice-Chairs
Tom Morrison MP & Lord Vaizey of Didcot

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The Northern Culture All Party Parliamentary Group (NCAPPG) was established in 2021 to provide a strong and cohesive voice in Parliament. It brings Northern MPs and Peers — from all parties — together to advocate for Northern Culture, heritage and sport.

The Northern Culture APPG was created to promote and champion the huge economic contribution made by the North's cultural sector. It works to:

- ➔ Provide a united voice on pan-Northern Culture asks and priorities in order to shape and influence future Government decision-making
- ➔ Generate debate on how to boost skills, create equal opportunities for all, promote diversity and support ambitions to empower future generations
- ➔ Level-up investment in Northern Culture
- ➔ Maximise the soft power of Northern Culture to promote a strong and cohesive brand for the North
- ➔ Establish wider recognition of the world-class reputation of Northern Culture
- ➔ Build back the North's cultural potential now, and in the longer term

GRATEFUL THANKS



This report has been prepared by the University of Sheffield and the Northern Culture All-Party Parliamentary Group's secretariat. With grateful thanks to our Academic Partner: Sheffield University Management School for their support, drafting and insight

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John P. Wilson

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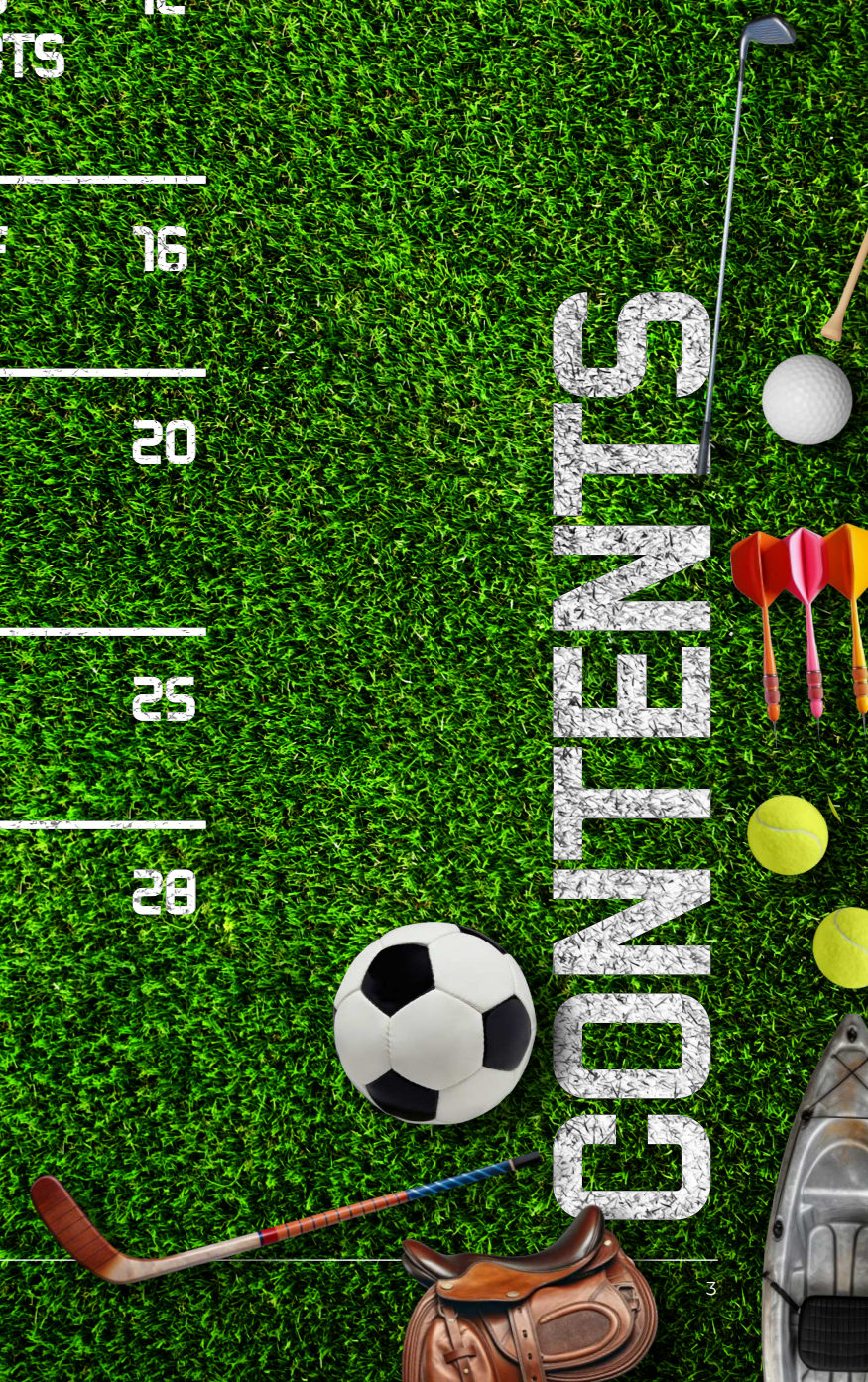
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SPORTS



FOREWORD

SPORT IS EMBEDDED
IN NORTHERN CULTURE
AND IS PART OF OUR DNA.

It is probably legitimate for Northerners to claim that the North is the spiritual home of British sport. From its proud and pioneering sports heritage — the beginnings of the Football League in Manchester; to the home of Rugby League in Huddersfield; the county cricket clash of the centuries at Old Trafford and Headingley; and the Great North run in Tyneside — sport is a central part of our lives and often the beating heart in our communities.

Sport drives people to be the best versions of themselves. Sport is about forming bonds and friendships, teaching teamwork, pushing to improve performance, expanding horizons and building character. It helps to take us away from our anxieties and stresses, enriches our lives and improves our health and wellbeing.

Our Question of Sport Inquiry makes the inextricable connection between sport and culture and sets out the cultural value that sport contributes to the North - its people and places. Sport generates huge dividends for the North's economy and society as a whole and is the glue that bonds our social fabric together.

Wherever you live, work, rest and play in the North, sport is likely to be core to the culture and identity of that place. Sport boosts the unique Northern brand and reputation and attracts investment and tourism. It makes sense then, for sport to be central to any Government's policy thinking around the importance of culture to levelling up, improving health and wellbeing and building great places and communities.

The findings and recommendations of our Question of Sport Inquiry make a compelling case for investment in sport and culture in the North. If we are serious about tackling prevailing disadvantages and inequalities in our communities we need to generate greater cultural value and opportunities. It is time to build a talent pipeline and develop the sporting and cultural infrastructure in all parts of the North.

The Question of Sport Inquiry makes it clear that we all need to do more to unlock talent, potential and invest in sport for future generations.



Alison Hume MP
Co-Chair of the
Northern Culture APPG



**Lord Tom Watson
of Wyre Forest**
Co-Chair of the
Northern Culture APPG

ABOUT THE QUESTION OF SPORT INQUIRY

THE QUESTION OF
SPORT INQUIRY:

- ➔ **Heard evidence from a host of sport stakeholders across the North on how to level-up opportunities to increase diversity, sustainability, accessibility, and resilience in Northern Culture.**
- ➔ **Looked specifically at the major role sport plays across the North in terms of shaping the North's cultural identity and value.**
- ➔ **Assessed the cultural value of sport, its social impact and economic benefits to towns, cities and regions and communities across the North.**

The Northern Culture Question of Sport Inquiry invited and received written and oral evidence in the last Parliament between January 2023 and January 2024 to hear views on 3 key questions:

What is needed to boost the cultural value of sport and build stronger communities across the North?

- ➔ How can sport contribute to generating better and more inclusive places and communities?
- ➔ What is the economic contribution of sport to culture?
- ➔ What investment is needed to increase the cultural output of sporting institutions?
- ➔ How can sporting institutions turn funding into cultural value for their communities?
- ➔ Should more powers and funding be devolved to connect the value of sport to Northern Culture?

2 How much more cultural value could sport add to levelling up opportunities and access to culture?

- ➔ How can sport aid participation in culture? How do we ensure a fair spread of funding for sport across the North?
- ➔ How do we ensure funding is fairly distributed across different sports?
- ➔ How can we ensure communities and spectators are able to access sport and its cultural value?
- ➔ How can we ensure fair access to sport for underrepresented communities?

3 How can sport drive cultural value, identity and diversity and contribute to the North's rich seam of talent and grow the North's economy?

- ➔ What is the value of sport to the North's cultural identity?
- ➔ How can sporting institutions contribute to a sense of place and community?
- ➔ How can sport contribute to a strong Northern cultural brand a strong and cohesive brand for the North, building recognition of its world-class reputation
- ➔ How do we develop a strong and diverse supply chain for sporting talent?

The term "sport" used for this inquiry, as per the European Sports Charter, is:

"All forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels" (Council of Europe, 2021: 3).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SPORT MEANS A LOT
TO US HERE IN THE NORTH.

The North East alone produced 4 of our finest Lionesses who won the Euros. Today, the North West remains the powerhouse of English Men's football. The football derbies across and inside Manchester and Liverpool are the country's most fiercely fought. We are the home of the Rugby League. St Helens is the talent factory for UK darts. Yorkshire contributes England's finest cricketers and the Roses match is County cricket's equivalent to the Ashes. Whatever the sport, the North exemplifies some of the best of British sporting culture.

Our sporting heritage and culture needs to be better supported, so that we can capitalise on our strengths and build communities that are as inclusive, as healthy, and as dynamic as possible. This report sets out why it is so important to secure and attract investment in sport across the North if we are to maximise cultural value and benefits for our communities and places.

Sport is good for the North's economy - and UKPIc

Despite prevailing economic disparities in the post-industrial era, the North has maintained its sporting prowess and list of achievements.

The Question of Sport Inquiry found that:

- ➔ Sport provides direct economic benefits to the North's economy. The economic contribution of sport and exercise is greater than the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector combined
- ➔ Each major sporting event returns around £6 for every £1 we invest
- ➔ Every sporting event, from the smallest community get-together to a sold out stadium leads to increased spending and footfall in our high streets and towns

“Major events can have a significant impact on the local economy, for example the 2019 Tour de Yorkshire generated £60m into the region and additional benefit is brought through direct and indirect spend. For example, the UCI World Championships in Harrogate had an estimated 380k visitors over the 9-day race period which will have generated spend in local shops, restaurants, accommodation etc. These events also raise awareness of our places on a global scale, increasing future visitor numbers and boost the visitor economy. This provides further exposure to our area's cultural offer, which in turn creates further interest and visits.” **North Yorkshire Sport**

Sport builds stronger communities and opportunities for the North

The connection between culture and sport is obvious — sport creates value through the cultural and social capital that it builds in our local communities.

The Question of Sport Inquiry found that:

- ➔ Sport helps people develop the soft skills they need to get on in life. Teamwork, leadership, and discipline are essential skills for the job market and for life.
- ➔ Sport helps young people to learn and grow in communities, helping them to overcome adversity and tackling some social determinants of crime.
- ➔ Over 11.5million adults, children and young people in England volunteered at local or national sporting events in 2023, highlighting the ways in which sport acts as a vehicle for unity and philanthropy.¹

“Cultural value, civic pride in place was our focus so Huddersfield, Leigh, Warrington, Saint Helens is the only time that a world championship, a World Cup, a tournament of global proportions is likely to come to those towns and cities and people were incredibly proud of their place.” **Jon Dutton, CEO Rugby League World Cup 2021**

¹ Sport England (2021) Uniting the movement: A 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity, Loughborough: Sport England, p. 8.

Sport is good for our health and wellbeing

Sport helps keep us healthy, and active, allowing us to live longer, and happier lives:

- ➔ Sport and activity is essential to reduce early disability, heart health issues, and other disease. These issues are more common in the North of England.
- ➔ This helps to reverse an ongoing trend of less active and healthy lifestyles. For example, in 2015, Doncaster's Director of Public Health identified physical activity as a public health priority, given that 1 in 3 adults do less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week.

“Sport and physical activity also contribute to individual health and wellbeing, with attendant economic impacts; there is growing evidence of the benefit of social prescribing, and specifically how physical activity can enable people to return to the workforce (which in turn reduces demand on social care resources). There are symbiotic impacts on other policy areas, for example a culture of people cycling or walking to work overlaps with net-zero targets and planning/transport considerations.”

West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Overall, this means that for each £1 invested in sport in the UK, a return of £4 in social and health benefits is created. Sport has the potential to vastly improve our health, and reduce burden on the NHS through preventative action, make us happier, and bring together local communities.

Of course, there are numerous barriers which influence the willingness and ability to be physically active. These are particularly prominent in smaller sports and in grassroots settings, where funding is often unstable, and where cuts to local government have meant that financial support has decreased or dried up altogether. A Sported UK survey shows that 9 in 10 Community sports organisations were concerned about having the funding to continue, with just under half having seen a reduction in funding over the last year. This has contributed to ongoing inequalities in terms of access to sport, which run along many of the same lines of inequality that many social policies do, those of class, race, gender, and geography. Or, as Sport England¹ stated:

“It's not always a level playing field. Right now, the opportunities to get involved in sport and activity – and reap the rewards of being active – depend too much on your background, your gender, your bank balance and your postcode.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Question of Sport Inquiry recommends the need to capitalise on the strength of sporting identity in the North to create a “Northern Sporting Powerhouse”. This would attempt to get more inclusivity into sport, reducing inequalities and driving sport’s cultural and economic output. Plans for a Northern cultural or creative corridor across the North must include and involve sport.²

To power up and level up the cultural value of sport and reduce inequalities we need to:

- ➔ **Remove the silos between Arts, Culture, and Sports funding**
Ensure a whole systems approach with cross-government and partnerships at all levels working across silo boundaries to coordinate and implement initiatives
- ➔ **Devolve the spending power to Combined Authorities**
Reduce barriers to funding and make applications for funding accessible and simple
Funding should move from short to long-term and support existing successful programmes rather than seeking new unproven initiatives
- ➔ **Account for the positive secondary effects of sport on health and wellbeing**
Community sport and activity generate £85.5 billion of social and economic value in England – a return on investment of £3.91 for every £1 spent.³
Funding to preserve infrastructure should be prioritised so that large capital costs to replace a loss of provision can be avoided in the future.

This Northern Culture All Party Parliamentary Group Question of Sport Inquiry provides timely and important evidence on what the North needs to maximise its cultural value. It provides cross-party consensus and a powerful and united voice on pan-Northern sport asks and priorities. We want its findings, recommendations to shape and influence future Government decision and policy making so that the North can unlock the true value of its cultural potential through sport.

CREATIVE CORRIDOR



WE NEED TO UNLOCK THE CULTURAL VALUE OF THE NORTH

The North has a long and proud sporting heritage which reverberates nationally and internationally.

Among the many contributions are: the 1888 establishment of the Football League at the Royal Hotel in Manchester; the 1895 birthplace of the Rugby Football League at the George Hotel in Huddersfield; the oldest annual horse race in the English calendar held since 1519 at Kiplingcotes in East Yorkshire; the world's oldest association football team, Sheffield FC (1857); and Sheffield home of the world's oldest football culture.⁴

The North also possesses a formidable reputation for hosting major events such as: the UCI Track Cycling World Championships, and Commonwealth Games in Manchester; cricket test matches in Durham, Leeds and Manchester; the Great North Run in Newcastle and Gateshead; The 2014 Tour de France Yorkshire Grand Depart from Leeds; 2015 Rugby World Cup in Leeds, Manchester and Newcastle; 2021 Rugby League World Cup games in: Bolton, Doncaster, Leeds, Leigh, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, St Helens, Warrington, Wigan, Sheffield, and York; elite horse racing with the Grand National at Haydock, Ebor Festival in York, and the St Leger in Doncaster; World Snooker Championship in Sheffield; and the UEFA Women's EURO 2022 with matches played in Leigh Manchester, Rotherham, Sheffield, and Wigan.

The North has also nurtured and produced numerous world-class athletes and Olympians across multiple disciplines including: Nicola Adams (boxing); Alistair and Jonathan Brownlee (triathlon); Lizzi Deignan (cycling); Jessica Ennis-Hill (heptathlon); Matthew Fitzpatrick (golf); Katarina Johnson-Thompson (heptathlon); Natasha Jonas (boxing); Jason Kenny (cycling); Beth Tweddle (gymnastics); Sir Bradley Wiggins (cycling) and many, many more.

It is not just high-profile sports stars and top tier events that are deserving of attention, it is all those who play, coach, officiate, volunteer and spectate in grassroots sports whether it be during winter's biting cold and wet, or summer's burning heat and humidity. Dedicating personal time and expense to enable community sports to contribute to people's enjoyment and challenge is one of the cornerstones of our society.

Sport includes exercise — which everyone can engage with even if they have no active interest in sport. Exercise can involve taking the dog for a walk in the local park; gardening in the backyard or allotment; dancing; going to the gym, or simply walking up the stairs at work instead of taking the lift etc. The more exercise people undertake, the greater the potential that they will experience better mental and physical health and a longer and higher quality of life.

What is increasingly clear is that sport and activity contribute far more than sport for sport's sake; they contribute to art, community, culture, economy, education, heritage, physical and mental health, and tourism.

The Northern Culture All Party Parliamentary Group (NCAPPG), commissioned the Question of Sport Inquiry to analyse the cultural value of sport to the North. The Inquiry gathered a strong body of evidence on why sport and culture in the North are inextricably linked.

Based on the evidence received our Inquiry found that:

- ➔ There is a clear and direct economic value of sport to the North's local economies
- ➔ Our health and wellbeing is improved and health inequalities reduced through sport and active travel
- ➔ Sport contributes to the wellbeing of our communities; generating safer and stronger places

“The dichotomy between the arts and sport needs to be broken down. There needs to be joined-up policy and funding which breaks down the barriers between sport and the arts.”

The British Association of Sport and Exercise Science

THERE IS A CLEAR AND DIRECT ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL IMPACT

We heard:

The North is home to some of the world's premier sporting brands. From Manchester United, to the Great North Run, to Wigan Warriors and Yorkshire Cricket. These brands are central institutions in our collective identities and in our local communities. These clubs bring in visitors from all over the world as well as from their local catchments and drive spending on our high streets, and in our bars and restaurants.

"Professional football started in the North of England, the EFL has always been headquartered here and today almost half of our teams are Northern. These clubs make a major economic and social impact on their communities and EFL attendance has exceeded 17 million last season and clubs' community activities touch almost a million people every year."

Rick Parry, Chair English Football League

In sum, the economic contribution of sport and exercise is greater than the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector combined and could be even greater.

Moreover, sport is a bright spot in the economies of the North that have struggled with the decline of industry. These challenges were described in HM Government's Levelling Up the United Kingdom which identified that the North trails the South across a range of areas such as income, health, education and qualifications, etc.

"Northern cities' global brands and identities are formed by both sport and culture. Liverpool, for example, have won the Champions League in recent years and were on the world stage in 2023 hosting the Eurovision Song Contest. Manchester is home to two world-class football teams and brings in 1.4 million visitors per year for the annual Manchester International Festival."

The reputation and draw of these cities is due to both sport and culture, both of which attract visitors and promote inward investment." **Arts Council England**

The gross value added (GVA) per hour worked in the North East, North West and Yorkshire and Humber regions is among the lowest in the UK.⁵ A consequence of this is that income levels are often proportionately lower than the national average, although there are some pockets of higher income. Centre for Cities calculated that raising the level of productivity for cities in the Midlands and North to the same as that for London and the South-East would result in an economic boost of £180 billion.⁶ The middle estimate for levelling up is £50 billion/year and the long run benefit of this at a growth rate of 2%/year and discounted rate of 4% would lead to a £2.5 trillion net present value.⁷ This is approximately the size of UK GDP.

"Our budgets for maintaining parks, open space and playing fields, which support formal and informal sport and physical activity, have reduced. Parks and open spaces provide localised access for our residents to move more and be physically active in local places. They are particularly important in some of our more deprived communities where they may form the only access to safe outdoor space, and provide a free outlet where people are unable to afford to pay for access to other types of facility."

Yorkshire County Council

The divergence of the economic and social metrics between the North and South have increased in recent decades and do not show imminent signs of reducing. However, some prosperous areas in the South do not always display high levels of life satisfaction and sometimes are among the lowest. There are a number of locations in the North which display higher levels of life satisfaction due to factors including lower spatial congestion, and mental and physical health, work and housing. Yet, despite some positive indicators, the broader picture of the North is one which is falling further behind more affluent areas in the South.

We can evidence that globalisation - and declines in traditional industries - have resulted in lower CVA, lower income levels, lower healthy life expectancy and lower skills often resulting in a vicious cycle across Northern towns and cities. The Levelling Up White Paper (2022) identified six capitals which have affected these geographical disparities: physical, human, intangible, financial, social and institutional.⁸ Diminished levels of these capitals individually contribute to decline and in combination to exacerbate social and economic challenges. Sport and physical activity have the potential to contribute substantially to four of these capitals: human, financial, social and institutional.

“The majority of BBC Sport’s output has been produced from its Salford base, now with around 500 employees and an established freelance community. It has been a decade since the BBC moved services to the North West, including Children’s, Sport, Breakfast and Radio 5Live. The impact of this investment can be clearly seen. The number of digital and creative businesses in Salford have grown by 70% and employment in the sector is 142% higher than since the BBC moved there. For every job created by the BBC just over one additional job was created in Salford’s creative sector. The BBC acts as an anchor institution, supported by an ecosystem of other businesses that have grown up around it.” **BBC**

The long-lasting levels of lower functioning economies in some North localities will not be resolved with a quick fix, they will require time and substantial resources to deliver on the Levelling Up missions which is why the White Paper states: “Community-led regeneration cannot be achieved with a stop-start funding stream that first builds hope, then destroys it, leaving people less optimistic and trusting, and feeling more disempowered than ever.”⁹ For this reason, it recommends that: “This programme has to be broad, deep and long-term.”¹⁰

This longer term perspective has been embodied in the 10-year vision described in Sport England’s Uniting the Movement strategy which describes how lives and communities can be transformed through sport and physical activity.¹¹

“The funding that is desperately required at a regional level is for community sports facilities. These precious hubs are centres for activity, talent development and activity for young people. All leisure facilities are under extraordinary pressure in the pandemic recovery period and with the cost-of-living crisis biting. Local and regional authorities should be in charge of the funds to maintain, develop and build new sports facilities that best serve their communities.” **British Cycling**

Sport and physical activity can strongly contribute to addressing many of the challenges faced in the North; however, there is a frequent misconception that this just depends on educating people about the benefits of exercising and they will be self-motivated to engage. BUT there are numerous other factors which influence the willingness and ability to be physically active:

“It’s not always a level playing field. Right now, the opportunities to get involved in sport and activity – and reap the rewards of being active – depend too much on your background, your gender, your bank balance and your postcode.”

Sport England

“6,030 jobs are registered in the local authority across sporting activities. Sheffield was a host city for UEFA Women’s Euro 2022 tournament which generated £8.3 million pounds for the city’s economy with increases in footfall and economic diversity.” **Sheffield City Council**

In other sectors of the economy, we talk about anchor institutions. These are large scale employers tied to a particular place, and whose goals and missions are aligned with the development of that place. Universities, hospitals, and private businesses, can help build an economy and act as a catalyst. Sport in the North has numerous anchor institutions. Each sports club is tied to its place and its community. These are the seeds around which we can build a thriving cultural and sporting sector.

In a recent report, Sport England (2022) showed the economic benefits of several important events in the North.¹² The report showed that large scale sporting events made a 6:1 return on investment. Even in sports with traditionally lower reach outside of UK markets, there was a clear ROI. The Rugby League World Cup for example, which took place in some of the most deprived areas of the country returned £40m from a £15m investment, directly helping their local communities.

At a large scale, these anchor institutions are contributing to the regeneration of our cities. Developments at Anfield, Bramley Moore Dock, and in East Manchester are all contributing to improving their local communities.



“The whole of east Manchester around the City Stadium and what was the former Commonwealth Games Stadium has been completely regenerated and rejuvenated. For every pound you spend on community support and physical activity you get an ROI of £3.91 so it’s a false economy not to be investing in those kind of things.”

Jeff Smith MP

“Sustainable and popular football clubs help to put Northern towns and cities on the national and international stage, helping to promote a sense of pride and generate income for the region. As a result, many are the single biggest expression of community in their local area.” **English Football League**

2 HEALTH AND WELLBEING INEQUALITIES ARE REDUCED

We heard:

Sport has a huge impact not just at an elite level in terms of economic contribution. In particular, there are numerous and well documented links between engagement with sport and health benefits.

“Hospitality and tourism spend are well-documented, as are destination marketing of our cities/towns/region.¹⁴ But sport and physical activity also contribute to individual health and wellbeing, with attendant economic impacts; there is growing evidence of the benefit of social prescribing, and specifically how physical activity can enable people to return to the workforce (which in turn reduces demand on social care resources). There are symbiotic impacts on other policy areas, for example a culture of people cycling or walking to work overlaps with net-zero targets and planning/transport considerations.”

West Yorkshire Combined Authority

“Look at Greater Manchester as an example of the health strategy aligning and sport feeding into each other. This is about people in communities being inspired or engaged in some way and moving.”

Yvonne Harrison, CEO Women in Football

Sport, therefore, is about so much more than just the elite level participation in the professional world. It is about improving wellbeing in our society.

Currently, health inequalities mirror the economic inequalities of our society. Healthy life expectancy for people living in the least disadvantaged areas is approximately 10 years longer than those in the most deprived areas.¹⁵ In the North East, healthy life expectancy is 3.5 years (male) and 4.2 years (female) less than the national average and Blackpool averages 9.2 years (male) and 8 years (female) fewer.¹⁶ This coastal community compares unfavourably with male healthy life expectancy in Rutland of 8.6 years above national average and female life expectancy in the Orkney Islands of +11.7 years above average. In these diverse cases, the difference in healthy life expectancy for males is – 17.8 years and for females – 19.7 years.¹⁷

As many in our inquiry told us, people across the North (although this is true to differing degrees in other economic geographies) simply do not get enough activity to maintain their health and wellbeing.

“There’s massive benefits to joining together in a way that we don’t. So actually to get education and health and sport in the same room it’s reasonably difficult. 80% of women are not fit enough to be healthy so we need to have it much higher up the government agenda.”

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson

“As a country we are not physically active enough. Less than half of secondary school children manage the recommended 60 minutes of exercise a day. 34% of adult men and 42% of women are not active enough for good health.” **Mayor Jamie Driscoll, North of Tyne Combined Authority**

This has numerous downstream impacts on our health and wellbeing. Exercise is important to contributing to our coronary health. There are also numerous studies linking our mental wellbeing to our physical activity.



As a result, we know sporting activity can improve people's lives while also driving savings to the National Health Service. Sport England research found that - across the UK- £42 billion worth of value was created from improved life satisfaction for 24 million participants and 3.9 million volunteers through their involvement in sport and physical activity.¹⁸ A staggering £5.2bn was in healthcare savings, while £1.7bn was in social care savings.¹⁹

More than £3.6bn worth of savings were generated by the prevention of 900,000 cases of diabetes, while a further £3.5bn of value was generated through avoided dementia cases and the related care. A total of £450 million was saved by preventing 30 million additional GP visits.

Sport England also drew upon research conducted by other organisations ie. Fields in Trust²⁰ which calculated that parks and green spaces provided over £34 billion/year in health and wellbeing benefits. And Natural England estimated that: "£2.1 billion per year could be saved in health costs if everyone in England had good access to green space."

"We need to ensure the NHS has a future by having less people using it. It's increasing the productivity of the workforce with less sick days and more healthy life years, and it's a sense of personal achievement for individuals" **Chris Boardman, Chair Sport England**

While these numbers are not broken down by region, it is clear that the North is benefiting already from the sporting culture that it has, but that there are benefits to the Northern economy and that greater benefits could be achieved with greater investment.

Sport England identified numerous benefits from sport and exercise and told us: "Moving our bodies, through sport and different forms of physical activity, has huge and well-evidenced benefits for our individual health and wellbeing, but it also brings significant value to our communities, and our collective sense of self."

"Sport is a key vehicle to reach communities that do not traditionally engage with mental health services. Our strategic partnership with Sport England, supports thousands of people to use physical activity to help them to stay well and live well with mental health problems and as a platform to raise awareness of mental health, tackling mental health stigma." **MIND**

And that, "Build physical activity and movement into treatment pathways. Almost two thirds of people feel physical activity should be offered alongside medication and talking therapy, yet just 1 in 20 people have been offered exercise on prescription or social prescribing to support their mental health. Physical activity can be as effective as anti-depressants for mild to moderate depression."

"We also believe that there could be a focus on prioritising improved access to green space and creating greener communities in areas of deprivation or where there is poor or unequal access. There is increasingly compelling evidence demonstrating access to green (and blue) space is important for our health as it is where many engage in sport and recreation. Evidence shows green environments are associated with reduced levels of depression, anxiety, and fatigue; enhanced quality of life for both children and adults; lower levels of cardiovascular disease; maintaining healthier weight; improving social cohesion; and bringing communities together."

Sport England

3 SPORT BUILDS A CULTURE OF STRONGER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES

We heard:

“In the most disadvantaged communities there is quite a significant gap in the educational achievement of pupils compared with their peers and that schools struggle quite a lot because the issues that the kids are facing go well beyond the school gates and we know that sport can be one of those avenues where kids can pick up and learn other important life skills about leadership and teamwork and lots of stuff that they struggle with in a school environment.” Northern Powerhouse Partnership

Sport is also crucial to our work to improve the social fabric of our communities. Sport can be an important part of interventions which improve education and skills, drive up social trust through networks of volunteers, bring together diverse communities, and even reduce crime.

There is, perhaps, nothing more important to the levelling up agenda than education and skills. The Northern Powerhouse Partnership (2019: 6) described the importance of education: “Of all the requirements to deliver a meaningful Northern Powerhouse, there is perhaps nothing more important than high-quality education and skills.” Education and skills’ qualifications also tend to be lower with 7 of the 12 local authorities in the North East being found in the bottom quartile. The difference between London and the North East for adults aged 16 – 64 with level 3 skills and above is 16%.²²

Justine Reilly, Sporting Heritage told us: *“Sporting Heritage unlocks education for children and young people, for example, a school in Bradford transformed from failing to outstanding school by underpinning essential values with sporting heritage. It helps people develop skills and careers into the cultural heritage sector.”*

Sport can play an important role in facilitating education. The Youth Endowment Fund has argued that sport: supports positive development; provides children with positive peer groups and influences; enables them to develop social skills; improves their physical and mental health; and helps children develop motivation and self-regulation through committed practice and relationships with positive role models like sports coaches.¹⁹

Nobody Left Behind described how, in culturally embedded Liverpool: *“15% of NEETS and marginalised young people were falling through the gaps. So we decided to set up a little bit of a safety net; where we removed them from the school environment and took them to a boxing gym. Boxing worked as a better conduit for those young people to express themselves.”*

“15% of the student population have some sort of special educational needs diagnosis and they’re three times more likely to be excluded from school, and four times more likely not to receive their GCSEs and around 18 times more likely to find themselves in custody age 16 to 18 and that’s something that really needs to be subverted and sport is one of the main ways that we try to develop social emotional skills that sense of self-awareness, social awareness managing and regulating your emotions making responsible decisions and then building relationships with people. Sport is very inclusive and one of the great tools to do that.” Football Beyond Borders

Youth Sport Trust (2020) have estimated that sporting activity generates over £20 billion in value from stronger and safer communities.²³

There are many ways in which sporting programmes protect children from involvement in crime. Sport plays a role in direct prevention, by reducing the time that children are exposed to negative influences, while allowing children to take risks in a safe environment.

Sport also serves as a hub for other services: a platform to engage children in other anti-crime interventions. Many programmes use sport to connect children to other services and activities like education, counselling, and support for drug and alcohol problems. In these programmes, sport is used as a 'hook' to engage children, but it is the other activities which are thought to drive positive development.

"Our philosophy now is that relationships, jobs and families stop bullets so with that philosophy we built a seven week programme [using sport] where we engaged with young people and ex-prison offenders."

Paul Walmsley, Nobody Left Behind

Sport also gets to the heart of our communities. Every sporting event, from local egg-and-spoon races to the Commonwealth Games receives help from local people who give up their time and energy to bring our sporting world to life. The replacement value of work done by sports volunteers is estimated to be worth around £5.7 bn.

"Sports can play a massive role in community bringing young people together bringing communities together it's not just the health and well-being and exercise it's the camaraderie the Teen Spirit the sense of being and certainly I engage with very many grassroots sports clubs and groups in my Colne Valley constituency back up in Yorkshire they also have amazing cultural value as well both my professional rugby league club Huddersfield Giants and Huddersfield Town Football Club are both engaged in things like the National Citizen Service²⁴ they also helped deliver the holiday activities food fund programme which is where the government funds them to give kids sporting activity through the summer and also a healthy nutritious meal as well."

Jason McCartney, Former MP

"Culture and Sport Evidence (CASE) is a DCMS led programme in collaboration with Historic England, Sports England and Arts Council England of research which collects cross-cutting social and economic evidence across arts, heritage and sports. Research commissioned by the CASE programme found that both sports and cultural participation, on a local and national level, generate social capital within places, acting as a type of 'social glue' that increases social connectedness and a sense of belonging within communities. The Government's Levelling Up White Paper also recognises the impact that access to sporting and cultural excellence can have in generating civic renewal, helping to restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging in places." **Arts Council England**

"Community clubs and smaller clubs really came into their own during the pandemic and really proved their worth because they were the ones calling up through their alumni network the lonely people. They were the ones delivering medical supplies and food parcels and all this to an incredible degree. Now many of them through their foundation arms do that anyway as an ongoing part of their commitment to their local communities."

Nigel Huddleston MP, Former Sports Minister



Sport can also strongly contribute to bringing together people from different backgrounds. This is work in progress given recent scandals like the racism scandal at Yorkshire Cricket Club, showing that there is still much work to be done. In 2019 research by the European Parliament found that, globally, 85% of media coverage is of male athletes, and 90% of articles on sports written by men.²⁵ Even at the lower level, there is still much work to be done to tackle inequalities if we are to generate greater diversity and equal opportunity for all, as we heard from those who gave evidence.

"Firstly, young people, less engaged minority ethnic communities, women, disabled people, people who maybe aren't as engaged in sport as they could be. We need to focus on these and there's some good work e.g. the 'This girl can' initiative; the Activity Alliance²⁶ for disability inclusion. It's really important to get young people early into sport and I do worry about that about sport in our schools. Secondary schools are teaching 42,000 fewer hours of PE than they did a decade ago as over 2 million children have less than 30 minutes of physical activity a day²⁷."

Jeff Smith MP

“The staff from ethnic minority backgrounds are seriously under-represented. The workforce needs to be more diverse and representative of the community it serves; existing staff have improved cultural understanding and ethnic inclusion training. Ideally an organisation needs an audit to highlight where they are in terms of inclusion/ community engagement. Tracking the engagement and setting aspirational goals after finding what goes well/not goes well.” **Sheffield City Council**

Previous governments have recognised the important role that sport can play in this domain, arguing in their recent sport strategy: *“We want sport to lead the way in tackling discrimination, using its high profile to promote values of inclusion and community. Sports teams that reflect the diversity of their communities, or of the nation in the case of international competition, are powerful demonstrations of the positive role that inclusion can play.”*²⁸

The Women’s Euros showed, this is an area where sport has great potential.

“The Women’s Euros required investment in legacy planning or social impact in advance of the event. It has done that absolutely brilliantly when we look at the women’s Euros you know more than 500 000 opportunities for women and girls; new opportunities to play; 1500 volunteers; nine host cities’ school programmes; and 120,000 regular opportunities for girls to play.”

Yvonne Harrison, CEO Women in Football

In sum, at individual, community and national levels there are extensive benefits derived from participation in sport. The Army Sport Control Board (2014) catalogues these as: physical and mental fitness, and health; personal development including courage, self-discipline, integrity, competitive spirit, confidence, motivation, determination and willpower, and character building; team building involving mutual trust, moral cohesion, cooperation, loyalty, and esprit de corps; developing leadership skills and identifying those who have leadership potential.²⁹ In addition to all these, the Army also acknowledged the development of leadership skills in officials and coaches, and the retention of personnel.

“Rugby League is played in some of the hardest to reach areas, so we did a piece of work working at the indices of multiple deprivation. The results will show that we mainly invested in the top 10 on IMD and that just intrinsically shows that connection between hard to reach communities and the sport of rugby league.” **Jon Dutton, CEO Rugby League World Cup 2021**



CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY ASKS OF GOVERNMENT

This report shows that sport is essential to the fabric of the North and that there is huge potential for sport to do even more, with the proper governmental backing and support. The cultural value of sport must not be left behind.

The Question of Sport Inquiry calls on the Government to make sport in the North a key driver of positive outcomes for the lives of our people and communities.

KEY ASKS

1 Make sport integral to Industrial Strategy across the North

➔ To level up we need to invest in sport in the North. The cultural value of sport must be considered a key strategic asset and industry and not ignored.

2 Government must take action to break down the silos

➔ The North needs a whole systems approach across-government and partnerships at all levels - who work across silo boundaries to coordinate and implement initiatives.

➔ Sport and exercise should be used to complement active travel initiatives which enhance health and the environment.

➔ The link between engagement with sport and its positive impact on health and mental wellbeing needs to be recognised and appropriately funded. We need to unlock potential and:

➔ Invest in sport and physical activity to help reduce demand on the NHS

➔ Prescribe sport, physical activity and access to green and blue spaces to help recovery

CONCLUSIONS

“To maximise community access to sport and its cultural value, there is a need for better system-wide collaboration, so that the plethora of organisations within local ‘eco-systems’ work more cohesively and harmoniously together. Within each area, a key organisation would take on the leadership role (which could be the Local Authority) who connects agendas at a strategic level and provides understanding of where sport and activity can contribute. This in turn will help local organisations coalesce around the things that matter the most locally and drive action.” **StreetGames**

3 It's time to connect and create Culture and Sport Hubs across the North:

- Use sport and exercise to impact across multiple areas including: art, community, culture, economy, education, heritage, physical and mental health, and tourism.
- Use community organisations which are not sport related to encourage engagement with sport and exercise.

“Bradley Mills Cricket Club was formed in the 1870s in Huddersfield it survived the Boer War, WW1, WW2, the Great Depression everything the world could throw at it but in modern times it folded because there was a lack of interest in supporting that club in a deprived part of Huddersfield. And, what I'm really concerned about is the ghettoizing of sports so if you're in the middle class area you may well have your cricket club or your athletic club or whatever. It is harder in deprived areas or disadvantaged areas.”

James Daly, Former MP and Chair of Northern Culture APPG

4 We need greater long term investment in spaces, places and people

- Invest more in facilities such as swimming pools and green spaces to prevent the deterioration or closure of facilities and loss of provision.
- Secure funding to protect our sporting heritage.
- Break down the outdated barriers between sport and culture so that they can support shared agendas.
- Long term investment in sport and exercise particularly in areas of greatest need.
- Invest more to earn more. The return on investment in sport and exercise is substantially higher than the recommended guidance stated by HM Treasury as a justification for investment.

North Yorkshire Sport Ltd and Districts of North Yorkshire told us: “National funding can often go to those who can write the best applications, not those who would benefit the most from the investment. Therefore, investment should be needs led not necessarily demand led and this intelligence can be provided at a local level, supported by the Local Authority and the Voluntary Sector.”

5 The North needs easy and effective funding pots and places

- A greater proportion of Sports funding should be devolved to Metro Mayor/CA level, with oversight so that impact can be efficient and measured
- Sports funding should be held in devolved pots at the same level of government across England. This could be at the Local Authority level but, where possible, this should be at the Combined Authority level
- Funding should move from short to long-term and support existing successful programmes rather than seeking new unproven initiatives.
- Reduce barriers to funding and make applications for funding accessible and simple
- In both national and devolved settings, indices of multiple deprivation should be used to guide funding

“A balance needs to be struck between investing in the new, investing in time limited ‘programmes’ and ensuring survival of the existing infrastructure, with swimming pools and leisure operators facing significant challenges to maintain and replace stock which will lead to the potential loss of provision.”

North Yorkshire Sports Ltd & Districts of North Yorkshire

“Sporting heritage is largely not valued or funded as part of our cultural offer, why is that? We think there are complex issues behind that of high and low culture that has meant that sport has been largely excluded from the formal heritage record.” **Justine Reilly, Sporting Heritage**

“Funding should follow the real needs of these communities – which requires more investment in system working and collaboration for co-production. This investment should be devolved and requires a long-term view...The funding application, award, and evaluation processes need to be simple, supported, and light-touch.” **County Durham Sport**

“For longer-term investment programmes (i.e. 5-10+ years), which allows enough time for change to take place and for local assets to be developed. Rather than short-term 1-2 year funding initiatives. Investment should not always be channelled into new schemes or new projects, but instead allow for replication and mainstreaming.” **StreetGames**

If these policy aims were met, sport in the North, both at the elite level, and at the grassroots level would go from strength-to-strength. Because sport is so intertwined with so many different facets of a good life, the result would be safer, happier communities, higher levels of public health, reduced inequalities, and a higher-skilled and more productive workforce. The cultural and talent pipeline in the North needs to flourish and be unlocked. The Question of Sport Inquiry shows the economic potential that can be harvested to safeguard our rich sporting and cultural heritage.

The Northern Culture APPG believes that this Inquiry provides testament for the need for policy change. Any future Government must recognise the huge cultural value of sport to creating strong, safe, diverse and successful communities and take on board these recommendations if we are to level up, reduce inequalities, boost investment and growth across the North.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND THANKS

Oral and written evidence was given from key organisations, MPs, Peers and stakeholders to help to inform the output Inquiry report

With grateful thanks to all those who contributed:

The Northern Culture APPG Question of Sport Inquiry received oral evidence from:

- **Liane Azevedo**, Researcher in Health, University of Huddersfield
- **Clive Betts MP**, Former Chair of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (LUHC)
- **Sir Howard Bernstein**, Former CEO Manchester City Council
- **Sara Britcliffe**, Former MP
- **Chris Boardman**, Chair Sport England, Active Travel England
- **Jon Dutton**, CEO Rugby League World Cup 2021
- **James Daly**, Former MP and Co-Chair of the Northern Culture APPG
- **John Downes**, North-East Director, Street Games
- **Julie Elliot**, Former MP and Co-Chair Northern Culture All Party Parliamentary Group
- **Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE**
- **Yvonne Harrison**, CEO Women in Football
- **Paul Howell**, Former MP for Sedgefield
- **Nigel Huddleston MP**, Former Minister for Sport
- **Daghan Irak**, Sports Sociologist, University of Huddersfield
- **Natasha Jonas**, WBO Boxing Champion
- **Ken Knott**, CEO Stockport County
- **Jason McCartney**, Former MP, Vice Chair Northern Culture APPG
- **Baroness Masham of Ilton**
- **Rick Parry**, English Football League
- **James Reeves**, Football Beyond Borders
- **Justine Reilly**, Founding Director Sporting Heritage
- **Alex Sobel MP**
- **Jeff Smith MP**, Former Shadow Sport Minister
- **Gerald Vernon-Jackson**, Chair, Local Government Association Culture, Tourism and Sport Board
- **Paul Walmsley**, Executive Researcher, Nobody Left Behind.



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- Blue Mirror Insights
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- City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- Counterculture Partnership LLP
- County Durham Sport
- Curious Minds
- Dawson's Academy of Dance and Stage
- Edge Hill University
- English Football League (EFL)
- Get Doncaster Moving
- Kirklees Council
- Leeds Beckett University
- Leeds Rhinos RL
- Marketing Humber Bondholder Scheme Ltd
- Mind
- North of Tyne Combined Authority
- North Yorkshire Sport Ltd (Active Partnership)
- North Yorkshire Sport Ltd + Districts of North Yorkshire
- Peel L&P
- Rugby Football League (RFL)
- Sheffield City Council
- Sport England
- Sport Works
- Stockport County FC
- Street Games
- The British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES)
- University of Huddersfield
- West Yorkshire Combined Authority
- Wigan Council
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Devo@Inflect acts as the Secretariat of the Northern Culture APPG.

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