



18 June 2018

An Open Letter to British Weight Lifting affiliated clubs and members

The athletes within the sports, including weight lifting, cast aside by UK Sport's current investment policy have little hope for change as UK Sport looks ahead to Paris 2024. Under the heading of 'Future Strategy', UK Sport's live consultation survey on future funding for Olympic and Paralympic sport illustrates that there is little appetite for change.

At the London 2012 Games, UK Sport invested the public's Lottery money into 70% of Olympic and Paralympic sports. At Rio 2016 this figure reduced to 64% and in Tokyo 2020, the investment is likely to be in the region of just 48%. With less lottery investment predicted post 2020, UK Sport's policy is fast becoming an exclusive club with fewer and fewer members allowed in.

This approach has to end and I am writing to you to urge you to have your say on how you want the future investment into the British elite sports system to be used. Should the current policy continue, the implications for weight lifting are huge because our sport is not one that can deliver multiple medal opportunities.

Despite not only meeting, but exceeding the target set for Commonwealth Games medals this year – with six medals for England and two for Wales, we are still having to convince UK Sport that we have future medal potential; and we are one of many sports left wondering what it has to do to receive investment that can support our current athletes and our future potential.

Since UK Sports investment decision in December 2016, the impact on our programme has been significant:

- BWL's England's talent system and performance structure has been badly affected as the 'medals at all cost' policy has started to unravel the opportunities, infrastructure and pathways for future medal success.
- We have seen athletes retiring or leaving the sport because they cannot afford to compete and we cannot afford to support them.
- We have less athletes in our programme now, fewer travelling to international competitions, fewer coaches working in our environment and less coaching hours. Our performance programme is highly fragile as we look to the start of Olympic qualification next year.

Around 18 months ago, a group of Olympic and Paralympic sports came together around the concept that Every Sport Matters. The group strongly believe that:

- The existing approach to National Lottery funding of Britain's Olympic and Paralympic sports has created a two-class system that runs counter to Olympic ideals.

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- Opportunities for elite British athletes in all Olympics and Paralympics sports need not run counter to the pursuit of medals. More sports competing and more athletes delivering more medals will make Great Britain even prouder.
- Medal targets alone should not be the sole criteria for funding because:
 - UK Sport has a responsibility to ensure that all our Olympic and Paralympic athletes are encouraged to achieve their potential and that a system of development opportunities should be there for all of them.
 - The popularity and levels of participation of a given sport are key to inspiring a nation and must be considered when funding decisions are made. According to the recent Active Lives survey carried out by Sport England, more than 550,000 people participated in weight lifting twice a week – a 12% increase on the prior year – yet this counts for nothing in funding considerations.
- An investment system should be developed whereby every Olympic and Paralympic sport would receive 'baseline funding' – this would protect the high-performance system in the UK. Sports would then receive individual investment beyond this based on their medal potential. If this approach were applied for the Tokyo Olympic cycle, the money required to provide baseline funding for those sports that are currently unfunded would represent a little over 1% of UK Sport's total budget of £550 million for the cycle.

What will happen to the British high-performance system if the current medal-winning sports stop winning medals and a generation of talent has not been able to develop and emerge from other sports? Surely, this is not the way to approach our future.

YOUR say will influence the next generation and we believe there is an opportunity to create a new, bold, inclusive goal to underpin the next 20+ years of participation in the Olympic and Paralympic Games: more sports (represented), more athletes (qualified) and more medals (won across more sports).

This goal can be achieved without sacrificing current medal success. But it will require a change in UK Sport's current approach to one in which the leading Olympic and Paralympic sports will continue to be rewarded but all sports and all Olympic and Paralympic athletes will have a chance to succeed.

You are all passionate about weight lifting and I hope you are as proud as I am when our athletes stand on the podium, not just because of their achievements, but because we know it inspires kids to become more active, more people to participate, more members to join clubs, more athletes who want to improve and more lifters who want to compete.

I am calling on you all to have your say - <https://survey.euro.confirmit.com/wix/1/p1865845301.aspx> - in the hope that UK Sport, and the Government, will keep those dreams alive.

Best wishes

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