**The Future Funding of Sport: Summary**

The conversation started by discussing what sources could help to fill the gap in reduced public sector funding beyond the Olympics.

While increased investment from the private sector are often touted as a potential solution to mitigate the emerging funding gap it was clear that if the commercial sector was to further invest in sport, would have to understand what is important to the commercial sector and what drives it to sponsor sport. It was felt that those administrating sport displayed a chronic lack of understanding of commercial values and pressures resulting in less investment. By understanding business drivers better, it was argued, different sports would appear much more attractive to corporate partners. Those sport administrators present agreed thatsport could learn from its commercial partners in a broader sense, particularly when it comes to profiling, understanding of behavioural insights and wider promotions and marketing.

There was a general discussion about what corporate money could and should be spent on. It was suggested that corporate money could go straight into encouraging mass participation or on grassroots sport more generally, although there were varying opinions on whether this money would be better spent on facilities, coaching or other areas.

The role of Government was focused on in some detail. There was general frustration about the number of different ‘funding pots’ that organisations could bid for. It was agreed that this created short-term, specifically targeted projects rather than encouraging a more appropriate and effective strategy – spend rather than investment. The Government was also criticised for not seemingly having a long-term strategy right across the sporting landscape or for one department or body who could manage sport across the vast number of areas that it was involved. It was broadly agreed that a long-term, evidence-based strategy was required.

It was felt that perhaps the lack of such a plan was a result of t rarely having being made clear *why* Government supported sport at all. While it generally accepted that this is the ‘right thing to do’, a more explicit justification should be clearly set out. Furthermore, in doing so, it was agreed that such an approach would help unlock other Government funding (from the Departments of Health or for Education, for example) to use sport to achieve wider governmental aims, and could also help give a clearer indication of where sport ought to sit within Government.

There was a general agreement that perhaps a contributing factor to this was because of the lack of significant research about what sport can achieve in public policy delivery. Research into the outcomes achieved remained a priority, particularly in sport for development organisations, although this was also a function of adequate funding.

It was suggested that in a drive to increase commercial sector funding more notice should be take of the wider sport hinterland – sport has the ability to impact on a wide range of business including the hospitality and transport industry and these sectors should be explored. Specific ideas which could encourage galvanise these business could include the establishment of a reward programme like nectar in return for sporting spend. Current commercial partnerships could also be enhanced though for example mobile-based applications and technology which encouraged individuals to access and make real-time bookings to their local sports facilities.

It was agreed that sport needed to seek out and develop the use of cutting edge technology and innovation and become far more effective in terms of promotion and marketing. These areas, it was agreed, are essential in terms of developing the customer base, encouraging private sector support and investment, achieving Government targets and significantly changing how the public engage with sport and physical activity.

In conclusion a number of key areas were seen as worthy of greater attention and potentially specific research projects:

1. Why does the Government invest public funds in sport? What does it believe sport can do, what is its rationale and what it is trying to achieve through the funding it provides. Is this based on a long-term, evidence-base strategy and if not why not?
2. What is the role of the commercial sector in funding sport? What incentives do they need and what are the current barriers to further investment? What specific measures could be developed to encourage further and innovative investment? Could certain tax incentives or other carrots / sticks be offered? What can sport do to ensure it is properly aligned with sponsors’ / funders’ priorities and interests?
3. What can the commercial sector teach sport? Can key skills such as customer retention and development, profiling, promotions and marketing and use of technology effectively change the way sport is run and boost funding?
4. What opportunities are there for sport to embrace and encourage technology? Can more effective partnerships be established between the corporate sector and key sporting bodies, which benefit both parties? How can this help deliver mass participation or deliver other key public services messages?