**The Future of ‘Small’ Sports: How will broadcasting technology affect their ability to generate fans, funding and finances?**

Demand for sports content has never been higher but it is not spread equally, making the commercial success more elusive for some. The **Sport Think Tank,** sponsored by **British Eurosport**, asked an elite group of sports organisations to say how they saw broadcast technology affecting their futures. The key conclusions are highlighted below.

1. **Marketing imperative or commercial return?** Despite demand for sports content, the commercial rights of many smaller sports have little or no monetary value. Sports need to crystal clear about their goals when seeking broadcasting partnerships: are they seeking revenues from their rights or strategic marketing to grow fans or achieve other objectives? Perhaps they should ask: ‘Is broadcast really the silver bullet to their problems?’
2. **Fix innovation gaps:** Sponsors and broadcasters want NGBs to think more creatively and to innovate about product, platforms, pricing and content. Three key principles should drive this: exposure, impact, and engagement (through content) in the post-Olympic environment. There is a Big Gap around Big Data. Improvements here could boost the viability and success of smaller sports and potentially help re-shape the strategy and improve the return on public sector funding for medals and participation. Should improved data management be a condition of public funding in the future?
3. **Become A Broadcaster:** Internet TV has made it easier to reach people and lowered the cost of production. But at the same time, fragmented audiences have lowered values and attempts to aggregate the rights sales of smaller sports have failed (so far). Many sports are becoming production houses seeking to control their content better. Could smaller sports get better value if they were to pool content production? Should Sport England finance or facilitate this at a time when the potential for social and digital media has yet to be fully tapped?
4. **Improve Partnerships**: The relationships between sponsors, rights holders and broadcasters should be re-thought. Schedules and tournaments are not always frequent enough or well suited for TV to create narratives around which audiences and fans can congregate. Traditional commercial antagonisms should be set aside so that sports, sponsors and broadcasters can do more to encourage innovation and create new products that work for all parties.
5. **The Role of the BBC:** Despite praise for the Olympics, the pre-eminent public broadcaster could do more to ensure a broadcast platform for smaller and non-live sport. The benefits would include greater exposure, improved marketing investment, commercial value and could also improve sports’ success against other social objectives such as improved fitness and activity levels, healthy eating or social exclusion.

Notes: The views above are an editorial summary provided by the Sports Think Tank. They do not necessarily represent the organisation’s view or that of any of its individuals, the attendees or the sponsor. Summary based on a roundtable event held Mid-October 2013.