

INQUIRY REPORT Bradford Dragons

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1. Submission from Bradford Dragons

Stuart Culliford, Chairman of Bradford Dragons Basketball Club, wrote “Clearly we have been unable to meet the timetable listed below for the APPG’s excellent Inquiry. This is because, in effect, I work more than full time on a voluntary basis to maintain and build the basketball club in the very uncertain terrain of Bradford. Consequently, I did not have the time to respond fully nor was there anyone I could pass the responsibility to.

With little history of implantation in the area, it is an uphill task to establish, develop and sustain a basketball club in the Bradford district. However, as we come to the end of our most successful season to date in our 13-year history, the broad bullet points I would feed back to the APPG are as follows and I hope they are useful. I am sure that the APPG will have seen them many times before in other submissions.

The major barriers to sustainability and development are:

- Lack of coaches;
- Lack of money;
- High cost of facility hire;
- Increasing burden on volunteers from a plethora of demands regarding safeguarding, health and safety, complicated and time consuming monitoring information required, complicated and long winded application processes to apply for funding, liabilities attached to funding;
- The ‘Big Society’ belief that there is an inexhaustible supply of individuals who are prepared to sacrifice careers, salaries, pensions, family relationships to work full time and more for a sport that they still love after 40 years and are trying to give a new generation of young people access to quality basketball opportunities and development;
- Cuts in funding to England Basketball translate into less funding for grassroots basketball and less support to clubs;
- A ‘never mind the quality feel the width’ approach by funders and government agencies looking for big numbers to participate in basketball rather than an approach to quality to improve competitiveness and medal performance in the very long term;
- An approach to Olympic funding that only rewards sports with Olympic medal prospects and dismisses a major world sport like basketball in the UK, despite a massive improvement in performance at international level by UK basketball. This will have long term disastrous consequences in my opinion as UK basketball will not be able to afford to compete internationally and we will be back to the bad old days of players and coaches paying out of their own pockets to represent their country/GB. The best professional players will not do it and so we will become less competitive and less likely to win medals. This removes the incentive for young players to aim, high and identify with successful basketball role models;
- In a global economy and with open borders in the EU, what we find unique about the sport of basketball is that as it is a major world sport [played in more countries than any other sport other than football - despite what people in rugby [both codes], netball and cricket might say] and as a world sport we find lots of overseas players turning up wanting to play basketball who have played in their country of origin and want to continue in the UK. We have young players from refugee families from Africa, players from more eastern European countries than you can shake a stick at, Asian and Chinese the list goes on. Our Under-13/14 squad has players whose families originate in Poland, Latvia, China, the Philippines, the West Indies, as well as local south Asian, African Caribbean and white British players, all coached by a Hungarian coach in a sport they are learning to love and their families and communities support. The appeal of an indoor sport [that can be played outdoors as well] that does not close down for two months every UK winter due to frozen or water logged pitches, can be played in a relatively small space, that is primarily a non-contact and therefore relatively low impact injury game, that is a truly global game that binds together sport, fashion and music like no other sport makes basketball a very exciting sport for young people to take up and learn a team ethos and respect for the rules of the game.