



Every Sport Matters – a new approach to elite sport funding

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Table Tennis England is among a group of sports calling on UK Sport to rethink its investment strategy into Olympic and Paralympic sport.

A total of 11 sports have teamed up to seek a new approach from the organisation, following its funding awards for the 2020 Olympic cycle.

All the sports were told in December that they would not receive any elite funding for their performance programme working towards the Tokyo Olympics. In the case of table tennis, this was despite being in the group of sports projected to achieve zero to one medal in Tokyo. UK Sport later confirmed its stance after an appeals process.

Now Table Tennis England, alongside Archery GB, BaseballSoftballUK, British Basketball, British Fencing, British Handball, British Volleyball, British Weightlifting, British Wrestling, Badminton England and GB Wheelchair Rugby, have written to new UK Sport Chairman Dame Katherine Grainger as she prepares to take up her post on July 1.

It calls for all sports to receive baseline funding to underpin their elite programmes and give their athletes a fair chance to represent GB at the Olympics or Paralympics.

The letter, headed *Every Sport Matters: A call for a new approach to investment into Olympic and Paralympic Sport*, reads:

The existing approach to National Lottery funding of Britain's Olympic and Paralympic sports has been conspicuously successful in winning medals, but has disenfranchised many of the country's elite sportsmen and women, creating a two-class system that runs counter to Olympic ideals.

At London 2012, UK Sport initially funded 18 of out of a total of 26 Olympic sports (70%). In 2016, out of 28 Olympic

sports, UK Sport funded 18 (64%). For Tokyo, they will fund 16 sports out of 33 (48%). Where will this approach end?

UK Sport has appointed a new Chair, which presents an ideal opportunity for her to conduct an urgent, thorough review of the funding agency's objectives for Tokyo 2020 and the Games that follow. At the heart of a revised purpose should be a celebration of Olympism and Paralympism as ends in themselves.

Providing opportunities for elite British athletes in all relevant sports to compete in the Olympics and Paralympics need not run counter to the pursuit of medals, and will make the nation even prouder of TeamGB's and ParaGB's triumphs.

Currently, athletes in sports deprived of Lottery funding will find it almost impossible to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. Even athletes with recognised medal potential created by Lottery funding have now been completely abandoned by the system.

Their respective national governing bodies have also been deprived of funding to support British teams' and athletes' training programmes, sport science and sports medicine programmes and international competitions, and to represent their interests with International Federations.

We, the governing bodies of the affected sports, have now come together to call for a new approach to the investment into Olympic and Paralympic sport. In the first instance, we call for the new Chair of UK Sport to instigate an urgent, thorough review of its objectives.

We call on Dame Katherine Grainger to recognise the dangers inherent in the current direction of travel, and to enter into debate with governing bodies about the basis on which National Lottery funding should now be allocated to sports.

We urge UK Sport to recognise that medal targets alone should not be the sole criteria for its funding, that it 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.

We believe that UK Sport should adopt a revised investment model that embraces EVERY Olympic and Paralympic sport, with a tiered support structure:

- EVERY sport to receive a base level of funding for support for athletes and to include a coach, programme manager and a core competition programme
- GOLD sports to receive full investment where medal success is very likely
- SILVER sports to receive support if there is a recognised medal opportunity
- BRONZE sports to receive a baseline investment to enable a reasonable level of programme management
- EVERY sport to be allocated funding to enable them to continue with their International Relations aspirations

In return, EVERY sport to agree clear measures and targets.

It is not too late to make a difference in Tokyo 2020 and beyond, but time is pressing and debate must begin now. Every Sport Matters.

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