

<b>Scotland's University for Sporting Excellence</b>
--

On Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008 First Minister, Alex Salmond named the University of Stirling as Scotland's University for Sporting Excellence. He announced that Stirling will be the centre of a national network of excellence, providing training and support for high performance athletes studying at universities and colleges across Scotland.

The new centre will receive £600,000 from the Scottish Funding Council. Mr Salmond said it would be an initiative to raise the potential of Scotland's best athletes and "enhance our culture of sporting success".

Jim sent on behalf of SUS the following response to Stewart Maxwell, Kate Vincent, Stewart Harris and Mike Whittingham on the 15<sup>th</sup> May. (Appendix One)

Following a response from Stewart Harris on the 20<sup>th</sup> May Jim replied with the email appended below. (Appendix Two)

**SUS Executive is asked to:**

Item
------

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Consider any further action for SUS on this matter</li></ul> |
|--|

## **APPENDIX ONE**

Dear Minister, Kate, Stewart and Alastair,

I am writing on behalf of Scottish Universities Sport (SUS) to follow up yesterday's announcement to create a Scottish University of Sporting Excellence at the University of Stirling.

SUS is delighted that the role of Universities in developing sporting talent has at long last been acknowledged, and of course, we very much welcome too the investment of new resources to support our work. SUS has lobbied consistently for this public recognition, and we are pleased it has now been forthcoming.

We wish to record however, and in the strongest possible terms, our surprise, disappointment and frustration that such a major initiative could be developed, decided and announced WITHOUT ANY consultation with SUS, or its member Universities. SUS has worked tirelessly over the last three years to engage with National agencies on a range of matters surrounding sport and physical activity in the country's student aged population. In actual fact, we were the first national agency to respond formally to the Reaching Higher consultation, and we have been active since then in holding formal and informal discussions on a range of matters (including elite sport) with senior officials in the Scottish Government, sportscotland and Scottish Institute of Sport. SUS has consistently, and repeatedly, promoted the view that Scotland SHOULD NOT invest in a single University of Sporting Excellence but instead exploit and celebrate the expertise and facilities (training and competition) that exist across the Scottish Universities sector, and to do this in association with the Scottish Institute of Sport network. We are appalled and enormously aggrieved that the Scottish Government and its national agency partners should ignore our views on this matter. At the very least, we would have expected the Scottish Government to invite notes of interest from Scotland's Universities on their wish/potential to host the Scottish University of Sporting Excellence ~ there would have been many contenders with legitimate and compelling cases to make. Given we have not been provided the courtesy of any further information on this initiative, we cannot make any further comment on it.

The recent Scottish Government consultation exercise on achieving a lasting legacy from the 2014 Games seemed a genuine attempt to draw opinions and suggestions from across the Scotland. SUS, and many of its partner Universities, responded fully to this invitation by again outlining the collective force of the sector in helping deliver yet more sporting success for Scotland, as well as pioneering a healthier and more physically active/literate student population. Given yesterday's statement was contrary to our views, we can only conclude that this consultation process was, at best, hollow.

With all due respect, SUS would ask that a senior official from one or all of the lead agencies comes to speak with us as a matter of urgency about the proposed Scottish University of Sporting Excellence. This could be done at our upcoming Executive Council meeting on Friday 23 May'08 (1400 hrs, University of Stirling) and/or by attending our National Conference, which takes place at the University of Dundee over 10/11 June'08. We would be pleased to welcome you at either/both of these meetings.

You will, I hope, appreciate our strength of feeling on this matter. SUS appreciates that the Scottish Government will form its own views on policy matters, but we cannot accept when this is done unilaterally and without due regard to the views of the fully democratic and wholly representative and inclusive National Association.

We would ask that you consider our invitation, and respond at your earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Jim Aitken  
Chair, Scottish Universities Sport

More in formation on Scottish Universities Sport can be found at [www.susport.org.uk](http://www.susport.org.uk)

## APPENDIX TWO

Stewart,

Many thanks for your 'holding' response.

SUS welcomes your efforts to meet with the Scottish Funding Council to obtain some clarity on this matter. Naturally, we would be pleased to join you if you wish. I would readily concede that we (SUS) have not (to date) actively engaged with the SFC, though by the same token, I would argue that we have been very pro-active in communicating with the Scottish Government, Scottish Institute of Sport and sportscotland. The announcement was made by the First Minister and so there can be no doubt that it was a political decision, with full endorsement from Mr Maxwell and his officials. The sector's stance on this matter (and many others besides) has been clearly, consistently and repeatedly stated since February 2007 ~ and yet our views would appear to have been ignored. This is disappointing in the extreme.

SUS, and its sector partners, have a number of unanswered questions, and I still await a response from either Mr Maxwell or his officials. For instance:

- why was SUS not consulted at all on this matter?
- why was it announced now, and BEFORE due consideration has been afforded to the Commonwealth Games Legacy consultation AND the interim review of 'Reaching Higher'?
- what will the Scottish University of Sporting Excellence actually do (on a variety of levels ~ I did speak with Mike Whittingham about this and he is equally unsure of what is proposed, which is a great shame given the pivotal role the 'Scottish Institute' plays in facilitating performance sport in Scotland, both past, present and future), and how can statements of hub/network be made without even the courtesy first of discussing proposals with HE and FE partners?
- why was Stirling selected as the host site? Please can we know the rationale for this because a number of other Scottish Universities could lay claim to being equal to, if not superior, in terms of: sports facilities; conditioning facilities; academic reputation; range of course/degree programmes; sports medicine and sports science provision; athlete base; British universities' ranking; number of national/Olympic performers; accessibility; to name but a few. AND MORE, if the 'unitary' host was the only option available, why wasn't there the opportunity given to other universities to express an interest in hosting this initiative (this would at least uphold the most fundamental procurement/value for money demands made by Scottish Government, not to mention APUC commitments), and why wasn't more consideration given to the Scottish Institute's role as a potential co-ordinator.

There are many more questions we could ask but I will refrain.

We welcome Lawrie's involvement at Friday's meeting but we would still want a perspective from the Scottish Government ~ either at the SUS Executive or at our Annual Conference on 10/11 June. We await a response from the Minister or Kate Vincent.

In the mean-time, please let me know if you are able to broker a meeting with the SFC, and if you would want our involvement.

Yours

Jim  
Chair, Scottish Universities Sport