

Summary of Parliamentary Business Relating to the Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) Scheme: October-December 2007

1. CCPR Press Release

CCPR - 100 MPs back community amateur sports club campaign

Date: Wednesday, 24 October 2007

Contents

100 MPS BACK COMMUNITY AMATEUR SPORTS CLUB CAMPAIGN

Almost one hundred MP's showed their support at CCPR's 'Subs for Clubs CASC Campaign' event, held at the House of Commons last night. Football legend and Strictly Come Dancing Star, John Barnes also joined the event to back the campaign. Among attendees were Sports Minister, Gerry Sutcliffe, shadow Sports Ministers, Hugh Robertson and Don Foster, Tessa Jowell, the Minister for the Olympics and former Sports Minister, Richard Caborn. The Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) scheme provides a range of financial relief for sports clubs in the UK. Since its launch in 2002, nearly 4,500 clubs have signed up, making an estimated saving of over £22 million.

The aim of the event was to publicise the important role grassroots sports clubs play within the community and to call on the Government to increase the benefits of the CASC scheme by allowing clubs registered for the scheme to claim GiftAid on junior subscriptions paid by youngsters.

Guest of honour, John Barnes, said:

"Sport should always be high up the political agenda. I know from my experience as a player, as a coach and as an ambassador for Access Sport, the power that sport has to unite communities, to build confidence, to teach new skills and to help people get fit and healthy. The support of local MPs is a vital part of that work and this event showed just how strong that support is.

"The CASC scheme is one of the best ways for clubs to save money. I know how important even small amounts of extra cash can be for clubs. The more clubs sign up to the scheme the more money there will be in sport and, hopefully, this event will raise awareness of that.

"This campaign is about getting kids active and healthy and about recognising the amazing work that amateur sports clubs do around the country."

Brigid Simmonds, Chair of CCPR, said:

"At CCPR we are working hard to develop sport and recreation across the UK and this was a great occasion to explore with MP's how we could work together to improve sporting opportunities in local communities and clubs. We're delighted that so many MP's showed interests in backing our campaign."

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

1. CCPR is the umbrella organisation for around 270 national governing and representative bodies of sport and recreation in the UK, which speaks and acts to promote, protect and provide for the interests of sport and physical recreation at all levels.
2. Further information about the Community Amateur Sports Club scheme can be found at www.cascinfo.co.uk.

2. House of Commons – Culture Media and Sport Committee

Culture Media and Sport Committee hears from Secretary of State James Purnell

Date: Thursday, 25 October 2007

Contents (relating to the Community Amateur Sports Club scheme)

A welcome, but under-reported area of Government policy was the Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) scheme, Paul Farrelly noted. He explained that a cross-party campaign had been launched earlier in the week to allow junior subscriptions to qualify for gift-aid. MPs had their part to play in this, he insisted, and he called on the Minister to lobby Andy Burnham to extend the scheme in this regard.

In reply, Mr Purnell agreed that this was an important initiative. He welcomed the fact that ten per cent of eligible clubs had signed up for the scheme but agreed that more could be done and stated that he was happy to consider any progress that could be made.

3. House of Commons – Oral Question

Hepburn - Sport (local communities)

Date: Monday, 29 October 2007

Contents

Mr. Stephen Hepburn (Jarrow) (Lab): If he will make a statement on funding opportunities in sport for local communities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Mr. Gerry Sutcliffe): Sport England is the Government's lead agency for delivering investment into community sports. It makes lottery and Exchequer funding available for sport in local communities through its community investment fund, the National Sports Foundation and the community club development programme.

Mr. Hepburn: I congratulate the Minister on the work that he is doing for grass-roots sport throughout the UK. However, I remind him that in April this year, the then Secretary of State made a commitment that local, grass-roots sports clubs would not be affected by any diversion of funds to the Olympics in the south-east. Is the Minister willing to confirm those assurances?

Mr. Sutcliffe: I thank my hon. Friend for that question. Clearly, the Government are committed to grass-roots sports; through the community amateur sports club initiative and a great deal of investment in school sport, we want to make sure that we get to the grass roots. However, the 2012 Olympics will clearly be important and it is important that we fund them appropriately. We need to make sure that we meet the budget announced in March this year. I am sure that the lottery order will be debated in the House with a great deal of verve, and I look forward to that debate.

4. House of Commons – Written Answer

Hancock - Taxation (sports)

Date: Monday, 10 December 2007

Contents

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what leisure activities are classed as sports for tax purposes by HM Revenue and Customs; and if he will make a statement; (2) if he will seek to discuss the decision by HM Revenue and Customs not to recognise racing pigeons as a sport for tax purposes with the Royal Pigeon Racing Association.

Jane Kennedy: Sports clubs that meet certain criteria are able to register with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) as a Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC). HMRC do not however decide which sports are eligible sports for the CASC scheme. Eligible sports are

defined by Treasury Order, by reference to the Sports Councils' list of recognised activities. The list can be accessed at
- www.sportengland.org/index/get_resources/resource_ul.htm.

5. DCLG Press Release

DCLG - John Healey announces property tax exemption for businesses in administration

Date: Monday, 17 December 2007

Contents (relating to the Community Amateur Sports Club scheme)

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Business rates break for companies in administration

Companies in administration are to get a permanent exemption from empty property rates, Local Government Minister John Healey announced today (17 December).

Communities and Local Government has also decided that empty listed buildings like shops, offices and visitor attractions should continue to qualify for tax concessions because of the extra work required to bring them back into beneficial use.

The Rating (Empty Properties) Act

Key provisions, which relate to England and Wales:

* provide a zero rate for empty properties owned by charities, as announced by the Chancellor, and also for empty properties owned by community amateur sports clubs. This represents a significant boost to the support given by the Government to the voluntary and community sector.

Notes to Editors

The Government's proposals for reforms to empty property relief were part of a package of measures introduced in the Budget to help incentivise the efficient use of land, to help increase the supply of commercial property and to reduce costs for businesses.

The Government considers that the reforms provide a strong incentive for owners to re-use, re-let or re-develop their empty shops, offices and factory buildings, and so improve access to property and reduce rents for businesses.

The Rating (Empty Properties) Act 2007, which received Royal Assent on 19 July, gave effect to these reforms, and set a revised empty property rate of 100% of the basic occupied rate.

Owners of empty non-domestic property have been liable for non-domestic rates since 1966. They currently qualify for significant relief from rates, receiving at minimum a 50 per cent relief from the occupied business rate. Owners of empty industrial premises enjoy a complete exemption from rates. This regime was introduced in the 1980s during periods of economic recession and low demand for property and land. In 2007-08 this tax relief was worth a total of

£1.38 bn in England alone. The UK economy has enjoyed ten consecutive years of growth, with significant rises in land and property values.

UK office rents are currently amongst the highest in the world and there is significant pressure on land for new housing and commercial developments. In these circumstances it does not make sense for other taxpayers to subsidise owners to keep properties empty.