

Sporting Nation

[SPORT & ECONOMY







Shona Robison

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Shona Robison, MSP, Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport

Sport has a significant contribution to make to both Scotland as a nation and to us all as individuals and my appointment as Scotland's first Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport is a tremendous honour. For many, sport is an abiding passion which generates a strong sense of loyalty and pride. For others, it is a welcome distraction and source of release from the pressures and stresses of our modern lives.

Whatever sport means to us, its impact can be far-reaching. For the nation, our economy, our cultural heritage as well as our international standing and reputation, are all influenced by sport. For the individual it can prolong life, improve physical strength and protect mental wellbeing.

In my view, the contribution of sport to Scotland is vastly underestimated. Quite often our attention rests briefly on individual sports or events without considering all of the benefits which these bring to the nation.

We must remember that direct sports related consumer spending alone amounts to over £1.8bn a year and accounts for over 51,000 jobs in Scotland. Major sporting events have an annual net impact to Scotland of £25m and that's without the inclusion of the domestic spend associated with these events.

Even without the anticipated income stream from the Commonwealth Games, EventScotland forecasts that the net impact from sport events over the next 10 years will be in the region of £560m. Added to this we have savings to the NHS from a more physically active population which runs into millions of pounds. For example, a one per cent increase in sport and

physical activity would yield a £3.5m saving each year from coronary heart disease, stroke and colon cancer alone.

In Scotland we are uniquely placed to reap considerable benefits from sport and physical activity. Not only will 2014 see us host two of the world's greatest sporting events in the Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup, it will of course also be our year of Homecoming. And before then Scotland will be playing host to a number of events including the International Children's Games in Lanarkshire, the Mountain Bike World Cup in Fort William and the British Women's Open in Carnoustie. Looking further ahead, we have the Open Championship and the World Gymnastics Championships coming up. And there will be more to come.

Already, we are seeing tangible results from our investment in the games, not only through infrastructure improvements and in the creation of state of the art facilities, but in the award of contracts with a combined total of £227m to Scottish companies.

Hosting the Commonwealth Games will place Scotland well and truly on the global stage and it is around the games that my vision for a sporting nation will crystallise – a vision where Scots are helped to become more active, where physical activity is embedded in our culture, and where our athletes excel.

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Sporting Prowess Brings Economic Advantage

The Scots have always been keen sportsmen and women, and sport has long played a vital role in the country's economy; giving birth to commercial interests, generating wealth and income, and attracting visitors from across the world.



In global sporting terms the country is perhaps best known as the home of golf. The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews is custodian of the game, but the greatest economic impact is created by the hosting of major tournaments, and by Scotland's golf courses, which attract thousands of international visitors every year.

In 2010, St Andrews staged the 150th Open Championship. Studies show that single event delivered a £100m benefit to the Scottish economy. Similar economic advantages accrue when the Open Championship and events such as The Ryder Cup regularly take place in Scotland.

One of the country's most distinctive new developments is the Carrick Course, which was opened in 2007 in a wonderful setting on the banks of Loch Lomond. Part of the Cameron House resort, this championship standard course has already become a magnet for golfers from across the world.

Hoping to follow in its footsteps is the Trump International Golf Links, which is due to open in 2012. Developed by businessman Donald Trump, it is located on the north-east coast of Aberdeenshire. As well as a world class championship course, the development comprises a landmark hotel, luxury holiday homes and a residential village.

In economic terms it's estimated that the anticipated annual GVA (Gross Value Added) of the Trump Links will be around £50m and 1000 – 1200 jobs.

Also in the north-east, and linked to another economically crucial sport, is development of a new stadium for Aberdeen Football Club. The Club plans to move to a state-of-the-art development at Loirston Loch in time for the 2013/14 season.

The decision to invest in the new £50m stadium is a sign of great optimism in Scotland's biggest spectator sport. That outlook is enhanced by news of an increase of 28 per cent in viewers of live televised Clydesdale Bank Scottish Premier League (SPL) matches during season 2010/11. As well as thriving home-based audiences, it was revealed that people in over 50 countries regularly tune in to enjoy the drama of the SPL.

In Glasgow, the city is gearing up to host one of the world's biggest multi-sports events – the 2014 Commonwealth Games. The run up to this major event, and next year's London Olympics, is presenting great economic opportunities.

Twenty major infrastructure projects are part of the preparation for the 2014 Games. One of the most significant is creation of the new 12,500-seat Scottish National Arena at the SECC (Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre). Due to

open in 2013, this stunning new venue has been designed by internationally renowned architect, Sir Norman Foster.

Even before the Games have taken place, Glasgow has become an attractive location for international sporting organisation planning to stage prestigious events.

In 2011, the city became the first in the UK to host the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) artistic World Cup, which features the top ranked eight male and female gymnasts in the world.

It is the ability to put on events like this, and the sophisticated infrastructure that has been created across the country, that will help Scotland maintain its place at the top of the sporting league, and continue to benefit from the economic spin-offs.

