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SCOTTISH FA SCOTTISH FOOTBALL AND THE WELLBEING ECONOMY



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GET THE BALL ROLLING FOR A WELLBEING ECONOMY: THE ROLE OF FOOTBALL IN DESIGNING AN ECONOMY IN SERVICE OF PEOPLE AND PLANET

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People across Scotland are hungry for a new type of economy that meets the needs of people and planet. The economy we have today was built on the false logic that focussing on growing the amount of goods and services we produce will automatically lead to prosperity for all. In a Wellbeing Economy we would ask first, what does each and every one of us need to thrive within a healthy natural environment? This core purpose would drive the design of our economy and institutions, the policies we prioritise and the businesses and industries we nurture. The Scottish Government, a founding member of the Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership (WEGo), has committed to transforming Scotland into such an economy.

Across Scotland, policy-makers, businesses, institutions and individuals are embracing new ways of thinking to prioritise our collective wellbeing and help build flourishing communities. The Scottish Football Association (SFA) commissioned this report to inform policy-makers about the value of football and assist them with its potential contribution to policies aimed at building a Wellbeing Economy. Football has long been at the heart of Scotland's communities. Our "national game" has a unique reach. It is played and watched by children, young people and adults across Scotland, in the streets, in parks, in halls, on pitches and in stadiums. It is a sport that everyone should be able to get involved in when provision is tailored. Teams can comprise players of different ages, genders, physical ability and levels of performance. Its hinterland of volunteers, coaches, referees and spectators make football clubs a significant part of their local communities. The broad appeal and reach of football gives it the potential to achieve a broad set of social and economic policy goals spanning a range of government priorities. Football's popularity provides clubs with huge power to help the most marginalised groups in our society.

Taking part in sport contributes to people's ability to lead long and healthy lives, extending life expectancy and reducing the likelihood of several major non-communicable diseases, such as hypertension, diabetes and heart disease. With its combination of running, sprinting, walking and kicking, football has been associated with a range of physical health benefits and enhanced cognitive function in children. Football can increase people's mood and self-esteem and it has been found to help people diagnosed with mental health disorders such as anxiety and schizophrenia.

Football can be a tool to bring people together and create a sense of connection within communities. Community football clubs are an integral part of their local areas and many of them run programmes aimed at supporting their surrounding communities, for example running foodbanks and outreach programmes to tackle social isolation or target marginalised groups.

For children and young people, football can provide a safe, neutral environment in which to play together, boost self-confidence, develop teamwork skills and make new friends.

Football positively contributes to Scotland's economy, not only through direct impacts like job creation, but also through its social benefits, for example, crime reduction, improved educational and health outcomes. Community football clubs often offer crucial economic support to their local communities through their charitable work.

Football has a crucial role to play in tackling climate change both through innovative practices within the sport and through its power to raise awareness about current environmental challenges. Football clubs and fans typically engage in a number of activities which can strain environmental resources, for example, using substantial volumes of water to maintain the surface quality of pitches, using high energy floodlights and generating significant amounts of carbon emissions in travelling to matches and training. The SFA and Scottish Professional Football League are committed to creating a more sustainable national game, and community football clubs are increasingly adopting practices to reduce the amount of resources they use and improve their environmental footprint.

While football undoubtedly provides significant health, social and economic benefits, these benefits are often unequally distributed amongst the population depending on factors like socio-economic status, age and gender. And football is associated with negative phenomena which require urgent attention, such as racism (in all its forms), alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and extreme economic inequalities amongst clubs. These issues require understanding and attending to their root causes, some of which arguably lie beyond football itself. Undeniably, football can do more to address them, but it can also act as a mirror for the wider inequalities in our society.

Specific steps to realise the potential of football could include:

- Free football and sports provision for all children and young people under the age of 18. Free provision could be supported by local authorities through funding community clubs based on the usage of their facilities.
- Increased public and private investment for the establishment of free 'quality' football facilities (especially for girls & women and disabled people) and social spaces for all communities. The financial support would also allow grassroots football clubs to organise further groups for girls and women, older players, disabled people, participants from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and the wider community.
- Conducting an infrastructure audit across the country including the location, usage and state of facilities of football pitches that will help identify potential needs for further resources.
- Improved public transport connectivity, especially in rural areas, and further public and private investment to support community football clubs enhance accessibility for all and reduce their environmental impact, such as through the use of renewable energy and sustainable practices.
- Football and sports to become part of the school curriculum throughout primary and secondary education in order for more children to have access regardless of their gender, socio-economic status, physical ability or sexual orientation. Through educational programmes, social issues like racism in all its forms, such as sectarianism could also be addressed.
- Implementing policies that will increase income equality and secure more equal and just access to football for all members of the community, such as pay ratios and paying the real Living Wage.
- A sports4development philosophy to be embedded in coach education so that coaches are rewarded for lifelong participation outcomes as opposed to winning and developing talent.
- Prescribing football clubs and sports programmes for social and health outcomes, such as building healthy lifestyles and contributing to the Keep the Promise implementation plan for care experienced children, young people and their families.
- Utilising technology for more efficient reach, data capturing and analysis.
- Forming a strategic partnership between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Football Association to assist delivering government outcomes, collectively implement the recommendations above, and explore how government budgeting could be redirected in order to improve access and participation for all.

Football can be used as a vehicle for a fairer and more sustainable economic system. By implementing some of the recommendations suggested above, the benefits of football will be distributed more equally across society. The collaboration between government departments, experts, organisations, and private investors would be essential to achieve the Scottish Government's goals as set out across the various portfolios and transition to a Wellbeing Economy that provides all of us with what we need to thrive on a healthy planet. At the same time, a reformed economic system will allow a more just allocation of resources in the first place which will allow people and communities to thrive.



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Special thanks to Dr Amy Isham, Research Fellow at the University of Surrey; Emma Lamont, Lecturer at the University of Dundee; Fiona McIntyre, Head of Girls' and Women's Football at the SFA and Interim Managing Director of the Scottish Women's Premier League; Mel Young MBE, Chairman of **sportscotland** and President of the Homeless World Cup; Liam McGroarty, Strategic Development Manager at UEFA who gave their time and valuable input. The report does not necessarily reflect their views and any mistakes are entirely due to an error on the author's part.

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INTRODUCTION

People across Scotland are hungry for a new type of economy that meets the needs of people and planet.^{1 2 3} The economy we have today was designed to meet a long-outdated logic, that focussing on growing the amount of goods and services we produce will automatically lead to prosperity for all. In a Wellbeing Economy we would ask first, what does each and every one of us need to thrive within a healthy natural environment? This core purpose would drive the design of our economy and institutions, the policies we prioritise and the businesses and industries we nurture.

There is an increasing appetite for change in the corridors of power and boardrooms of business. But what role does sport play in the transition to a Wellbeing Economy and how can we recognise and enhance its contribution to our collective wellbeing? The benefits of sport for our health, society and economy are recognised in policy frameworks such as the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework⁴ and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.⁵ This report brings the lens of economic system change to these efforts and asks whether Scotland is making the most of the potential of sport to enable the transition to a Wellbeing Economy.

Football has long been at the heart of Scotland's communities - it is the national game. In recent years, its contribution to our collective wellbeing has been increasingly documented and appreciated. Football can improve our physical and mental health, foster social inclusions and community ties, increase self-esteem, tackle social isolation and loneliness and support people dealing with alcohol and drug misuse.⁶ With its focus on people it can enable communities to thrive and enhance collective wellbeing; it thus has the potential to embody the sort of activities and spaces we need more of in Scotland.

This report presents the findings of a small-scale research project that explored the role of football in creating a positive impact on people and communities. It focuses on the health, social, environmental, and economic outcomes associated with football in order to deepen our understanding and advance the conversation in Scotland around how football could be used to prevent or alleviate issues such as poor physical and mental health. It concludes by identifying areas to go further: highlighting the issues where football risks reinforcing some of the characteristics of the current economic model and hinders progress to a Wellbeing Economy - such as income inequality in professional football, the level of inclusion and the unequal access to participation according to people's socio-economic characteristics. Action on these issues would be pivotal in transitioning to a Wellbeing Economy where we all have what we need to thrive in a healthy environment.

1 <https://www.citizensassembly.scot/sites/default/files/inline-files/Weekend%203%20-%20Outputs%2010%20-%20Canvasses%20for%20publication%20-%20Final%20Copy%20-%2030%20January%202020%20-%20C10.pdf>

2 <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/293743/rr-humankind-index-second-results-100613-en.pdf;jsessionid=548C57902C761A7D3C52C980547D1C33?sequence=1>

3 https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S5_Local_Gov/Inquiries/Page_19_-_Carnegie_UK_Trust_and_Oxfam_Scotland_report.pdf

4 The Active Scotland Outcomes Framework sets out Scotland's vision and goals to support and encourage people in Scotland to be more physically active. The associated Delivery Plan can be found here <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2018/07/active-scotland-delivery-plan/documents/00537494-pdf/00537494-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00537494.pdf>

5 The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. The Global Goals can be found at <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

6 <https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/football-development/value-of-football/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1647362452913883&usg=AOvVaw2KI1MdNES9Vnelk7ruFctL>

WHY WE NEED A WELLBEING ECONOMY

Societies around the world are facing unprecedented social, economic and environmental challenges, and high levels of insecurity, despair and alienation, primarily driven by our current economic system, which prioritises economic growth above human wellbeing. As a result, countries are grappling with the need to cope with the profound impacts of widening inequalities and climate change. Governments respond with (often inadequate), reactive measures that fail to attend to the root causes of these problems. In order to address the drivers of harm, it is imperative that we reprogramme our economy so that it delivers social justice on a healthy planet.

A Wellbeing Economy starts with the idea that the economy should serve people and communities, first and foremost. It looks at enabling contexts that allow flourishing for all and harmony with nature. It asks what sort of economic activity is needed and for whom? By reorienting goals and expectations for society, businesses and politics, a Wellbeing Economy will deliver collective wellbeing, recognising that the economy is embedded in society and nature. Instead of responding with expensive interventions to fix the damage caused by a growth-focused economy,⁷ a Wellbeing Economy would prevent harm in the first place. It would focus on strategies expressly designed to tackle the root causes of problems like poverty and deliver on people's core needs for dignity, nature, fairness, connection and participation in their communities.

All over Scotland, policymakers, businesses, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and individuals are embracing new ways of thinking to put people and planet first and help build flourishing communities. Businesses are adopting alternative models like employee ownership and putting social and environmental goals at the heart of their mission.⁸

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This research project by WEAll Scotland was commissioned by the SFA to inform policy makers about the value of sports, and football in particular, and assist them with its potential contribution to policies aimed at building a Wellbeing Economy.

The project was based primarily on desktop research with complementary in-depth interviews with stakeholders from academia and key supporting agencies in Scotland. It provides an overview of the role football plays in collective wellbeing, and provides policy makers with a broader sense of the benefit of football and the diverse ways we can collectively achieve a Wellbeing Economy in Scotland.

As shown below the relationship between sports and health and social impacts is complex due to issues of reverse causality and that certain benefits may not be directly and solely attributable to football (as other socio-economic characteristics and experiences associated at the individual level may have a strong effect on football participants and their surrounding community). Yet, there is clear evidence of a strong link between sports (and football, in particular), with certain health, social and economic benefits.

The report also presents issues that football has been associated with such as racism (in all its forms), alcohol misuse and domestic abuse, pay gaps and unequal access to sports. It is acknowledged that other areas like sectarianism and gambling have been linked to football and are not analysed in the following sections. This is because sectarianism is situated within cultural and historical connections of communities rather than related to football itself, and it is, therefore, beyond the scope of this report. Similarly, gambling is linked to socio-economic factors that require extensive analysis which is outside the realm of this project.

7 https://weall.org/wp-content/uploads/FailureDemand_FinalReport_September2021.pdf

8 For instance, businesses foster their area's local identity, support community engagement and redefine success by prioritising people and the environment, instead of growth as the ultimate goal. Further information can be found at <https://weall.org/wp-content/uploads/Tapping-into-a-Wellbeing-Economy.pdf> and <https://weall.org/wp-content/uploads/Business-and-a-Wellbeing-Economy-WEAll-Scotland-Report-1.pdf>

SPORT IN POLICY FRAMEWORKS

The Scottish Government, a founding member of the Wellbeing Economy Governments Partnership (WEGo),⁹ has committed to transitioning Scotland into “a Wellbeing Economy, thriving across economic, social and environmental dimensions”.¹⁰

This intention to move towards a Wellbeing Economy is mirrored in various frameworks aiming to “create a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish”, as stated in the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework (NPF).¹¹ In order to achieve this, several outcomes have been set, like the goal that everyone should live a healthy and active life. The NPF aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, for example, in relation to good health and wellbeing, gender equality and reduced inequalities. The achievement of these goals will be enhanced by sports and physical activity and people’s rights to have access regardless of where they come from.¹²

Alongside the National Performance Framework, the Scottish Government has also published the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework¹³ which sets out a vision of enabling people in Scotland to be more physically active. The associated Delivery Plan, which also aligns with the World Health Organisation’s Global Action Plan,¹⁴ demonstrates Scotland’s commitment to work across multiple systems and settings. For example, working across planning, education, communities and sport should enable Scotland to fulfil the goal of becoming a more active country.

Government, businesses, civic society and communities need to work together to deliver this vision, and in this context sport has a major contribution to make. Sport and football, in particular, can contribute to achieving the Government’s vision to build a Wellbeing Economy and set outcomes to support physical activity. The core characteristics of a Wellbeing Economy resonate with the stated mission and values of the Scottish Football Association (SFA). The SFA’s mission is “there are no barriers to participate and access football in Scotland” and has publicly committed to promote and cultivate a positive and inclusive team and ethic; leading with purpose by committing to fair play; respecting each other, acknowledging that diversity brings success; lifting barriers in order to allow participation and access to all.¹⁵

The SFA’s mission is strongly aligned with the Scottish Government’s ambitions and outcomes, as set out above. By enhancing their working relationship through the establishment of a strategic partnership, access and participation in football would be improved and the associated health and socio-economic benefits would be equally enjoyed by all communities.

9 The Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership (WEGo) is a collaboration of national and regional governments promoting sharing of expertise and transferrable policy practices. The aims are to deepen their understanding and advance their shared ambition of building wellbeing economies WEGo, which currently comprises Scotland, New Zealand, Iceland, Wales, Finland and Canada, is founded on the recognition that ‘development’ in the 21st century entails delivering human and ecological wellbeing. <https://weall.org/wego>

10 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-national-strategy-economic-transformation/>

11 <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

12 Ibid.

13 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/active-scotland-delivery-plan/pages/5/>

14 <https://www.who.int/initiatives/sdg3-global-action-plan>

15 <https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/scottish-fa/organisation/working-at-the-scottish-fa/our-strategy-values/>



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FOOTBALL IN SCOTLAND

Football is the most popular sport in the world with an estimated number of 265 million people playing and 3.5 billion considering themselves football fans, according to FIFA.^{16 17} In Scotland, football has a rich history of 600 years and is enjoyed by diverse groups across Scottish society. Football is played by children, young people and adults across Scotland, in the streets, in parks, in halls, on pitches and stadiums. As Mel Young MBE, Chair of **Sportscotland**¹⁸ and President of the Homeless World Cup,¹⁹ stated "Football is a very simple, inexpensive and very impactful sport. It is an international language, which people understand. All you need is a ball."

According to the Scottish Football Association²⁰:

- Scotland has 630,000 'casual football players',²¹ and 147,555 registered players.²²
- Approximately nine in ten players are male and one in ten are female.²³
- 41% of people aged 16 or under play football.
- The sport is followed by approximately one third of the population (1.8 million adults).
- 2,500 Scottish clubs exist across the country, ranging from small ones led by volunteers to the large multi-million-pound businesses of the Scottish Premier League.

Football is a sport that everyone should be able to get involved in. Teams can be constructed with players of different ages, genders, physical ability or levels of performance. At the same time, a surrounding hinterland is built with volunteers, coaches, referees and spectators making football clubs a significant part of the local community with impacts both on and off the pitch. The diversity of groups that engage with football and the consequent health, social, environmental and economic outcomes is discussed in the following sections.

16 <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/55621f9fdc8ea7b4/original/mzid0qmguixkcmruvema-pdf.pdf>

17 <https://www.allianz.com/en/about-us/sports-culture/football/allianz-football.html>

18 <https://sportscotland.org.uk/>

19 <https://homelessworldcup.org/>

20 <https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/media/4961/sfa-uefa-grow-pp-screens-mar19-web.pdf>

21 Casual players are the ones who play informally such as with friends.

22 Registered players are those who train and play in football clubs.

23 To be specific 89% of players are male, and 11% are female. Data on non-binary players were not available on the referenced report.

HOW SPORT CAN KICK OFF A WELLBEING ECONOMY

Football is a great means to provide health, social, environmental and economic benefits to communities. Due to its broad appeal to participants across the country and especially to underrepresented groups,²⁴ like homeless people and refugees, football can play a key part in a range of government portfolios from physical and mental health and economy to social justice, equalities and environment.

FOOTBALL AND PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Football can be used both as part of the process of recovery from physical and mental ill health and as part of early intervention and prevention strategies for issues such as obesity or anxiety that could create a system of support to all individuals.

Physical activity is a significant determinant of health for children and adults.^{25 26} According to the World Health Organisation, physical inactivity can have profound health implications and can be a leading cause of disease and disability across the world.²⁷ Recent studies have demonstrated that a lack of physical activity is the fourth leading risk factor for mortality, as people who do not get enough physical activity have a higher risk compared to those who engage in moderate-intensity activity a few times a week.^{28 29}

It has been estimated that each year, at least 3.9 million premature deaths are averted due to physical activity on a global scale.^{30 31} This is because participation in sports contributes to people's ability to lead long and healthy lives, extending life expectancy and reducing the likelihood of several major non-communicable diseases, such as hypertension, diabetes and heart disease.³²

Football, in particular, has significant health impacts. As Professor Peter Krstrup stated "football is a broad-spectrum medicine, a polypill against lifestyle diseases",³³ due to its benefits on physical and mental health.

24 <https://openpublichealthjournal.com/VOLUME/10/PAGE/276/FULLTEXT/>
25 <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>
26 <https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/43/1/1>
27 <https://www.who.int/news/item/04-04-2002-physical-inactivity-a-leading-cause-of-disease-and-disability-warns-who>
28 <https://www.who.int/data/gho/indicator-metadata-registry/imr-details/3416>
30 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(20\)30211-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(20)30211-4/fulltext)
31 <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/06/200617194510.htm>
32 <https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/44/8/546>
33 <https://www.news-medical.net/news/20191212/New-book-provides-extensive-research-into-health-effects-of-football.aspx>

Participating in football in particular is associated the following impacts on physical health:

- The combination of running, walking, sprinting and kicking can bring increased stamina, improved cardiovascular health, reduced body fat, improved muscle strength and tone, increased bone strength and improved coordination.³⁴
- Football, and physical activity in general, is beneficial for cognitive function and academic achievement. It enhances response times, information processing, inhibitory control and working memory tasks in high-fit children and adolescents.³⁵
- Football fitness training (specifically an intense exercise programme for women treated for breast cancer) was found to improve self-reported health-related limitations on daily activities after six months.³⁶ When this form of exercise is continued for one year, it may enhance leg muscle strength and postural balance in women treated for early-stage breast cancer.³⁷
- Recreational football had a positive effect on bone formation by improving bone mineral density in elderly men.³⁸

There is also a strong link between sports and mental health. According to psychological research, sports and physical activity could support a flow experience (a psychological state that is associated with higher levels of personal wellbeing, such as life satisfaction, more self-esteem, and a greater sense of fulfillment, through involvement in challenging activities that are often less environmentally costly).³⁹

Football, in particular, has the power to increase self-esteem⁴⁰ and also help people diagnosed with severe mental health issues. Emma Lamont, lecturer at the University of Dundee, advised that football has been used as part of therapeutic activities for people diagnosed with severe mental health issues. As she explained for a service user:

"When [the service user] was playing football, he was not a person with schizophrenia. He was just a great football player. And that was one very obvious transformation of how he saw himself and others saw him too. Football can build identity and break down stigma".

In general, football has been associated with good mental health as:

- Projects to increase people's exercise levels through football have proven to be effective for participants with anxiety and schizophrenia and have improved people's general mood.⁴¹ As seen in the example above, participants can see themselves beyond their mental health issues and provide support to peers with similar lived experiences.
- As a team sport, football offers a positive impact on adolescent mental health.⁴² It allows young people to feel connected with others and helps those who might deal with isolation.
- Participants in a walking football activity (for senior players) in Scotland reported relational, personal, and physical recovery-related benefits.⁴³

34 <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/keeping-active/activities/football>

35 <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-020-09484-w>

36 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0033062020301547>

37 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33794005/>

38 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24903207/>

39 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2542519621002862>

40 <https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/research/an-evaluation-of-the-effectiveness-and-cost-effectiveness-of-the-coping-through-football-programme-in-tackling-physical-and-mental-health/>

42 <https://doi.org/10.1177/000992280003900304>

43 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhpa.2017.03.003>



THE SOCIAL VALUE OF COMMUNITY FOOTBALL CLUBS

Sport is increasingly recognised as a means for promoting social inclusion.⁴⁴ Football, in particular, is a tool that brings people together, fosters social interaction and creates a sense of connection within the local community. Clubs create networks that extend beyond participants themselves, for instance, amongst groups of parents or supporters of a local team or volunteers who help run an activity related to the club.³⁴⁵ Evidence shows that at a community level, football (and sport in general), has been used as a mechanism to promote a socially cohesive society, encourage strong community bonds, and tackle loneliness and social isolation.^{46 47 48 49} This is significant, especially in areas with people from diverse religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, as it fosters communication skills to engage and converse across cultural and socio-economic diversity.^{50 51}

"I didn't know anybody when I arrived in Glasgow, so football was very important. It got me into the community and I've made so many friends through it. Football is a way of life, a language. It doesn't matter where you're from, what your origin is. You step onto the pitch and you lose everything else. You forget it all." Abdul, player at United Glasgow Football Club⁵²

44 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13606710601056422>

45 <http://www.social-capital.net/docs/file/sport%20and%20social%20capital.pdf>

46 <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-10-587>

47 Atherley, K., 2006. Sport and Community Cohesion in the 21st Century: Understanding linkages between sport, social capital and the community. Department of Sport and Recreation Western Australia, University of Western Australia.

48 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0957926507069456>

49 <http://docs.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/fulltext/crusport.pdf>

50 https://file.scirp.org/Html/4-6902330_83368.htm

51 <https://openpublichealthjournal.com/VOLUME/10/PAGE/276/FULLTEXT/>

52 Quoted in <https://unitedglasgowfc.org.uk/>

Community football clubs are an integral part of their local areas and many of them run programmes aimed at supporting their surrounding communities. Examples include initiatives such as foodbanks, educational programmes, and activities that target improved employability, health and inclusion. For instance, Dundee Football Club has introduced the Football Memories programme, which is delivered in partnership with Alzheimer Scotland, giving older people the opportunity to meet and reminisce about football.⁵³ Motherwell Football Club provides regular support to local foodbanks, and Ayr United Football Academy, linked to Ayr United Football Club, offers training, particularly in skills that support participants to obtain paid employment.⁵⁴ Another example is St Mirren Football Club which runs a programme for adults who are disconnected from society and experiencing mental health issues associated with loneliness.⁵⁵

For children and young people, football boosts self-confidence, personal development and teamwork skills. Several assessments have found that community sports activities, such as football, allow young people to communicate and play together in a safe, neutral environment.⁵⁶ They bring together adolescents from different backgrounds who might not interact otherwise. A similar benefit was also found amongst children and young people in residential care. Children in residential care have often experienced hardship and the separation from their birth family can cause a sense of disconnection.⁵⁷ Through football and its team environment they can feel they belong, make new friendships, and accomplish their goals, which are vital for all children.⁵⁸

Football can reach groups regardless of their age, physical ability, gender and socio-economic background. For instance, football teams are formed for different age groups, such as through walking football⁵⁹ for senior players and programmes specifically for children and young people.⁶⁰ Disabled people are supported via activities such as para-football.⁶¹ There are also dedicated football initiatives for girls and women.⁶²

"If you're fit or not, Scottish or not, Messi or messy, all are welcome at our club. We have players of all genders, sexual orientation, religions, ethnicities, abilities, wealth and immigration statuses. WE ARE UNITED!"
Glasgow United Football Club⁶³

Girls' and women's football, especially, has seen an impressive growth in recent years, with Scotland's women's national football team playing in the FIFA World Cup in 2019. Participation in girls' and women's games has almost doubled in the last five years⁶⁴ providing positive female role models to young children and showcasing that football is an option for girls as well, whether it is for recreation or as a professional career. People from the most difficult of socio-economic circumstances - those experiencing homelessness - are also included in football, most famously via the Homeless World Cup.

According to a survey conducted by the Homeless World Cup Foundation,⁶⁵ 83% of participants stated that they improved their social relations with family and friends and 71% continue to play the sport. Such initiatives challenge how homelessness is perceived: it elevates the humanity of those experiencing homelessness.⁶⁶

A similar example is the Refugee World Cup Football Tournament, an annual celebration of all communities showcasing their cultures through the international language of football. In addition to providing an inclusive space, the event uses the power of this multicultural sport to raise awareness of gender inequality and the campaign to eliminate violence against women and children.⁶⁷

53 <https://dfccommunitytrust.org.uk/projects/>

54 <https://www.aufa.org.uk/>

55 <https://smfcfoundation.co.uk/about-us/>

56 <https://uefafoundation.org/action/social-cohesion-through-football-in-lebanon/>

57 Steckley, L, Crimmens, D (ed.) & Milligan, I (ed.) 2005, Just a game? The therapeutic potential of football. in Facing Forward : Residential Child Care in the 21st Century. Lyme Regis, pp. 137-147.

58 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22533784/>

59 <https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/football-development/participation/adult-18-yearsplus-football/walking-football/>

60 <https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/football-development/participation/childrens-youth-football/cashback-for-communities/>

61 <https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/football-development/participation/para-football/>

62 <https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/football-development/participation/girls-womens-football/>

63 <https://unitedglasgowfc.org.uk/our-story>

64 <https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/news/fiona-mcintyre-appointed-head-of-girls-and-women-s-football/>

65 <https://homelessworldcup.org/>

66 Ibid.

67 <https://www.nomore.org.au/events/2022-refugee-world-cup>

FOOTBALL AND THE PLANET

Football has a crucial role to play in tackling climate change both through innovative practices within the industry and through its power to raise awareness about current environmental challenges.⁶⁸ Community football clubs, recognising their negative environmental impacts, are adopting practices to reduce the amount of resources they use and improve their ecological footprint.

Football clubs and fans typically engage in a number of activities which can strain environmental resources. For example, using substantial volumes of water to maintain the surface quality of pitches, using high energy floodlights, generating significant amounts of carbon emissions in travelling to matches and training (especially in areas with poor public transport connectivity), and through the supply chains of clubs' catering and merchandising outlets and the related carbon emissions resulting from goods or services they purchase, like electricity and gas.⁶⁹

To address these environmental issues, the Scottish FA and Scottish Professional Football League are committed to playing their part in creating a more sustainable national game, and several community football clubs implement practices that improve their environmental performance.⁷⁰

For instance, Motherwell Football Club Community Trust launched the "Greener Well" project to use the power of football to promote lower carbon lifestyle choices across Lanarkshire.⁷¹ The programme included activities such as a 'Kit Bank', a sports kit and footwear recycling initiative and a lower carbon travel programme. Another example can be found in Cumnock Juniors Football Club which established and manages a food larder to support the community of Cumnock.⁷² Hibernian Football Club buys 100% renewable electricity, is exploring the option to generate its own renewable energy, and has committed to build renewable energy sources into future development plans.⁷³

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF FOOTBALL PARTICIPATION

Apart from the benefits on a health and social level, participation in community football clubs has a significant economic impact. According to a recent European study commissioned by UEFA in conjunction with the Scottish Football Association, grassroots football alone⁷⁴ delivers more than £1 billion of positive social value to Scottish economy.⁷⁵ The calculation includes factors such as the direct contribution to the economy through job creation, the economic impact of social benefits through crime reduction and improved education, and the healthcare savings from people's participation in football.⁷⁶

As part of UEFA's GROW programme,⁷⁷ Scotland was one of the first countries across Europe to undertake a social return on investment assessment.⁷⁸ The GROW programme is "[creating] a step-change in grassroots funding by providing unique and tangible evidence that investing in mass participation has a significant impact in terms of economic value, social and health benefits".

68 <https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/media/5953/scottish-fa-enviro-sustainability-in-scottish-football.pdf>

69 https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/348661/the-environmental-impacts-of-sport-the-case-of-football.pdf

70 <https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/news/scottish-football-outlines-sustainability-commitment-as-cop26-climate-summit-takes-place-in-glasgow/>

71 <https://www.efdn.org/blog/project/greener-well-motherwell-fc/>

72 <https://www.neighbourly.com/project/5efb5f6ac7ac8926d457c279>

73 <https://sustainabilityreport.com/2020/02/24/hibernian-fc-declares-itself-the-greenest-club-in-scotland/>

74 Grassroots football is described as all football that is non-professional and non-elite. Examples include children's football, school or youth football, amateur football, football for disabled players, and football for veterans. More information can be found at

<https://www.uefa.com/insideuefa/football-development/news/01ee-0f861b409205-58c13641167c-1000--uefa-s-grassroots-programme/>

75 <https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/news/playing-football-delivers-125bn-benefit-to-scotland-according-to-new-uefa-study/>

76 To be more specific the calculation includes the direct contribution to the economy through job creation, facility developments and revenue generated by direct participant spending on playing football; the economic impact of social benefits through crime reduction, improved education, volunteering and the estimated value of reducing the risk youth not being in employment, education or training; the healthcare savings from football participation based on the various physical and mental health cases that are prevented.

77 <https://www.uefa.com/insideuefa/football-development/news/0264-10fe1ac0497c-f4e49c301d3e-1000--explainer-football-s-social-value/>

78 A tool to understand the value of football participation at a social level. <https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/football-development/value-of-football/>

According to the "Measuring the value of football participation in Scotland" report:⁷⁹

- Football contributes £200 million to the economy, based on its direct contribution to the economy; £300 million worth of social benefits and £700 million worth of health benefits.
- Participation in football is a major contributor to preventative healthcare savings with around £40 million of savings on mental health, calculated at approximately 5,000 cases of mental ill-health prevented, almost £25 million in the treatment of cardiovascular disease and £10 million in preventing the onset of type-2 diabetes.⁸⁰
- Football creates around 40,000 jobs based on employment linked directly to current football participation. This comprises 36,000 jobs in the sports industry based on current employees, and 4,000 jobs through local construction industry investment.
- The economic value of football facilities is estimated to be £57.5 million based on the value of 627 artificial pitches through £18.7 million gross value added (GVA) contribution⁸¹ of the construction sector in Scotland and £38.6 million through direct value of pitch construction and hires.
- The impact of football participation on crime reduction is estimated to be around £236k based on the risk and cost of youth convictions and football's ability to reduce the possibilities of youth becoming involved in crime and violence. Indeed, according to the United Nations, sport offers an essential opportunity for building life skills of youth that allow them to deal better with challenges and eliminate their involvement in violence, crime or drug use.⁸²
- Football and physical activity, in general, can improve educational performance, which is calculated at around £12.9 million.⁸³

The economic impact of football participation extends beyond its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) and it focuses on its value in social terms. Although the social return on investment assessment does not provide further information on the quality of jobs or the impact on local economies - significant areas when thinking about a Wellbeing Economy - it showcases how football could be a vehicle for the flourishing of communities.

In addition, community football clubs offer crucial economic support to their local communities through their charitable work, such as donations or other fundraising initiatives like support to foodbanks. Due to football's popularity, clubs have huge power to help the most marginalised groups in our society.

As a spokesperson for Pollok FC, a fan-owned community club stated after appealing to fans to support local foodbanks:

"We believe that Pollok FC is more than just a football club, we are a part of our local community and part of that is doing our duty to help those in need within our community".⁸⁴

79 <https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/media/4961/sfa-uefa-grow-pp-screens-mar19-web.pdf>

80 These figures were calculated based on the number of registered players, the risk of having each of the above-mentioned health issue and the cost of treatment for each case. Therefore, when a case is prevented this can be measured as healthcare saving.

81 GVA (gross value added) is the value generated by any unit engaged in the production of goods and services.

82 <https://www.unodc.org/dohadeclaration/en/topics/crime-prevention-through-sports.html>

83 The assessment of the value of football's contribution to improved education is based on OECD calculation. The result was then modelled using the impact of education on the country's GDP. For further information, please see

<https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/media/4961/sfa-uefa-grow-pp-screens-mar19-web.pdf>

84 <https://news.stv.tv/west-central/scottish-football-club-appeals-to-fans-to-help-support-local-foodbanks>

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Football undoubtedly provides significant health, social and economic benefits, as the evidence above highlights. Yet, such benefits are often unequally distributed amongst communities depending on factors like socio-economic status, age and gender. At the same time, despite its significant positive impacts, football is associated with negative aspects, such as racism, alcohol abuse and domestic violence, and extreme economic inequalities amongst clubs that require urgent action. Some of these are highlighted in this section.

Socio-economic status significantly influences people's ability to participate in sport.⁸⁵ At all ages, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to participate in organised sports activities.⁸⁶ A family's economic resources and young people's perceptions of their families financial situation have been found to be the most crucial factor in determining whether children and young people take part in sport.⁸⁷ Hence, many of the potential benefits of sports are not evenly distributed, with the socio-economic position being inversely associated with outcomes related to health and participation.^{88,89} Another influencing factor of participation is age. Studies have shown that rates of participation in organised sports decrease with age.⁹⁰

The lack of pay parity in professional football and sports, in general, is also an issue to be addressed. In the majority of sports, women tend to receive significantly lower pay compared to their male counterparts, despite putting in the same amount of work.⁹¹ In addition, some women athletes report that they have often been treated as amateurs, in spite of complying with professional expectations and commitments.⁹² As a result, a lot of female athletes take on parallel full-time jobs to top up their income.⁹³ Therefore, being a professional athlete could be a less accessible option for a woman. Although significant progress has been observed in making the girls' and women's football more professional by changing the competition structures, attracting investment, bringing visibility to the game and creating role models, challenges remain.⁹⁴

- 85 <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-015-1796-0>
- 86 <https://www.news-medical.net/news/20210201/Students-from-lower-socio-economic-groups-are-less-likely-to-participate-in-sports.aspx>
- 87 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1012690218764626>
- 88 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8297079/>
- 89 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z8gvcwx/revision/5>
- 90 <https://eurapa.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1007/s11556-011-0087-8>
- 91 <https://www.mgmt.ucl.ac.uk/news/gender-equality-sports-%E2%80%93-why-gender-equal-pay-so-hard-achieve-sport>
- 92 <https://theconversation.com/women-in-sport-are-winning-the-fight-for-equal-pay-slowly-167943>
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/sport/football/womens-football/3962580/fiona-mcintyre-swpls-move-to-spfl-biggest-change-in-womens-game/>



Economic inequality also exists amongst football clubs themselves, with some having excess revenues while others might struggle financially. According to a survey, the financial gap between the largest and smallest clubs in Scotland's top league was widening.⁹⁵ Similarly, there is a considerable difference between the average annual wage amongst players of the Scottish Premier League, with some clubs offering high wages compared to others.⁹⁶

At the same time, racism in all its forms (from verbal intimidation to offensive behaviour) in football has been rising sharply over the last few years across the UK.⁹⁷ A recent survey revealed that 73% of ethnically diverse fans in Britain fear experiencing racism in stadiums.⁹⁸ As Marvin Bartley, Livingston Assistant Manager and Equality Advisor for the SFA, stated "It doesn't surprise me. We've seen it on social media and now it's creeping into football stadiums and back into society".⁹⁹ Similarly, sectarianism remains a persistent problem in Scotland, leading to abuse, anger, aggression and violence towards others.¹⁰⁰ However, it is acknowledged that sectarianism is not related to football itself, but it is rather a social issue linked to cultural and historical connections of communities.

Domestic abuse incidents have also been associated with the aftermath of a football game, especially when excessive alcohol has been consumed.¹⁰¹ According to a report published by the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research, a correlation between football games and increased reports of domestic abuse has been observed.¹⁰² Yet, the same report highlights that it cannot be assumed that football causes domestic abuse. The link between domestic violence and football could be explained due to the association between particular forms of masculinity, violence, sexism, and alcohol consumption.¹⁰³

To address these issues, several changes are required, and further discussion is needed to identify the next steps and actions. In terms of the unequal distribution of football's various benefits, investment in grassroots football clubs and infrastructure and universal access to football throughout primary and secondary could help achieve desired outcomes. Securing resources for grassroots football clubs will allow them to create further opportunities for girls and women, older players, people from different socio-economic backgrounds and the wider community.

At the same time, investment in infrastructure, such as establishing more football pitches and better facilities for girls and disabled people, along with improved transport connectivity should increase participation. In addition, changes in the education curriculum to include sports, and football, in particular, will normalise participation regardless of children's gender, physical ability and socio-economic status.

95 <https://www.scotsman.com/sport/football/scottish-premiership-wealth-gap-continues-widen-1529042>

96 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/788981/average-scottish-premiership-salary-by-team/>

97 <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/jan/30/football-related-racist-incidents-sharp-rise-police-kick-it-out>

98 <https://www.skysports.com/football/news/11661/12383739/racism-in-football-most-fans-worried-about-witnessing-players-receive-abuse-according-to-yougov-survey-for-sky-sports-news>

99 Ibid.

100 <https://www.pure.ed.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/25458071/00477619.pdf>

101 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/domestic-abuse-reports-in-scotland-soar-on-football-sundays-cggwmh3ln>

102 https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/188676984/Football_and_Domestic_Abuse_A_Literature_Review.pdf

103 Ibid.

Specific steps could include:

- Free football and sports provision for all children and young people under the age of 18. Free provision could be supported by local authorities through funding of community clubs based on the usage of their facilities.
- Increased public and private investment for the establishment of free 'quality' football facilities (especially for girls & women and disabled people) and social spaces for all communities. The financial support would also allow grassroots football clubs to organise further groups for girls and women, older players, disabled people, participants from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and the wider community.
- Conducting an infrastructure audit across the country including evaluating the location, usage and state of facilities of football pitches that will help identify potential needs for further resources.
- Improved public transport connectivity, especially in rural areas, and further public and private investment to support community football clubs enhance accessibility for all and reduce their environmental impact, such as through the use of renewable energy and sustainable practices.
- Football and sports to become part of the school curriculum throughout primary and secondary education in order for more children to have access regardless of their gender, socio-economic status, physical ability or sexual orientation. Through educational programmes, social issues like racism in all its forms, such as sectarianism could also be addressed.
- Implementing policies that will increase income equality and secure more equal and just access to football for all members of the community, such as pay ratios and paying the real Living Wage.¹⁰⁴
- A sports4development¹⁰⁵ philosophy to be embedded in coach education so that coaches are rewarded for lifelong participation outcomes as opposed to winning and developing talent.
- Prescribing football clubs and sports programmes for social and health outcomes that support various government objectives, such as building healthy lifestyles and contributing to the Keep the Promise implementation plan¹⁰⁶ for care experienced children, young people and their families.
- Utilising technology for more efficient reach, data capturing and analysis.
- Forming a strategic partnership between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Football Association to assist delivering government outcomes, collectively implement the recommendations above, and explore how government budgeting could be redirected in order to improve access and participation for all.

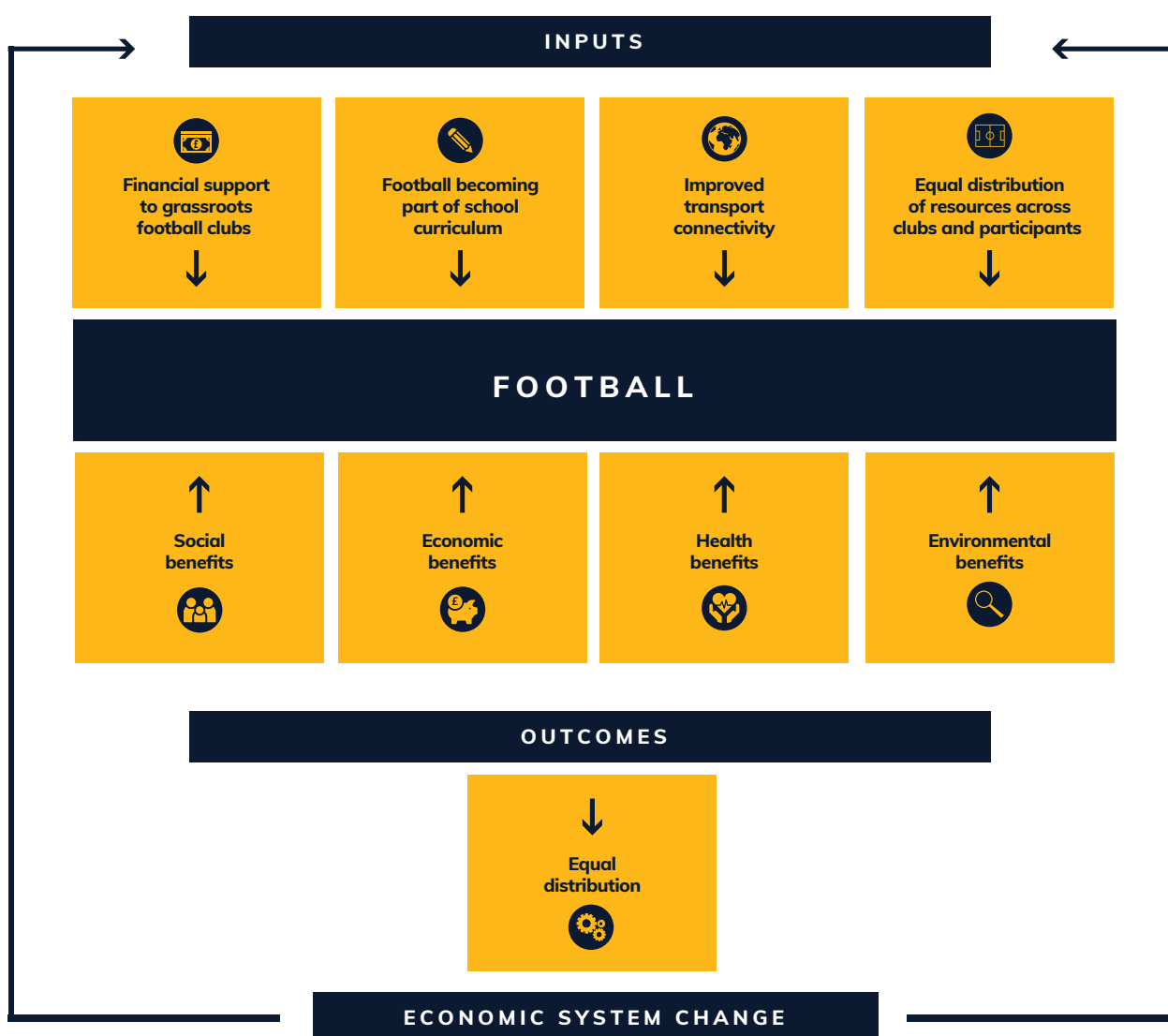
104 Real Living Wage is a UK wage rate based on living costs. It is paid voluntarily by employers and is independently-calculated based on what people need to get by. Real living wage differs from the National Living Wage and the National Minimum Wage, which are imposed by the UK government. Further information can be found on <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage>.

105 Sport for development (or sports4development) is an approach that uses sports to achieve outcomes, such as learning, health, empowerment and protection. Examples of sports for development can be found on <https://www.unicef-irc.org/research/sport-for-development>

106 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/keeping-promise-implementation-plan/pages/2/>

As the graph below illustrates by taking these steps, football can help our society to transition towards a Wellbeing Economy. At the same time, a redesigned economic model will allow these resources to be equally distributed in the first place which will lead to thriving communities.

Scotland could be a world leader in this space by integrating sport into a broad range of government portfolios, such as finance, education, transport and equalities, as depicted below. Sport could be designed to tackle some of the current societal challenges, as its power could be utilised in the development of social outcomes (rather than outputs) as the primary objectives (for instance, the socio-economic, health and environmental benefits presented in the previous sections).¹⁰⁷ Government departments, by collaborating with each other, alongside experts, organisations and private investors, could help meet the Government's ambition and targets, as set out in the National Performance Framework and the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework. Such a collaborative approach can be seen, for instance, in New Zealand's Sport Outcomes Framework, which contributes to broader Government's objectives by focusing on lifting people's physical levels.¹⁰⁸



Certain negative impacts associated with football, as presented in this section, require understanding and attending to their root causes, some of which arguably lie beyond football itself. For example, racism, alcohol and domestic abuse, pay gaps and unequal access to sports have their roots in the injustice of our current economic system. Undeniably, football can do more to address them, but it can also act as a mirror for these wider systemic drivers and the reality that reform of the current economic model and moves towards a Wellbeing Economy that underpins social justice is an urgent task that requires action from all parts of society.

¹⁰⁷ This approach is based on the concept of Social outcomes contracting, an innovative form of procuring social services based on outcomes. Further information can be found on <https://eiah.eib.org/about/initiative-social-outcomes-contracting>

¹⁰⁸ <https://sportnz.org.nz/resources/every-body-active-strategic-direction-2020-2032/>



CONCLUSION

Football can be used as a vehicle for a fairer and more sustainable economic system. With the necessary changes, such as reallocating financial resources to benefit grassroots football clubs, the inclusion of football provision for all children throughout primary and secondary education, an improved transport system, and policies to enhance justice and equality, the related benefits will be distributed more equally. By utilising its often unique power, football could tackle some of the current societal challenges, contribute to meeting targets across government portfolios and help develop social outcomes. To achieve this, the collaboration of government departments with experts, organisations and private investors would be essential to meet the Scottish Government's goals and transition to a Wellbeing Economy that provides all of us with what we need to thrive on a healthy planet. At the same time, a reformed economic system will allow a more just allocation of resources in the first place which will lead people and communities to thrive.



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