

[front page](#)

[news](#)

[back issues](#)

[comment](#)

[letters](#)

[advertise](#)

[subscribe](#)

[about us](#)

[contact us](#)

[back page](#)

Link me in, Scotty

One of the legacies of the Olympics has been a proliferation of schemes and initiatives with very little rationale beyond garnering headlines and getting ticks in the boxes marked 'participation'. Mick Owen joined a LinkedIn discussion group to find out where the Community Games fitted into the bigger picture.

In the good old days when the ISRM was in Melton Mowbray and Alan Smith occupied the corner office in ILAM House one of the major roles for the industry's institutes was facilitating regular meetings "out in the regions". Often sponsored by earnest chemical suppliers, these events were a chance for people who didn't really know each other to get together for a chinwag. These days its called networking and now, as then, while the ostensible reasons for gathering can be anything from a golf day to an updating session, the value of the event lies in the networking; the exchange, review and investigation of ideas, opinions and received wisdom.

Unfortunately, as petrol becomes more expensive, work time is held to be more precious and the profession we inhabit becomes ever more unglued, the number of such events has dwindled. However, the need to network has by no means diminished and the rise of internet-based discussion forums show just how much people still have to say.

One month ago a man with a mission needed to know what the Community Games are all about because his boss had asked him to "deliver them". He asked two simple questions of LinkedIn: were his fellow group members aware of the scheme and were they "clear about the way it will operate"? It soon became clear that clarity about the Community Games was at a premium and that, whether informed or not, there was a degree of ambivalence about the programme.

A respected academic in the leisure field asked the questions on the tips of many a colleagues' typing fingers: "Who is expected to instigate them and, bearing in mind they are supposed to be based on research into need and format, who is doing the organising?" The answer seems to be that funding has devolved through the Legacy Trust, the CSP Network and is now resting with individual county sports partnerships (CSP) but that the research on need and format is not a priority.

A CSP director offered the delightful idea that the scheme could be used to "bring a wee bit of 2012 gold dust to the local celebrations" of other events "such as Have a Field Day being promoted by Fields in Trust, Neighbourhood Sports Festivals being promoted by Streetgames as well as 2012 and Diamond Jubilee events", which a fellow forum member listed and confirmed were "already being planned".

At this point in the discussion more heat than light was being produced and a gentle reminder that the funding had come from the Cabinet Office, thus exonerating Sport England from accusations of wasting money, merely aggravated those in the thread who felt that the whole programme was little "more than an exercise in massaging legacy participation figures".

If the purpose of the funding was an issue then so too was the actual destination of the cash with a CSP board member reporting that his CSP will be using the money "to appoint an officer to support the events primarily already planned". In other words, a completely redundant post will be created. He went on: "I had reservations about this and still do to a degree as my immediate thought was to see a little bit extra given to well deserving locally planned events." A view shared by more than one contributor and probably one that many people on the ground would echo.

Inevitably the discussion petered out after about three weeks and the only people to see it will have been members of the group but the final word should

www.theleisurereview.co.uk

A gentle reminder that the funding had come from the Cabinet Office, thus exonerating Sport England from accusations of wasting money, merely aggravated those in the thread who felt that the whole programme was little "more than an exercise in massaging legacy participation figures"

The Leisure Review is supported by:



The Leisure Review is written, designed and published by:

tlr.comms
TLR Communications Limited

be left to the academic: "A very interesting discussion of a live issue – somebody somewhere will eventually ask, what was the result of investing in Community Games? Will we be able to say it made a difference? I hope that the 'dash for cash' helps communities get the Games 'gold dust' as John has described it, but I think the hard thing for professionals is to let go, knowing that its not going to necessarily get to the areas that need it most, but the ones who are already doing something."

The Leisure Review, May 2012

© Copyright of all material on this site is retained by *The Leisure Review* or the individual contributors where stated. Contact *The Leisure Review* for details.