

PRESS RELEASE:
Scottish Governing Body
for Sport CEO/COO Forum response to Budget
announcement

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Sports governing bodies welcome Government funding boost and focus on ‘Summer of Sport’

- Government’s £40m increase for sport in 2026 warmly welcomed by Scottish sports governing bodies (SGBs)
 - Outcome follows SGBs’ successful Running on Empty campaign which highlighted the severe financial impact on governing bodies as a result of standstill funding over last five years
 - SGBs welcome plans for a ‘Summer of Sport’ as a way of improving access to sport for children across Scotland
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Sports governing bodies in Scotland (SGBs) have begun discussions about how to get much-needed cash to their organisations as quickly as possible after welcoming the Scottish Government’s announcement of a financial boost for sport.

In this week’s Budget, Cabinet Secretary for Finance Shona Robison revealed a total uplift of £40m for sports funding in 2026. Around £18m of that will go to sportscotland with a focus on supporting sports governing bodies (SGBs) and their day-to-day operational needs.

The announcement comes in the wake of the SGBs’ powerful Running on Empty campaign highlighting how sports in Scotland were struggling to operate amid increasing financial pressures and standstill funding decisions over the last five years.

In 2021, the Scottish Government pledged to double annual funding to £100m per year by 2026 but had yet to increase sport’s annual budget during the current Parliament.

Running On Empty, supported by more than 30 sports, shone a strong light on the risks created by the lack of funding especially around the valuable work done by governing bodies at grassroots, community and elite levels.

Doc McKelvey, chief executive of Scottish Gymnastics and Chair of the SGB CEO/COO Forum said:

“This uplift is very welcome news. The amount is significant and testament to the hard work done recently by all the governing bodies who are part of the SGB Forum to demonstrate the wide value of their work and sport in general to the Scottish Government. We also want to recognise the important part played by many other partners, including sportscotland itself, in helping us get to this positive outcome.

“In a number of our discussions with the Scottish Government, we made it clear we understood the pressures they had faced, and in turn they acknowledged the challenges we had faced.

“It is welcome to see their positive reaction to our approach where forum members gave them detailed thoughts on areas of greatest need and impact for additional funding.”

He added that they had now begun detailed discussions on how the funding will be delivered, and the hope is to be able to give sports bodies some much-needed breathing space after “running on empty” for so long.

A survey last year of 30 Scottish sports organisations, initiated by the SGB CEO/COO Forum, found the standstill budget had led to the vast majority having to cut costs, reduce programmes and in some cases lose staff to be able to keep going.

They also said the cuts had led to sport becoming less inclusive and less able to help achieve desired public health outcomes.

The total payroll costs of those SGBs with the greatest reliance on public funding have grown by over £7m in the past four years. Over the same period, sportscotland has only been able to support an increased investment of £1.4m due to funding constraints.

Summer of Sport

The Government also announced plans to spend £20m on promoting a “Summer of Sport” which will give children free access to sport.

The full details remain to be shared but SGBs say Glasgow 2026, the Tour de France Grand Depart in 2027 and Euro 2008 are great opportunities to invest further in sport as a way of improving public health, supporting communities, inspiring participation in sport and showcasing Scotland on the global stage but that all sports need to be involved.

Judith McCleary, chief executive of JudoScotland and deputy chair of the SGB CEO/COO Forum said:

“The power of sport is phenomenal; whilst we have recently experienced the feelgood factor that the success of the Scottish Men’s Football team has had on a nation, sport changes lives in a multitude of ways through engagement.

“We know the physical benefits and mental health & wellbeing benefits that sport contributes to, but it also leads to so much more – increased levels of confidence, resilience, teamwork and problem solving, and most importantly, a happier and healthier nation.

“It’s great to see this further commitment to sport which plays such an important part in many public health and community programmes.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

The Scottish Governing Body for Sport (SGB) CEO/COO Forum represents senior leaders in sports across Scotland. Around 800,000 people (15% of the Scottish population) are members of just under 8,000 sports clubs affiliated to SGBs.

From research commissioned in partnership with DCMS, UK Sport and the other home country sports councils, sport directly contributes £6.7 billion to the total output of the Scottish economy (nearly 2.5%). The sector supports nearly 70,000 full time jobs, 3.4% of total Scottish FTE.

The Running on Empty campaign was supported by over 30 sports as part of the wider work of the SGB Forum.

Badminton Scotland, Basketball Scotland, Bowls Scotland, Boxing Scotland, Commonwealth Games Scotland, Cricket Scotland, Horse Scotland, Judo Scotland, Mountaineering Scotland, Netball Scotland, Paddle Scotland, Ramblers Scotland, Royal Yachting Association Scotland, Scottish Archery Association, Scottish ClubSport, Scottish Curling, Scottish Cycling, Scottish Disability Sport, Scottish Fencing, Scottish Football Association, Scottish Golf, Scottish Gymnastics, Scottish Handball Association, Scottish Hockey Union, Scottish Orienteering Association, Scottish Rowing, Scottish Rugby, Scottish Squash, Scottish Student Sport, Scottish Surfing Association, Scottish Swimming, Scottish Target Shooting, Scottish Volleyball, Scottish Athletics, Snowsport Scotland, Table Tennis Scotland, Tennis Scotland, The Camanachd Association, Triathlon Scotland, Waterski & Wakeboard Scotland.

Media contact

Issued by 56° North on behalf of Scottish Governing Body for Sport CEO/COO Forum

For further info and images contact

John Penman

07590 484 304

john.penman@56degreesnorth.co.uk

Dominique Mitchell

07535 522 044

dominique.mitchell@56degreesnorth.co.uk