

From: Alan Jones

15 November 2006

Sir John Ritblat, President, SSGB and President British Land Company plc
Allan Green, Vice President SIGB
John Steel, Chief Executive UK Sport
Oliver Jones, Chairman Snowsport GB
Cc. SSGB and its Member Groups, DSUK, SCUUK and the Sports Councils

Dear Sirs,

**OPEN LETTER REFERRING TO SNOWSPORT GB PRESS RELEASE DATED 07/11/06
Sport and Trade bodies back UK Snowsport**

I have long felt the need for reorganisation and modernisation of the structure of British skiing. As long ago as 1995 I submitted proposals for a single governing body, but they did not find favour at the time. A revised version was submitted in 1998, but most of the member bodies did not have the common courtesy to even acknowledge receipt of my letter. I further revised my proposals in 2003 to cover all snow-sports, when it appeared that the Sports Councils' Modernisation Programme might provide a window of opportunity for implementation of a new structure, and I re-circulated them in 2004 following the publication of the Consultants' Report, *Investing in Change* by the Sports Councils and the presentation on the need for Modernisation to the SSGB Congress by Fiona McNeilly. I was delighted that the Green Paper from the Modernisation Working Group recommended to the Congress in Autumn 2004 the formation of a single new organisation replacing all existing governing bodies and leaving history behind. 'Bob', as it was called then, seemed to be very much on the lines I had been suggesting over the previous 9 years.

Sadly, each presentation of the proposed new structure since then has moved further away from the original concept of Bob and become less and less satisfactory. Despite the feedback which I know was sent from Snowsport England (as well as myself personally), the final proposals in the paper dated 29/9/06 are unsatisfactory, are not for a single body and will resurrect the conflicts of past history, as they are based on political demarcations and not on functional needs. These proposals are not Modernisation; they are turning the clock back. They are unlikely to increase effectiveness, efficiency or participation because the structure of UKS would be similar to that of BSSF some years ago when it gave rise to conflict. It is unlikely therefore that UKS could successfully take on additional roles from the Home Nation Governing Bodies (HNGBs). Whilst there is still a suggestion of unification in the longer term, there is no indication of what form this will take or of how the proposed transitional structure will lead to it or when it will be implemented.

It has just come to my attention that the agenda for the EGM of SSGB includes a proposal relating to draft M & A. This draft was not circulated in time to be considered by the Member Groups and included on the agenda of their respective general meetings. Contrary to the wording of motion 1(b), these are not written in accordance with the Modernisation paper as transitional arrangements but go beyond it, presumably in accord with the longer term aims. This draft includes no infra structure within the articles, so there appears to be no statutory provision for involvement of Home Nations, Regions, disciplines, coaches and instructors, or athletes, or indeed any volunteers, other than the non-executive directors. It thus appears to be dispensing with the HNGBs and Regional bodies within England without any corresponding sub-unit (for ring-fenced funding) or even statutory committee within UKS; and passing over the coaching scheme to another body, presumably BASI.

In the terms of *Investing in Change*, the proposals replace one “Type Four” organisation (one giving rise to a plethora of National Governing Bodies for one sport) with another, including two further bodies, whilst disenfranchising the Northern Ireland Ski Council. The advice in *Investing in Change* for “Type Four” organisations is that “Any NGB that can be designated a Type Four organisation should be identifying the pathway to change as a priority either by merging with other subgroups within the sport or seeking to join a broader Federation”. “NGBs need to consolidate to ensure there are no “Type Four” organisations representing their sport and undermining their role as the single voice of the sport”. There are numerous other weaknesses and deficiencies in the proposals which suggest that they have not been sufficiently thought through.

I think most people will be under the impression, from the transitional document, that we are moving towards a “Type One” organisation in the terms of *Investing in Change* (those differentiating themselves along home country lines). However, the draft M & A is for a “Type Two” organisation (those differentiating themselves by sporting function across all four home countries) without addressing the key issue “to ensure that the single body is effective, particularly in representing the views, needs and requirements of all its members and participants throughout the UK”.

It is with great regret therefore that I will be voting against these proposals and recommending colleagues to do likewise.

In the circumstances, I am surprised that you have publicly expressed support for the proposals. I wonder if, as busy people, you have just looked at the objectives (which I do not think are contentious) and not considered the rest of the document in depth to see if it is actually likely to fulfil its aims. It is unfortunate that Modernisation is a very broad and complicated issue which cannot be effectively summarised. As a result there are few of us who have studied the issues in depth. Sadly, the majority of snowsport enthusiasts do not have the time or the interest. They have therefore provided little feedback and are content to leave the matter to the few. I certainly hope that the few get it right. I am also hoping that you might be prepared to reconsider your position and reflect on the appropriateness of your comments, particularly before the Membership has voted on the issue.

I am sorry that I did not see the press release in time to respond before all groups had held their general meetings. Whatever the outcome, we need to consider how best to move forward positively. Even if the resolutions are passed, there is a lot of work to do with many people pressing for changes. I am doubtful if the Steering Group of Federation Chairs (SGFC) is the appropriate body to take the matter forward. It comprises mainly representatives of all the political factions from the past, rather than people with appropriate expertise and commitment to the sport. Commitment to the sport rather than a particular organisation must be the overriding consideration both in the planning of UKS and in running it. I would favour starting again, on the basis of the original concept of Bob and a structure based on functional needs, through an independent body or individual facilitator. I realise that two years will have been lost, but I think the most important thing is to get the structure right, as it will be very difficult to change it at a later date.

Yours faithfully,

Alan Jones

Background notes

The views expressed in this letter are personal and do not necessarily reflect the views of any of the organisations of which I am a member.

If this letter is published, I should be grateful if it did not show my personal contact details. However, I would be happy to receive feedback via any of the member organisations.

Whilst I have never reached a very high level of performance, I have been skiing for over 40 years and I have been an Artificial Slope Ski Instructor for 30 years and a Nordic Instructor for nearly as long. I have therefore been licensed by ESC since its foundation and by BASI since it took over the Nordic qualifications from the old NSFGB about 20 years ago. I am a member of a number of ski clubs including the SCGB and DSUK (formerly BSCD). Until recently, I held a FIS Masters start licence through SSGB and I hold an artificial slope start licence with SSE. I have also participated in Nordic races and roller ski races. I have occasionally acted as a voluntary race official in the past.

I have been involved as a volunteer in the governance of skiing for nearly 30 years, mainly holding various offices within the North West Ski Federation (NWSF) and the ESC Nordic Key Committee. I have served on the Council of SSE as a representative of the NWSF. I have organised various events for the Nordic Committee in the past and more recently informal training sessions at local ski centres for the British Alpine Masters Group. I was a member of the Membership and Voting Working Group in the Modernisation project. I have actively lobbied for more and better local skiing facilities both within the NW Region and through SSE. I was hoping that the UKS would be more receptive to the concept of a national strategy for snowsport facilities than SSE has been.

I am also a keen mountaineer of very modest standing and it was out of this that my interest in skiing developed. However, I have not done a lot of ski mountaineering but I have been to some very remote areas, including some exploratory work in Greenland. I am a member of the British Mountaineering Council, the Austrian Alpine Club and the Karabiner Mountaineering Club, but I have not been involved with organisation in mountaineering.

Professionally, I am a retired University Assistant Registrar, having started my career as a research chemist. I hope that the extent and breadth of my experience will be accepted as sufficient to make valid comments on the Modernisation of snowsports in the UK.