Policy making in UK sport: an examination of the role and influence of the Minister for Sport

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Policy Making in UK Sport: An Examination of the Role and Influence of the Minister for Sport

by

Arthur McMaster

Doctoral Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: UK Minister for Sport 1964 to 2009</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 1 Literature Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.1 Introduction</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Sport and Politics</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Sporting Developments in Britain and the Increasing Role of Government</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 The British Post-War Consensus and its Effect on Sport</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Sport and Party Politics in the UK Since 1945</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Governments and Ministers</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Ministers for Sport</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 Conclusion</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 2 Research Methodology and Research Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1 Research Methodology: Introduction</th>
<th>63</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Research Methodology: Ontological Issues</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Research Methodology: Epistemological Issues</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Methodological Approach</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Research Methods: Introduction</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Research Methods: Content Analysis</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Research Methods: Secondary Analysis of Published Material</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Research Methods: Interviews</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 Research Methods: Purpose of the Interviews</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10 Conclusion</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 3 Theoretical Approaches: Policy Frameworks and Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.1 Introduction</th>
<th>88</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Policy Cycle or Stages Models</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Policy Communities and Networks</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Institutional Rational Choice</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Multiple Streams</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Punctuated Equilibrium Theory</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Advocacy Coalition Framework</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Core Executive Framework</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Interpretivist Theories of the Policy Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Policy Models for Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>Choice of Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter 4** The UK Minister for Sport in Parliament 1964-2005: A Quantitative Approach

| 4.1 | Introduction | 114 |
| 4.2 | Junior Ministers | 114 |
| 4.3 | Junior Ministers in Named Offices | 115 |
| 4.4 | First Ministerial Appointments | 117 |
| 4.5 | Junior Ministerial Appointments | 119 |
| 4.6 | Parliamentary Role of Ministers for Sport | 121 |
| 4.7 | Parliamentary Activity of Ministers for Sport | 123 |
| 4.8 | Parliamentary Questions Dealt with by Ministers for Sport | 126 |
| 4.9 | Parliamentary Debates on Sport | 129 |
| 4.10 | Conclusion | 136 |

**Chapter 5** Interviews with Key Individuals and Policy-Makers in Sport and Politics: Data Findings and Discussion

| 5.1 | Introduction | 139 |
| 5.2 | Sources of Government Policy | 139 |
| 5.3 | Sources of Sports Policy | 143 |
| 5.4 | Government Sports Policy | 145 |
| 5.5 | The Role of the Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, and Civil Servants in Influencing Government Sports Policy | 146 |
| 5.6 | The Role of Non-Government Bodies in Influencing Government Sports Policy | 154 |
| 5.7 | The Role of the Devolved Administrations and Sports Bodies in Influencing Government Sports Policy | 159 |
| 5.8 | The Role of the Minister for Sport in Influencing Sports Policy: |
| (a). The Duties of a Minister for Sport | 162 |
| (b). The Seniority of a Minister for Sport | 165 |
| (c). Perceptions of the Office of Minister for Sport | 169 |
| (d). Governments’ Treatment of the Office of Minister for Sport | 175 |
| (e). The Holders of the Office of Minister for Sport | 179 |
| 5.9 | The Policy Role of the Minister for Sport in Key Policy Areas: |
| (a). Sport For All | 185 |
| (b). Elite Sport | 189 |
| (c). Sport in Schools | 194 |
| (d). Attracting Major Events to the UK | 197 |
| 5.10 | Conclusion | 201 |

| 206 |
List of Illustrations

Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fundamental Stages in the Research Process</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Comparison of Sporting and Non-Sporting Issues Dealt with in Parliament by Minister for Sport: Quantity of Text in Hansard 1964-2005</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Comparison of Sporting and Non-Sporting Issues Dealt with in Parliament by Minister for Sport: Number of Parliamentary Questions 1964-2005</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basic Beliefs of Enquiry Paradigms</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Quantitative and Qualitative Paradigm Assumptions</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Junior Ministers who Entered the Cabinet 1964-2005</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>All Ministers Appointed 1964-2005</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ministerial Appointments 1964-2005</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Adjournment Debates on Sport in Which the Minister for Sport Participated 1964-2005</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Government Debates on Sport in Which the Minister for Sport Participated 1964-2005</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Opposition Debates on Sport in Which the Minister for Sport Participated 1964-2005</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Legislative Debates on Sport in Which the Minister for Sport Participated 1964-2005</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine the role and purpose of the United Kingdom Minister for Sport 1964-2009, with particular reference to sports policy-making. The literature review seeks to establish the position of the Minister in the context of post-war British politics and party government. This is followed by an exposition of the methodological approach that will be taken and the research methods involved. Several theoretical models of policy-making are outlined, against which the various Ministers’ activities have been tested. Evidence has been gathered, presented, and discussed from both quantitative and qualitative approaches, including interviews with key figures, to help answer the research question: “What is the role of the Minister for Sport in the policy-making process for UK sport?” It is concluded that UK Ministers for Sport have had a relatively small role in policy-making, mainly because their position in government has been too junior. Their main function has been to raise the profile of sport, act as ambassadors for it, and encourage participation.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor at Loughborough University, Professor Alan Bairner, for his immense help over the past five years. He has put me straight on so many things, has saved me from numerous pitfalls, has been unfailingly hospitable, and has introduced me to some outstanding beers in the pubs of Loughborough on my many visits. Without his assistance, I would never have got this far, though I may have had a healthier liver.

Also at Loughborough, I wish to thank Professor Barrie Houlihan, my Director of Studies, for his pioneering work on sports policy and for his constructive suggestions in our annual meetings, all of which helped me a great deal.

Grateful thanks are extended to all the people who agreed to be interviewed for this study, and who are listed in Appendix 5. I very much appreciate how they patiently allowed me to ask so many questions, freely gave their time, and invariably treated me with courtesy and consideration. It is the data arising from the interviews that lies at the heart of this thesis. I also thank the University of Kent at Canterbury and Canterbury Christ Church University for allowing me extensive use of their libraries throughout my period of study.

Finally I would like to thank my family: my wife Dr Bernadette Hughes for allowing me the indulgence of undertaking this project and for supporting me throughout; and my sons Alasdair and Patrick, who have reminded me so much of the purity, simplicity, and joy of sport when I have watched them take part in it over the years.
Introduction: UK Minister for Sport 1964 to 2009

It has sometimes been suggested that Lord Hailsham (formerly Quintin Hogg) was the first British Minister for Sport (see Athletics Weekly, 2001; Coughlan, 1990; Houlihan, 1991). Indeed Hailsham (1990) tells us that, “Of the various strange events that befell me in 1963, none was more bizarre than my appointment as Minister with special responsibility for sport” (p. 335).

The importance that Hailsham (1975) attached to the assignment can be assessed from his own words:

The idea of a Minister for Sport has always appalled me. It savours of dictatorship and the nastiest kind of populist or Fascist dictatorship at that. Moreover, I am not a man who enjoys “watching” sport, and ever since I got rid finally of the incubus of compulsory games at school, I have carefully eschewed almost all forms of sport or game which depends on a marked-out ground, a racetrack, a swimming bath, a pitch, or what have you, to enable it to be carried on (p. 206).

It is perhaps indicative of government attitudes towards sport at the time that the Minister, whose nominal responsibility it was, actually disliked watching sport, avoided taking part in sport, and was even opposed to the appointment of a Minister to deal with the subject area.

With this negative approach, Hailsham, by his own account, seems to have done little for sport in the year or so to the 1964 election, other than set up a small secretariat under Sir John Lang (Hailsham, 1990), while his official title at this time was Lord President of the Council. Geoffrey Lewis (1997), Hailsham’s biographer, believed that, “The assignment for Sport was a bizarre one. He was almost perversely unsuited. There is here a case to answer on the charge of electoral gimmickry” (p. 197).

Hailsham himself confirms elsewhere (1975) that he did not take sport seriously. He notes dismissively, “This particular activity was a minor matter, and I thought comparatively little of it at the time since it occurred at a period when other things were preoccupying my mind” (p. 207). One of the things occupying his mind in 1963 was achieving the leadership of the Conservative Party, and thus the office of Prime Minister. Instead, he was beaten by Alex Douglas-Home, a man passionate about

Also in 1963, Harold Wilson became leader of the Labour Party. On 15 October 1964 he won the general election and with it the job that Hailsham really desired (Hennessy, 2000). Wilson was thus in a position to appoint Denis Howell as the first Minister for Sport to take the job seriously. Howell devotes a great deal of his autobiography (1990) to his involvement in sport, compared with the few dismissive lines in Hailsham’s two volumes of memoirs (1975, 1990). Therefore it seems appropriate to consider Howell as the first true Minister for Sport in Britain, a description that Hailsham clearly did not merit or seek.

Wilson had filled all the senior posts in his new government by 20 October 1964, and was appointing the junior Ministers. It is a British convention for the Prime Minister to appoint all the junior Ministers, rather than delegating this to the Cabinet Ministers to whom they will report (Headey, 1974; Dorey, 2005). Denis Howell was called to Number 10 Downing Street, where Wilson offered him the post of Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Education and Science (Wilson, 1971). The circumstances of the appointment have also been described by Howell in his autobiography. Howell (1990) remembers that Wilson told him, “You will be the first Minister for Sport” (pp. 141-2).

Howell went on to take over and expand the small sports unit previously set up to advise Hailsham. He was fortunate in retaining the services of the semi-retired Sir John Lang, a highly-regarded civil servant. This is illustrated by Lord Carrington, who was appointed as First Lord of the Admiralty in 1959, with Lang as his Permanent Secretary. Carrington (1988) describes him as, “one of the most, if not the most, astute civil servants of his generation” and a person who, “ruled the Civil Service roost with a rod of iron” (p. 148). For a junior Minister, such as Howell, to work with a person of Lang’s stature was quite unusual and very fortuitous for him.

Denis Howell was keen to set up a sports council, as recommended by the Wolfenden Committee (1960), but Lang immediately presented Howell with a paper setting out the arguments against this course of action. Howell was not impressed by the work carried out on sport by the outgoing Conservative administration and its civil servants, recalling that, “John Lang handed me half a dozen of the thinnest files I have ever
seen and told me this represented the previous Government’s thinking on sport” (Howell, 1990: p. 143). From this inauspicious start, Denis Howell’s own contribution to sports policy was substantial, including the speedy establishment of the Sports Council under his leadership in 1965 (despite Sir John Lang’s advice).

There have now been 13 Ministers for Sport, 1964-2009, five of whom were Labour and eight Conservative. These are set out in Appendix 1, showing the dates of their appointments, titles, and departments. Denis Howell held the post for far longer than any of the others. He was also the only one to hold it twice, 1964-70 and 1974-79, his two spells in office lasting for almost 11 years. The average tenure for all post-holders at the time of Gerry Sutcliffe’s appointment in June 2007 was 42.7 months. If Howell is excluded, the average for the others is only 34.7 months (Butler and Butler, 2000; Hansard, 2000-07).

However, a high turnover of Ministers and a short time in office are quite normal phenomena in British politics, as Berlinski et al (2007) have discovered. To take a few examples of named offices at junior ministerial level (a trend started by Harold Wilson), a pattern emerges that confirms their findings. For instance, there were 14 Ministers for Defence Procurement from 1971 to 2005 (the office was vacant from 1972 to 1981), with an average of only 21.6 months in office. From 1979 to 2005 there were 13 Ministers for Local Government, whose average time in post was 24 months. There were 12 Ministers for Social Security from 1976 to 2005, with an average of 32.3 months in the job (Butler and Butler, 2000; Hansard, 2000-05; see also Chapter 4, pp. 115-17). By these standards, Ministers for Sport have actually enjoyed a relatively lengthy time in office.

The Minister for Sport is a strange creature in British political life. Since the inception of the office, it has always been held at junior ministerial level (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State or Minister of State) in the House of Commons. According to Theakston (1987, 1999), there is really no difference in status between a Parliamentary Under-Secretary and a Minister of State, with the true change in influence coming at Cabinet member level. Theakston illustrates this from his own experience:
During many interviews with serving and former office-holders at all levels, no one demurred at my working assumption that ministers of state were also junior ministers: no minister of state objected to my questioning him or her on the grounds that my subject had nothing to do with them! (1987: p. vii).

The post has never been located in the Cabinet, nor in the House of Lords, and none of the 13 post-holders has ever achieved Cabinet office in any other job before or after. By contrast, Hailsham was a Cabinet Minister many times, in different posts, between 1957 and 1987 (Butler and Butler, 2000), and was a potential Prime Minister.

The Parliamentary careers of the Ministers for Sport will be explored in more depth later and compared with those other of junior Ministers (such as those cited above) in Chapter 4. The career prospects of junior Ministers as a whole may help us to understand better where Ministers for Sport fit in to the larger processes of government.

It is interesting to note that only one of the 13 Ministers for Sport resigned; Tony Banks did so in 1999 to help pursue the unsuccessful bid for England to host the 2006 football World Cup. After retiring from the Commons in April 2005, he was given a life peerage in the Prime Minister’s May dissolution honours list (Hurst, 2005), but unfortunately died on 8 January 2006 (The Daily Telegraph, 2006). None has died in office, whereas most ended their terms with election defeat, sacking, or a sideways move.

Denis Howell was the first former Minister for Sport to go to the House of Lords on retirement from the Commons, having been awarded a life peerage in 1992, and was later followed there by three others. Hector Monro received his life peerage in 1997, after stepping down as MP for Dumfries. Colin Moynihan inherited his father’s title and became one of the 92 “elected hereditary” peers, while most of the other Conservative Sports Ministers received knighthoods. Following the 2005 election, only Robert Key and Kate Hoey amongst former Ministers for Sport were still in the House of Commons (The Guardian, 2005). Richard Caborn was re-appointed as Minister for Sport after the 2005 election (Bose, 2005), until he was replaced by Gerry Sutcliffe when Gordon Brown became Prime Minister in June 2007 (Kelso, 2007).
The 13 Ministers seem to have kept a relatively low profile in Parliament. During the 1964-2005 period, there have only been a handful of occasions when sport has been the subject of a debate in the House of Commons, normally initiated by backbenchers. In most of those cases, the debates were wide-ranging, to include recreation, youth services, sports facilities, or the Sports Council. A true debate on sport is a rarity, and one initiated by the Minister for Sport is even rarer, something that will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Nor does the Minister for Sport deal only with sport. The Minister has a wide range of duties, depending on the department where he or she has been located. These have ranged from Education to Environment at different times, with the office presently situated in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Appendix 1 shows the five different government departments where sport has been placed, with Education briefly appearing a second time in 1990-92. Denis Howell gives us some idea of what a Minister for Sport does on a day-to-day basis, reflecting on his experience in the Education Department at the time of his first appointment:

Day two [in October 1964] started with an astonishing surprise. I arrived at the office to find three huge bundles of files on my desk. Kay [Masters; his principal private secretary] explained to me that I had responsibility for teacher discipline and, on behalf of the Minister, I had to take decisions about 300 or more cases a year. It was clearly going to take me some considerable time to carry out this responsibility in a satisfactory manner (1990: pp. 144-5).

Howell’s recollections indicate that the Ministers are likely to spend a great deal of time on subjects other than sport, but it is not clear what the real proportion is. Houlihan (1991) has suggested that they devote only around 25% of their time to sport. Richard Tracey (Minister for Sport 1985-87) is quoted by a journalist as claiming to have spent around 20% of his working day on sport (Rowbottom, 1997). When Denis Howell was asked to quantify the time he spent on sport he could not do so because of his, “ever changing responsibilities” (Hansard: House of Commons Debates, 10 November 1976, vol. 919, col. 168). Theakston (1987), however, suggests that Howell spent around half his time on sport and half on education in the 1960s. He also quotes Eldon Griffiths who, “told a House of Commons Select Committee that 99.7% of his time was devoted to his DOE [Department of the Environment] work, the rest to sport” (p. 155).
So according to the Ministers themselves, or to outside observers such as journalists and academics, they spend somewhere between 0.3% and 50% of their time on sport! There is obviously a huge gap in our knowledge that needs to be filled here, and this will be addressed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Knowledge of the Minister for Sport's contribution to sports policy, and even what he or she does most of the time, is therefore fairly scanty. We know an insufficient amount about what Ministers for Sport do in Parliament, and what purpose he or she actually serves; this will be explored more fully in the literature review. Little is known of how their role fits into a wider sports network or community outside Parliament. This seems to be a fairly weak ministerial office in the UK, even if the office-holder is an able person, which raises a whole series of questions, including the following:

- How do Ministers for Sport spend their time?
- What proportion of their time is spent on sport?
- What subjects do they deal with in Parliament, other than sport?
- Do they become involved in debates as active parliamentarians?
- Do they pilot through sports legislation in Parliament?
- Do they answer parliamentary questions, and if so, on what subjects?
- Is their role concerned only with routine matters, or does it also involve sports policy?
- Do they have a key role in a wider sports network or community outside Parliament?
- Have they had any significant influence when key decisions on sport have been taken?
- How has the office of Minister for Sport developed over the years?

These issues may be summarised in the overarching research question: “What is the role of the Minister for Sport in the policy-making process for UK sport?”

The research also relates to some of the most important sporting issues faced by our society. For example, when London made its bid for the 2012 Olympic Games a strong Minister would have provided a powerful signal that the bid was serious. As
some commentators have pointed out, other countries have influential Ministers who are in their Cabinets (Houlihan, 1997; Kelso, 2004), including France, the capital city of which was a rival bidder. A Cabinet Minister could also be more assertive on such matters as drugs in sport, bad behaviour amongst professional football players, or tobacco sponsorship. Indeed, it may be convenient for other areas of government policy that there is no strong Sports Minister, since this might tend to conflict with wider government aims.

The literature review that follows will look at the history of government involvement in sport and the role of Ministers and parties in the post-war period. It will discuss some of what has been written about the Ministers for Sport since the office was established in 1964. A methodological approach will be proposed, followed by an examination of some of the theoretical works in politics which may help to place in context the role of the Minister in the policy-making process for sport. There will then be an examination of various ministerial offices, including that of the Minister for Sport, and an assessment of their contribution to parliamentary activity. This will be followed by a presentation of the data derived from interviews with former Ministers for Sport and Cabinet Ministers, past and present civil servants, sports administrators, policy advisers, and others involved in the sporting world at the upper levels. The data will then be analysed in relation to the theoretical literature. Finally, some conclusions will be presented to help answer the research question.
Chapter One: Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to critically assess the relevant existing literature. It will discuss what is already known about the topic using the available evidence. It draws on a wide range of sources, including monographs, edited collections, newspaper articles, biographies, autobiographies, and diaries. However, the politics of sport is in general a subject not well covered in the journal literature. Coakley and Dunning (2002: p. xxiv) provide a helpful table, showing sports-related journals. These cover many subject areas, including anthropology, history, and sociology, but not political science. This absence is reflected in the present review, which necessarily contains a relatively small number of references to journal articles, though many are cited in relation to policy analysis and elsewhere.

There will be an initial review of historical studies of sport in Britain, mainly from the nineteenth century to the present, followed by an examination of increasing government and political party involvement in sport. There will then be a discussion of the social and political trends in Britain during the twentieth century, particularly the post-war period. Leading on from this, the role of governments, Ministers, and civil servants will be set out. Finally, and within this context, the contribution of the Ministers for Sport will be reviewed from the literature about them or by them.

1.2 Sport and Politics

In introducing his edited collection of essays on the politics of sport, Lincoln Allison (1986) cautions against trying to produce an exact definition of the term “sport”, since it means many different things to many people. However, he captures very well the changed emphasis of the word, which occurred in the nineteenth century:

In English, the primary meaning of the word “sport” changed dramatically in the period after 1880. Before that date, if you picked up a book on sport, a sportsman’s bedside book, companion, or whatever, it would certainly have been about some combination of hunting, shooting or fishing, about man’s ritualised preying on other species. But increasingly in the Edwardian period, and almost universally after 1930, sport as such referred to purely human competitions like athletics and organised games (p. 5).
Likewise, trying to define “politics” is not straightforward. Bernard Crick (1976) looks at the word’s Greek origins in the expression polis or, “an aggregate of many members” (p. 17) forming a state, as suggested by Aristotle. He goes on to show how the meaning of “politics” has changed through the ages and then offers his own definition of its modern usage:

Politics, then, can be simply defined as the activity by which differing interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated by giving them a share in power in proportion to their importance to the welfare and the survival of the whole community (p. 21).

Very often the practitioners of politics are people who are members of governments, or who desire to form governments. They may be elected, or they may be part of authoritarian regimes of the Right or the Left, for which elections are irrelevant. Politicians and politics may operate at national, local, regional, or some other level, as Crick (1976) discusses. The worlds of sport and politics overlap, and sometimes collide, when the exponents of these crafts involve themselves in each other’s activities. In 1980, for example, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) found itself heavily embroiled in world politics to an unprecedented degree, following the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan. In his study of the modern Olympics, Guttmann (2002) tracks the response of the United States’ government:

It was a major crisis, but the foreign policy options available to President Jimmy Carter were meagre. Diplomatic protests were clearly useless, and the Soviet Union was in a position to veto any measure considered by the U.N. Security Council. Economic reprisals are always costly, and the Carter administration was already in economic trouble as a result of inflated oil prices (p. 149).

Guttmann (2002) then shows how Carter proposed a US boycott of the Games, a gesture that would not harm the American economy, and which quickly gained overwhelming support from a supine US Congress. The US Olympic Committee, was subjected to intense pressure by Carter’s administration, in the face of which, “abject capitulation followed” (p. 151). Carter then sought world-wide political endorsement, that Mrs Thatcher in Britain was only too happy to give, along with many other leaders. However, the world of sport was generally unsupportive of the boycott, putting sporting organisations very much at odds with their governments for years to come.
British examples of politics and sport clashing are numerous. For instance, Neil Macfarlane (1986), a former Minister for Sport, has written of Mrs Thatcher's indifference and even hostility to sport. Following incidents of hooliganism in 1985 she invited leading members of the Football League and the Football Association (FA) to meet her and other Ministers in Downing Street, where she treated them with barely-disguised contempt. After the Heysel disaster in 1985¹ she ignored their views completely. Macfarlane (1986) writes that:

She was quite explicit that she expected the Football Association to withdraw all English teams from Europe, pre-empting any decision that might be reached by UEFA. Twenty-four hours later the FA dutifully announced that Everton, who had won the League championship, Manchester United, the FA Cup-winners, and the four clubs which had qualified for the UEFA Cup – Tottenham, Liverpool, Norwich and Southampton – were not to have their names forwarded to the European association (pp. 26-7).

As Elias and Dunning (1986) demonstrate, football has often been at odds with the government of the day, particularly over law and order issues relating to football hooliganism. Tensions have also occurred for other reasons, such as the construction of a new national stadium or in the regulation of football’s business affairs, as shown by Tom Bower (2003), a journalist. He has described the FA as, “masters of delusion” (p. 174), out of touch with the modern age and incapable of dealing in a sensible way with government.

Sporting bodies, like the Football League and the FA, will themselves generate their own internal politics, since they have governing structures, hierarchies, elites, rulebooks, and elections. People who hold positions of authority within sporting bodies may behave in similar ways to politicians in the wider world, as these organisations have emerged into what they are at the present time. But in a clash with government, they are unlikely to win if the politicians assert their full authority.

1.3 Sporting Developments in Britain and the Increasing Role of Government

The development of sport in its modern, recognisable form has been well catalogued by a number of writers, including Brailsford (1992), Birley (1996), Holt (1989), and Holt and Mason (2000). These authors have concurred with Allison (1986) as to how our conception of the meaning of “sport” has changed completely from animal
hunting, fighting, or baiting activities, to one of the interpersonal or inter-team competitions of today.

Derek Birley (1996) traces the origins of sport in Britain back to Roman times, when it consisted mainly of various forms of hunting. As for the next thousand years or so, he concedes that, “Our knowledge of British sport in the Dark Ages is limited” (p. 12). His study therefore concentrates mainly on the period from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Denis Brailsford (1992) agrees with this view in a book which covers an even wider time-span, though in less detail:

Whatever later lyricists may have made of some lost pastoral idyll, the truth is that we know far too little of the sports of our distant ancestors. Medieval writers have left only scant and scattered evidence of the people’s play (p. 1).

Nowadays most modern sports have social class connotations, just as was the case for many centuries with earlier forms of sport. Birley (1996) reminds us that, for the aristocracy, “Hunting was an important status symbol” in the eighteenth century (p. 130), as it had been for the likes of Thomas Becket in the twelfth century. Birley (1996) describes how the poor people of London in Becket’s day had rather different sporting pursuits from the aristocracy:

At Easter there were water sports, including one using boats from which the contestants tried to hit a target with a lance as they passed. In summer, there were jumping, wrestling, casting the stone, archery, spear-throwing and sword-fighting for the men and dancing for the women, whilst on winter feast days there was bull- bear- or boar-baiting, and when the Moorfields marshes froze over men strapped bones to their shoes and propelled themselves with pointed sticks across the ice (p. 20).

Apart from animal-baiting, most of these activities have survived to the present day in one form or another, as have pugilism, village football, and various forms of racquet or bat games. Holt (1989) examines how the huge development of these organised sports came about in the nineteenth century. This is embodied in the parallel worlds of Victorian amateurism in the public schools and the professional sports associated with the new urban, working class communities. As Holt (1989) says:

By 1900 the scale of working-class involvement in organised sport was astounding. During the Edwardian period upwards of six million people a year paid to watch First Division professional football alone, and half a million or
more played in leagues admitted to the Football Association of England and Wales (p. 135).

In their study of post-war British sport, Holt and Mason (2000) pay particular attention to the amateur/professional dichotomy, with its moral undertones:

Amateurism was a marriage of honour and competition, of an upper-class ideal of chivalry and a new middle-class belief in the moral value of strenuous effort. These values and structures had a major part in shaping British cultural identity and remained tenacious in the post-war years (p. 36).

Holt and Mason (2000) show how professionalism is now universal for almost all elite sportsmen or women, even in games such as flat green bowling. They identify around eight thousand full-time professionals, mainly in football, rugby, cricket, and golf, while amateurism remains the norm for the millions of participants below the top level. Their study goes on to look at how sport has become a highly-professional business, with increased commercialisation, regulation, legislation, and involvement by government. In their view, “The government could intervene in sport when it seemed in the national interest to do so” (p. 147).

However, government involvement in sport is not at all new. The Game Law of 1390, for example, was introduced to protect landed interests. Brailsford (1992) believes that:

In the case of hunting, the statutory controls were a straight protection of privilege, to protect it as a sport against those for whom it might be a vital necessity. It was designed to make hunting very much an elite pursuit (p. 14).

Elias (1986) suggests that fox-hunting was, “closely associated with a specific code of manners” (pp. 24-5). It was part of a “civilizing process”, in which the warrior class came under stricter control when the modern nation state began to emerge after the Middle Ages. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a “sportization” of pastimes, such as horse racing, tennis, and athletics was well under way. Formal rules were established, and there was a greater sensitivity to violence (for example, by the wearing of boxing gloves to reduce injury). Many of these sporting forms were exported abroad, a process which Elias sees as, “another example of a civilizing spurt” (p. 22).
Elias and Dunning’s (1986) collection of essays examines, inter alia, the growing role of the state in suppressing working-class sport, so that social order could be better maintained. They observe that, “In the Middle Ages the kings and the authorities of towns tried for centuries to put a stop to the playing of football, among other reasons because it almost invariably ended in bloodshed” (p. 119). In various essays, they demonstrate how the state’s power to influence sport has since expanded enormously in the modern era.

During the fourteenth century, most lower-class sport in England was effectively banned by government because it interfered with archery practice. Although the English lost at Bannockburn in 1314, and won at Crecy in 1346, their archers were a formidable and deadly presence at both (Brailsford, 1992). Following Crecy, the English archers:

Not only initiated a new phase in the history of warfare but also, in one sense, a new episode in the history of sport. Henceforth, for nearly three centuries, governments would look to promoting skill and strength in the use of the new, demanding weapon (Brailsford, 1992: p. 6).

John Hargreaves (1986) also shows how popular sporting forms were repressed from an early stage, not just by government, but also by the aristocracy, the church, the forces of law and order, and other elite groups holding power throughout many centuries. He uses hegemony theory to argue his main thesis that:

Sport was significantly implicated in the process whereby the growing economic and political power of the bourgeoisie in nineteenth-century Britain was eventually transformed into that class’s hegemony in the latter part of the century (p. 7).

Although working-class culture and sporting forms were continually threatened, Hargreaves suggests that, “Popular culture under attack proved remarkably resilient” (p. 31). The delay in getting legislation passed, the inability of police and militia to enforce it, and popular resistance, ensured that many working-class sports and games survived. Hargreaves (1986) goes on to look at the cultural and social changes in popular sporting forms, mainly in their organised manifestation after the Industrial Revolution.
In recent years there has been a growing interest in sports politics and the involvement of government in sports. A number of works have looked at how modern sport is organised and financed, as well as topics such as drugs, national identity, gender, apartheid, and so on. For example, Allison’s 1986 collection covers issues that were highly relevant in the rapidly-changing world of the time, such as apartheid in sport. By the time his 1993 edition was published, apartheid was dead, influenced at least in some measure by sporting boycotts of South Africa. Similarly, the first edition covered elite sport in the Soviet Union and its satellites, a political entity that had collapsed completely by the time of his later work. Allison (1993) himself comments that the years between the editions, “have contained as much change to sport and its political context as the previous generation, perhaps as much as any generation since the period from 1860 to 1890” (p. 1).

Terry Monnington (1993), writing in Allison’s second edition, analyses the role of politicians in sport. He asserts that:

> In her own way, Mrs Thatcher has significantly altered the sporting agenda in Britain and has shown a readiness both to use sport for political ends and to intervene in the sports context when she deemed it necessary (p. 144).

Monnington (1993) cites the examples of support for the 1980 Olympic boycott, Thatcher’s antipathy towards the ostracism of South Africa from world sport, the Football Spectators’ Bill, and the direction of investment in sport towards diversionary activities for disaffected youth.

Barrie Houlihan (1991) takes up these themes, and many others, in a definitive work on sport and sport policy-making in Britain. He shows how government intervenes in sport when it is convenient, how sport is organised in Britain, the role of local authorities, the financing of sport, and the policy process for sport. This process could lead to the development of a “policy community”, as it does in many other areas, such as housing, education, or farming (Houlihan, 1991). Building on the work of Rhodes (1986) he claims that, “policy communities often develop around government departments” (p. 167). However, the key relationships in a policy community for sport are shown to be clustered around the Sports Council, with the CCPR, local authorities, the Minister for Sport, and others, at the periphery (p. 168). This tends to suggest that the Minister for Sport is not the key figure in the policy-making process for sport.
These points will be returned to in Chapter 3, when models of policy-making are
discussed.

Houlihan (1991) goes on to look at the role of the Minister for Sport, who is the link
between government and the wider world of sport. Of all the Ministers for Sport, he
suggests that, "None of them, with the exception of Denis Howell, who seemed to like
the job, has been an impressive figure or politically influential" (p. 261). The sports
policy community might coalesce around a powerful and significant Minister for
Sport, the government's main representative in that field. As Houlihan (1991) shows,
the government's key position gives it a uniquely powerful role: "While it does not
control all resources, it generally exercises significant control over some, such as
finance, and may well possess a near monopoly of others, such as political authority"
(p. 167). This is something on which a strong and effective Minister should be able to
capitalise.

In another work, Houlihan (1997) compares the organisation of British sport and the
policy process for sport, with those of Australia, Canada, the USA, and the Republic
of Ireland. He suggests that an important reason for using the comparative method is
that, "Through careful comparison, policy-makers may learn which policies it is
probably wise to avoid and which are most likely to prove useful" (Houlihan, 1997: p.
7). In the cases of the USA, Canada, and Australia, federal structures ensure that there
are rival power bases and sports networks at state level. The USA in particular has
always been antipathetic to government involvement in many areas of society because
of its free-market ideology. It is not surprising therefore that sport is seen as
something for their government to leave alone, in terms of giving financial and other
support, although there are occasions when it does intervene in sport for other reasons.
One such example, cited earlier, is President Carter's initiation of the 1980 Olympic
Boycott which Mrs Thatcher supported (Monnington in Allison, 1993; Guttman,
2002). The Republic of Ireland, although a unitary state, is heavily influenced by
external events due to its small size. Of the common themes identified in his cross-
national comparison, Houlihan (1997) sees the role of government as one of the main
features:

Of particular importance is the steady increase in the involvement of
government in sport whether as a provider, exploiter or regulator. For some
countries with a welfare state tradition, such as the UK, Canada, and Australia,
the expansion of the government’s role has not been problematic but for the United States the growth of government involvement has been most sharply contested but no less significant (p. 60).

The increasing role of government in sport may be a feature of the so-called post-war consensus in the United Kingdom. This consensus and its impact on sport will be examined in the next section.

1.4 The British Post-War Consensus and its Effect on Sport

For many years after 1945, until the 1970s, British governments of both main parties largely agreed on the shape and size of state provision in health, education, welfare, defence, and other programmes. There was, in effect, a “consensus” on the role of the state as a provider of a wide range of services. Kavanagh and Morris (1989) give one of the most succinct and informative accounts of this process. They discuss the contribution made by William Beveridge and John Maynard Keynes in the 1940s to government social and economic policy. This has come to be expressed in different ways but with similar meanings:

Welfare capitalism, or the mixed or managed economy, or Keynesian social democracy, are the terms most often used to describe the elements of the post-war consensus (Kavanagh and Morris, 1989: p. 4).

Another description of British society since 1945, still widely applied, is the “welfare state”. Derek Fraser (1984) points out that, “The term itself did not become commonly used until the 1940s” although, “It was the end product of a very long historical process” (p. xxi). Peden (1991) tracks this process from the Victorian period, through the social reforms of the early twentieth-century Liberal governments, and into the post-war age of the Labour and Conservative governments’ managed economy. At the height of the Victorian era in 1870, government spending accounted for only nine per cent of gross national product. This figure had risen to well over 40% by the 1980s, even at the pinnacle of the Thatcherite crusade to cut back the state (Peden, 1991). According to an Institute of Fiscal Studies’ pre-election report in 2005, the government was still spending 41.2% of national income in 2004-05, a figure that was expected to rise still further (Elliott and Seager, 2005).

Gamble (1981) sees this shift towards much greater state provision of services as, “A
triumph of social democracy” (p. 102). At the same time, only a relatively wealthy country with a vigorous economy could afford such a huge investment in social and welfare services. Wilson and Wilson (1991) suggest that, “Over the long run, economic growth has been incomparably the most important factor in raising the standard of living of all income groups” (p. 14).

The Heath government of 1970-74 was thought at the time to be more radical in economic policies, compared with Harold Wilson in 1964-70, although Gamble (1994) suggests that the consensus on the post-war social and economic settlement was largely maintained by a Conservative government under Heath. In retrospect, the Heath government was considered as a period of continuity rather than change. A departure from consensus is frequently identified more precisely as occurring the point at which the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, Denis Healey, applied for an emergency loan from the International Monetary Fund in December 1976. Peter Riddell (1985) claims that:

If there has been a Thatcher experiment, it was launched by Denis Healey. It was the response of a clever and flexible man to the breakdown of the post-war consensus on economic management and to external pressures. In contrast, the Conservative approach has been based on belief (pp. 59-60).

Mrs Thatcher’s government, when elected in 1979, acted with the conviction that the days of corporatism and compromise, under Wilson, Heath and Callaghan, were over. They built on the foundations laid by Denis Healey to exact greater control on public spending. Thatcher’s Ministers believed that previous governments’ policies had been fundamentally wrong. In examining Mrs Thatcher’s economic legacy, Nigel Healey (1993) states, “Mrs Thatcher’s government was elected on the basis of a programme which was diametrically opposed to the economic philosophy of the post-war consensus between the two major political parties” (p. 1).

Gamble (1994) takes a similar view to Healey (1993). He shows how New Right ideas became the dominant ideology in the Conservative government. This was not, “a unified movement or a coherent doctrine” (Gamble, 1994: p. 34). It was an eclectic blend of social and economic teaching from thinkers such as Hayek, Friedman, and others. What they had in common was a desire to reduce the size of the state, encourage a highly competitive economy, and ensure strong defence of the country, or
as Gamble (1994) puts it, "the doctrine of the free economy and the strong state" (p. 35). In such a climate of opinion, consensus was anathema to many Conservatives, who wanted to sweep away what they saw as an outmoded post-war settlement. There was no necessary contradiction in being a Conservative and radical at the same time, as Gamble (1994) points out: "Conservative critics of corporatism argued that it produced weak government. They wanted a new, strong state that did not need to bargain with organised interests" (p. 30).

Mrs Thatcher's successor, John Major, was not a conviction-driven politician in the same mould as she was. However, there was no discernible break with the free-market, self-reliant type of policies she espoused. An edited work by Dunleavy, et al (2000) examines how British politics has changed in recent years. In this, Steven Fielding (2000) suggests that there has been more continuity than change:

Major was, however, ideologically indistinct from Thatcher. His governments privatized what remained of the state sector and introduced market mechanisms into public services (p. 18).

Dunleavy et al (2000) set out the arguments for politics returning to "normal" after Thatcher and Major, with a re-establishment of broad party agreement on the main policy lines (p. 1). Others observe that, while there may be a less confrontational atmosphere in politics, there has been no return to the old ways. For example Budge, et al (2004) see continuity with Conservative policies in the Labour government that was first elected in 1997:

The Labour Party, along with other Social Democratic parties in Europe, has largely abandoned high-tax, high-spending policies in favour of fiscal rectitude (i.e. low taxation and restraints on public spending and inflation). This sea change in policy has had important consequences for British politics and for the British economy (p. 17).

It has been noted by both Haywood et al (1995) and Henry (1993) that, despite the differing ideological standpoints of governments in the post-war period, investment in sport has not been seriously affected. There have been no fundamental changes of policy following the move from post-war consensus as there have been with other services, such as housing or nationalised industries. The Sports Council (and its successor bodies) has more or less retained a consistent level of funding, while the Minister for Sport has been retained as an office in government throughout this time.
Haywood et al (1995) track the social democratic consensus in relation to sport and leisure through a series of policy documents produced by the two major parties. They claim that, “The Wilson Government of 1964-70 is particularly significant in the development of post-war leisure policy” (p. 176). The Labour government of the time not only established the Sports Council, but also developed policies for the arts, the countryside, and the National Parks. When the Conservatives were elected in 1970, the consensus was largely undisturbed in these areas and Labour policies were not dismantled. As Henry (1993) reminds us:

When policy initiatives were introduced by the post-war Labour governments, not only did the Heath administration (1970-4) not attempt to rescind such arrangements, it continued to fund increasing levels of finance for the leisure quangos (p. 56).

The Heath government made the Sports Council an independent body and continued to fund it at a similar level as before. This was at a time when it was actively trying to cut back on some government activities and programmes, without radically breaking with the post-war consensus. Gamble (1994) argues that, “The Heath government began by dismantling many of the interventionist agencies used by Labour to implement its policies” (p. 82). He gives examples of the Prices and Incomes Board, the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation, and the Ministry of Technology as some of the agencies that the Heath government abolished. Nevertheless, Gamble (1994) shows that these were relatively small-scale cutbacks compared with those made by the first Thatcher government.

Henry (1990) illustrates in a time-series how the annual grant to the Sports Council rose from £3.6m in 1972-73 to £41.9m in 1989-90. This increased to £47m in 1995-96, the last year before reorganisation, leading to the creation of UK Sport and the various national Councils such as Sport England (Sports Council 1995-96). By 2002-03, Sport England alone received £79.6m from government² (Sport England 2002-03). In the same year, UK Sport was given over £15m by government and had almost £30m available to distribute in Lottery funding (UK Sport 2002-03). If these figures seem generous, the importance of sport to society and the economy should not be underestimated. Holt and Mason (2000) observe that:

No government can ignore an industry the size of sport and leisure which not only accounts for about £10 billion annually of consumer expenditure but
employs 750,000 workers and currently pays £3.5 billion per year in tax revenues. Sport is Britain’s eleventh largest industry and expanding fast (p. 66).

The next section looks at how parties, governments, and Ministers have responded to the growth of the sport and leisure sector, a phenomenon that has occurred during a period of increasing affluence in Britain.

1.5 Sport and Party Politics in the UK Since 1945

In the twentieth century, until the 1950s, there was little direct government intervention to assist sport, with policy in this area being relatively undeveloped in Britain. Sensing the need for a more focussed policy to present to government, in 1957 the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) commissioned Sir John Wolfenden to undertake an enquiry and make recommendations. Wolfenden’s (1960) report was very influential, and became the basis for government policy at that time. One of the suggestions rejected by Wolfenden was that, “There should be established a new Department of State, called the Ministry of Sport, which should have an overall direction both of finance and policy” (p. 97).

The Committee believed that this, “was foreign to the whole national attitude towards sport” (p. 97), a sentiment with which Lord Hailsham would probably have agreed. Instead, the Committee recommended the establishment of the Sports Council, or “Sports Development Council” as they described it (p. 100). Wolfenden did not recommend the appointment of a Sports Minister. The Committee envisaged the “Sports Development Council” would report directly to the Lord President of the Council or the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was not until Denis Howell was appointed as the first true Minister for Sport in 1964, that the Sports Council was finally established in 1965 (Howell, 1990). Lord Hailsham (1975, 1990) makes no mention at all of Wolfenden in his memoirs, although he was nominally responsible for sport shortly after the report appeared and was Lord President of the Council.

Two books, by Coughlan (1990) and Pickup (1996), have looked at the Sports Council in some detail. In so doing they have provided a number of worthwhile insights into the Minister for Sport’s relationship with that body and with sports politics generally. John Coghlan was Deputy Director of the Sports Council from
1980 to 1988; before this he had had a long career in sports education and administration. David Pickup, a former civil servant, was the Council’s Director from 1988 to 1993. Both have tracked the influence of government in sport at a time of important issues, such as drugs, mass participation, abandonment of amateurism in elite sport, hooliganism, and so on and both have first-hand experience of how the Minister for Sport has or has not influenced these events.

Coghlan (1990) sees the early years of the Sports Council as extremely valuable in providing a critical link with the machinery of government, since the Minister for Sport was also its chairman:

It was, however, quite clear from the beginning that the Sports Council, although advisory, was intended to be a dynamic and promotional body. It was to advise the Government but with the Government being largely represented by the Minister for Sport in the Chair, it was overwhelmingly likely that such advice would be accepted (p. 22).

John Coghlan was not appointed to head the Sports Council in 1988 when John Wheatley resigned as Director-General (Coghlan, 1990) because of the internal politics of the organisation. Instead the job went to David Pickup, someone from outside of the sporting environment. Pickup (1996) readily admits to his lack of knowledge of the sporting world:

I have to confess to having been less than comprehensively informed about the origins, development, role, structure or policies of the Sports Council. I was ignorant of the existence of the territorial cousins: the Sports Councils of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (p. 2).

Some other authors have looked at sport and leisure in a wider sense, but in so doing, have also discussed the Sports Council and the role of the Minister for Sport. For example, Haywood, et al (1995) track the period from Wolfenden (1960) to the establishment of the Sports Council and the role of various Ministers for Sport. However, they say little about the role of central government in determining sport or leisure policy. This area is covered better by Henry (1993), who looks at the effects of political ideology on sport and leisure provision at both national and local levels. He tells us that:

If politics are concerned with the allocation of scarce resources then clearly
leisure is a political issue, even if only in terms of governmental decisions about the aims, level and appropriateness of investment in leisure from the public purse (p. 27).

This growing government investment in sport seems to be a common feature in most Western democracies, including Britain. The British government has taken an increasing interest in sport during the post-war period in many different ways, and for many reasons, such as promoting good health, occupying idle youth, and bolstering national prestige. According to Henry (1993), this “welfare” notion of sports and leisure provision has come under attack from many angles, including the Right, feminists, and even social democrats. He says that despite this, “Perhaps what was surprising was that in the early part of the 1980s leisure provision, as the ‘luxury’ end of the welfare services framework, was not immediately reduced or even dismantled” (pp. 58-9). He also looks at the role of local government in sport and leisure provision, and points out that, “Despite the ideological significance and generally high public profile of the leisure quangos, local government is by far the most significant vehicle for the delivery of leisure services” (p. 90).

Gratton and Taylor (2000) also provide evidence of sports and leisure funding by central and local government. They agree with Henry (1993) about the significance of local government in supporting such services, and present data showing that local authorities spent twice as much on this in 1995 as central government did. As economists, they set out a wealth of data on the income from broadcasting, sponsorship, government, sales of tickets, National Lottery, and other sources. They assert that sport and leisure:

Accounts for over a quarter of all consumer spending and over 10 per cent of total employment in the UK, and brings in over £20 billion per annum in foreign exchange. Sport is not the largest sector of the leisure industry, but it is amongst the fastest growing (p. 3).

The sport and leisure sector is now a major industry in Britain. With such a significant share of the national economy, it is little wonder that governments have become progressively more involved in sport. One way in which they have done so is through their programmes for government, as set out in their election manifestos. When Labour won the 1945 and 1950 elections, they were more concerned with restructuring the country’s industrial base than tinkering with people’s leisure
interests. Indeed, as Holt and Mason (2000) observe, “the post-war Labour government did not have a sports policy” (p. 146).

This lack of a sports policy is reflected in the Labour’s Party’s 1945 election manifesto, when all that was said on the wider leisure agenda was:

National and local authorities should co-operate to enable people to enjoy their leisure to the full, to have opportunities for healthy recreation. By the provision of concert halls, modern libraries, theatres and suitable civic centres, we desire to assure to our people full access to the great heritage of culture in this nation (p. 7).

By the 1950 election, the Labour Party still had no leisure and recreation policy, but they were edging towards it in their manifesto:

National Parks will be established in the fairest parts of Britain. Footpaths will be preserved and access to the countryside will be secured for all hikers and cyclists. There is also need for more playing fields for the children, and wherever possible these will be provided (p. 8).

The Conservatives had nothing at all to announce on sport or leisure at either the 1945 or 1950 elections. At the 1951 election neither of the main parties mentioned it in their manifestos. The election of 1955 was the first in which both parties included some mention of recreation at the same time. Labour made the very specific pledge to abolish tax on sport, and not much else:

We shall provide more playing fields. We shall abolish the tax on sport and the living theatre (p. 4).

In 1955 the Conservatives half-heartedly wanted to do something for better facilities, though this could hardly be described as a sport and recreation policy:

Grants will continue to be given for playing fields, community centres and youth clubs (p. 6).

Anticipating Wolfenden (1960) in 1959, Labour advocated establishing a Sports Council, with £5m for the purpose:

We shall make much better provision for the enjoyment of sport, the arts and countryside. A Sports Council will be set up with a grant of £5 million (p. 4).
This is the first time a specific figure was mentioned in relation to sports funding in a major British election manifesto, and one of the very few times any financial commitment was made. In actual fact, it was 1973-74 before the Sports Council achieved this level of funding in a single year (Henry, 1993). Labour did not have to fulfil their promise since the Conservatives won the 1959 election. The Tories in that year presented what was, for them, their most specific proposals for sport so far:

Measures will be taken to encourage Youth Leadership and the provision of attractive youth clubs, more playing fields and better facilities for sport (p. 6).

By the mid-1960s, both parties’ policies were becoming more specific. Labour again pledged to create a Sports Council in their 1964 manifesto. They stated that they would develop:

the national parks: preserve access to the coast and protect it from pollution and unplanned development: set up a sports council to supply in consultation with local authorities and voluntary bodies the physical equipment, coaching facilities and playing fields that are so badly needed (p. 18).

However, in 1964 there was no mention that a Minister for Sport would be created; this was Harold Wilson’s personal, spontaneous initiative, as Howell (1990) describes in his memoirs. The Conservatives advocated investment in a range of new facilities:

There remains a need in and around the towns and cities for many more sports grounds, playing fields, running tracks, swimming baths and gymnasiums. Local authorities have been advised on how to combine with their neighbours for the larger projects, and a substantial programme will be authorised (p. 15).

By 1966 the policies on offer from both parties were again somewhat vague. Each wanted more facilities, though without much definition or commitment, and better access to water for recreation. For Labour, the only specific mention of sport was the following:

A new Minister is energetically creating, through regional sports councils, a new approach to the provision of facilities for sport (p. 14).

The Conservative manifesto for 1966 included little on sport. No specific proposals were made for improving facilities, and the document simply noted that, if elected, the
Conservatives would:

plan the coast and countryside in such a way as to increase their natural beauty, increase the holiday attractions of Britain, and encourage provision for the growing numbers who leave the towns to sail, ski, climb, picnic or go caravanning (p. 8).

At the 1970 election Labour had more to announce on sport than ever before. In fact, it is the closest that either of the two main parties had reached at that stage to an actual policy for sport, and is worth quoting in full:

Labour's National Sports Council and the nine Regional Sports Councils are developing facilities and identifying recreational needs in sport. The next step is to assist in the establishment of regional sports centres. We shall encourage the design of new schools so that they can also serve as multi-purpose sports centres for the adult community. 200 schools are already being designed for this purpose. We shall seek to cater for the growth sports, golfing, squash, sailing and so on. Angling is one of our most popular sports and we shall give special attention to its two great problems of greater access to fishing waters and to the prevention of pollution (p. 17).

Since Labour lost the 1970 election, they were unable to implement these detailed policies. The Conservatives, who won in 1970, promised very little, except making the Sports Council an independent body:

The Sports Council is fulfilling an important function in carrying out research and advising the Government on capital investment in recreation by local authorities, and on grant-aid to voluntary organisations. We will make the Sports Council an independent body, and make it responsible for the grant-aiding functions at present exercised by the Government (p. 28).

The Conservatives' support for the Sports Council, a Labour initiative, tends to show a bi-partisan approach of sports policy. However, this was a time when the Tories were beginning to experiment with social and economic policies at variance with the post-war consensus, such as allowing some “lame duck” industries to go out of business (Gamble, 1994). An independent Sports Council was something that was actually delivered by the Conservatives in the following year, after their election victory in 1970.

With the February 1974 election being fought in an atmosphere of industrial crisis, Labour neglected to mention sport or recreation at all (for the first time since 1951).
The Conservatives, for their part, made a rather weak attempt to include something on the subject:

We shall give further impetus to the Sports Council, whose powers and funds we have already greatly expanded. Professional football clubs as well as amateur sports organisations will be encouraged to join with local authorities and voluntary bodies in the redevelopment of town centre grounds for multi-purpose recreational needs (p. 17).

As the governing party by October 1974, Labour may have felt it necessary to put something about sport in their manifesto. They therefore included only the second reference to the Minister for Sport in all of the 34 Labour or Conservative Party manifests between 1945 and 2005:

Labour appointed the first ever Minister of Sport and Recreation. We will continue to develop and improve the facilities for sport and leisure for all our citizens (p. 10).

The Conservatives made another half-hearted effort to mention sport in October 1974. They produced a fairly meaningless statement without offering any commitments:

At a time when economic conditions necessarily impose limits on public spending, we will nevertheless continue to give as much help as we can to the arts, to sport and to broadcasting, and we will be particularly keen to encourage local effort and involvement (p. 22).

After the “winter of discontent” in 1978-79, Labour lost the 1979 election. The single reference to sport in the manifesto of that year concerned extending facilities and putting an unspecified amount of “more money” into sport and leisure:

In a society where leisure is increasing year by year, Labour wants to make facilities for sport and leisure available to all. We will continue to put more money into these activities (p. 18).

The incoming Conservative government had little time for sport, certainly of the state-supported variety which was incompatible with the free market. However, a brief mention of sport was included, with some worthy, but fairly non-committal, thoughts being expressed about encouraging recreation:

Sport and recreation have also been hit by inflation and high taxation. We will
continue to support the Sports Councils in the encouragement of recreation and international sporting achievement (p. 26).

Labour's 1983 manifesto was memorably described by Gerald Kaufman as, "the longest suicide note in history" (quoted in Anderson and Mann, 1997: p. 17). It was laden with nationalisation, workers' control, increased taxation, and unilateral nuclear disarmament. However, some room was found for sport, without making any real promises:

Encourage greater participation in sport and recreation. Give incentives to voluntary bodies to involve themselves more widely in the provision of sporting and community facilities. Encourage local authorities and other owners of facilities to make them much more available to public use. Set up an immediate enquiry into the financial basis of sport and recreation. Review the provision of national sporting facilities, so as to secure a fairer geographical distribution. Ensure that the sporting talent of the nation receives sufficient support to enable them to bring sporting success to Britain (p. 32).

The Conservatives had similar vague ideas about widening participation and encouraging the voluntary sector in 1983, when they included a fairly lengthy statement without making any specific commitments:

The Government has increased the real level of funding for the Sports Council. The Urban Aid and Derelict Land Programmes have also contributed to new sporting projects. By these means, and by offering one pound of government money for every one pound raised locally, we have begun to transform sports facilities in the inner cities. But there are still plenty of sports facilities which could be opened up to the general public. In particular, to reinforce our initiatives for better use of schools and playing fields, we shall urge every local education authority to make school and college premises available for use outside school hours and in the holidays. In all these initiatives, voluntary bodies will be enabled to play a bigger part. We have kept up the pressure for public access to parks and reservoirs for anglers and all those who enjoy and respect the countryside (p. 31).

The 1987 Labour manifesto was a little more focussed, with pledges on a “Sports Trust” and “Support Sports Programme”. These initiatives indicate that some thought was actually being brought to bear on the subject. There was also the first mention of bringing major events to Britain:

Our “Support Sport Programme” will provide more resources for physical education and training through more playing fields and facilities, better equipment and well-trained teachers and instructors. We will nourish special talents and encourage wider participation in sport. We will encourage schools
to open up their recreational facilities to the whole community and prevent the selling off of school and other sports grounds. We will set up a Sports Trust to channel resources into the development of community sporting facilities and the attraction of major international sporting events to Britain (p. 14).

The Tories continued with their usual pledges on encouraging participation. In addition, law and order featured strongly in the sports section for the one and only time amongst the 34 post-war manifestos. There were promises to clamp down on football hooliganism and ban the sale of alcohol at grounds:

We have increased funding for the Sports Council from £15 million in 1978/79 to £37 million in 1987/88. We will continue to work with the Council and, through our funding of the Sports Council National Centres, we will encourage the pursuit of excellence in our sports. We want to encourage competitive sports through schools and clubs and we strongly oppose any attempts to ban competitive sports in schools. We will continue to encourage schools and colleges to open their facilities for community use wherever possible to co-operate with other owners to achieve public access to sport premises. Football hooliganism has tarnished the good name of British sportsmanship. We have acted to control the sale of alcohol at sports grounds. We have enhanced police powers to stop and search at football grounds and we have encouraged tougher sentencing of hooligans (p. 69).

Labour’s 1992 manifesto promised rate relief to voluntary clubs, an initiative later implemented by Richard Caborn (Mackay, 2004). There was also the first, and so far only, hint of an equity agenda, with a reference to, “all ages and abilities” (p. 21). However, neither this nor indeed any of the Labour or Conservative manifestos has ever specifically mentioned the needs of ethnic minorities, women, the disabled, or other disadvantaged groups:

As people have more leisure, they also need better facilities for sport. We will encourage councils to invest in modern, well-staffed sports centres for the enjoyment of people of all ages and abilities, and give mandatory rate relief to voluntary sports clubs. New facilities and better backing for people with outstanding talent will help put Britain back on the international sporting map. We will review sports taxation, reform the Sports Councils and make football grounds safe for spectators. We will stop the wanton sale of school playing fields and ensure that sport takes its proper place within the curriculum (p. 21).

The 1992 Conservative manifesto was a complete break with the party’s past, reflecting Prime Minister Major’s personal interest in sport. Their proposals on sport were the most detailed ever in a British election manifesto. The following two extracts illustrate this:
We propose to introduce a National Lottery from 1994, which would help provide funds for a number of good causes in the artistic, sporting, heritage and charitable fields - and from which some funds would be put aside for a Millennium Fund (p. 44)

We will continue to encourage private sector sponsorship of sport. We will encourage more effective use of local sport and leisure facilities through compulsory competitive tendering [CCT]. We want to see more dual use of school playing fields and halls and will give schools more freedom in their management (p. 45).

The Conservative commitment to a National Lottery was to be fulfilled in 1994, thereby transforming the prospects for many elite sports competitors. However, the promise to undertake CCT of facilities is one of the few “ideological” references in the sports sections of the manifestos. There were several other specific pledges, including a £55 million package to support Manchester’s Olympic bid.

The Conservatives followed this up in 1997 with another comprehensive manifesto for sport. Most of the pledges centred on spending Lottery money on an English National Stadium, an Academy of Sport, 1,000 community coaches, and supporting athletes. For instance:

The National Lottery will also help us train and promote British sporting talent. The English National Stadium and British Academy of Sport, funded by the Lottery, will be new focal points for sporting events and excellence. We will encourage more young people to play sport by ensuring every school plays a minimum level of sport, including competitive sports, and developing a network of Sporting Ambassadors - sporting celebrities who will visit schools to inspire young people. We will also encourage the Sports Council to use Lottery money to employ over 1000 additional community sports coaches to assist in schools (p. 44).

They were not able to implement these proposals because Labour won the 1997 election. Labour’s own manifesto was fairly lacklustre in relation to sport. Once again they wanted to support excellence, encourage participation, and ban the sale of school playing fields. For the third time, they proposed to attract major events to Britain, including the Olympic Games:

A Labour government will take the lead in extending opportunities for participation in sports; and in identifying sporting excellence and supporting it. School sports must be the foundation. We will bring the government’s policy
of forcing schools to sell off playing fields to an end. We will provide full backing to the bid to host the 2006 football World Cup in England. A Labour government will also work to bring the Olympics and other major international sporting events to Britain (p. 30).

The commitment to bring major events to Britain took some time to be fulfilled, following the abortive 2006 World Cup bid and the Scottish/Irish applications to host the European Football Championships 2008. However, the government gave full backing to the successful London Olympic bid for 2012. Labour followed up their relatively sketchy proposals for sport in 1997 with much more detailed ones in 2001. This manifesto contained their most comprehensive aspirations for sport, and a very wide range of initiatives:

We pledge a sports entitlement for all children, giving them access to at least two hours a week of sport in or after school. Thanks to our ban on the enforced sale of playing fields and a commitment of nearly £1 billion to new sports facilities and 1,000 school sports co-ordinators, all children will be offered coaching and competitive games. We have pledged to fund 200 specialist sports colleges. We will maintain the elite funding we put in place for individual athletes, with a first-class athletics stadium for the World Athletics Championships in 2005 and a new stadium in Manchester for next year’s Commonwealth Games (p. 23).

In addition to those set out above in 2001, there would a sell-off of the Tote, support for amateur sports clubs, a free vote in the Commons on banning fox hunting, and a refusal to ban angling and shooting. By this stage the Manchester stadium was largely complete, but the 2005 World Athletics Championships had to be forfeited because London lacked a suitable stadium and the government failed to ensure that it was built.

The Conservatives countered in 2001 with a return to some of their more traditional proposals, such as increased sport in schools, charitable status for voluntary sports clubs, streamlined funding for sport, and the encouragement of private investment. They would also:

ensure that our elite athletes get the funding they need to achieve excellence in the future. Conservatives will give back to headteachers and governors the right to offer adequate time for sport. We will also give further protection to playing fields (p. 42).

Labour’s 2005 manifesto contained many of the same promises as that of 2001, such
as a bid for the 2012 Olympics, support for amateur clubs, and encouragement of school sport. Indeed, the emphasis on school sport became its most significant feature:

Investment in school sports will ensure that by 2010 all children will receive two hours of high-quality PE or sport per week. Every child should have the chance to compete at school. We have clamped down on the sale of paying fields: 96 per cent of schools in Schools Sports Partnerships now hold at least one sports day or sports festival each year. All secondary schools will be expected to field teams in regular competitive fixtures (p. 95).

The emphasis was very much on grass-roots sports, community facilities, sport for all, and school sport, with little mention of elite sport. By contrast, the Conservatives almost ignored sport, with only a fleeting mention of the Lottery and a promise to reverse the ban on hunting with dogs.

Throughout most of the manifestos there is a strong impression that sport has been mentioned very much as an afterthought. It often merits only a couple of lines, or at most one or two paragraphs. In many cases it is buried within other subject areas, such as education (e.g. sharing of school facilities), or environment (e.g. opening up the countryside). On a number of occasions, sport is coupled with the arts, as if they were one and the same thing.

Only in the case of the Conservatives' 1992 manifesto was sport really flagged up as being of some significance. It was usually tagged on near the end, a long way behind the economy, taxation, law and order, defence, foreign policy, education, social services, and so on. Even where sport is given its own small sub-section, the contents are often very vague.

Some themes constantly appear, particularly those on the fringes of what could be considered true sport (e.g. national parks, footpaths, opening up the countryside, sharing of facilities, sales of school playing fields, better use of waterways for leisure). Many people would agree that more sport in schools is a good thing, so the parties have found it very easy to include this aspiration in their manifestos without actually doing much about it. Furthermore, no government could be pinned down on delivering these kinds of promises, since they are difficult to evaluate.

There are few definite pledges, and even fewer stated objectives which have been
fulfilled (the creation of the Sports Council, National Lottery funding, Manchester Commonwealth Games stadium, 2012 Olympics stand out as honourable exceptions). Many promises have not been fully delivered (e.g. the pledge to bring major events to Britain, a Manchester Olympics, or a major stadium in London for the 2005 World Athletics Championships), although the European Football Championships of 1996 and the 2002 Commonwealth Games were staged in Britain. The existence of the Minister for Sport merits only two mentions (Labour, in 1966 and October 1974). Perhaps this is an indication of the value attached to the office by successive Governments and Oppositions when writing their manifestos.

There appear to be few real ideological differences between the parties when writing their manifesto proposals for sport. There is no clearly-defined “Labour view” of sport, nor is there a Conservative one either. While some authors (e.g. Macfarlane, 1986; Houlihan, 1991) have shown how Labour and Conservative governments have taken ideological stances in response to particular events, such as football hooliganism, there is not much evidence of this in their manifestos.

There are some differences in emphasis, with a tendency for Labour policies to centre more on what the government can do via the Sports Council, by developing new facilities, or through the schools. In the Conservative manifestos, there is more focus on self-help, voluntarism, and competitive tendering. Only once was there a true ideological position taken, when the Conservatives flagged up law and order in 1987, in response to hooliganism in football at that time.

Overall, there has been a trend for both main parties to develop a more comprehensive approach to sport and leisure with the passage of time. There is a clear tendency for some of the later manifestos from the 1990s onwards to present more developed ideas. However, the Minister for Sport has not necessarily played a significant role in the processes of government or in delivering government policies, as the following section illustrates.

1.6 Governments and Ministers

British governments have not ignored sport, as Holt and Mason (2000) have shown. They have paid it an increasing amount of attention, not least by creating and
maintaining the post of Minister for Sport. Although there has been such a Minister since 1964, the post has always been outside the Cabinet, in contrast with some other countries. For example, Canada has had a Cabinet-level Minister for Sport since 1973 (Houlihan, 1997). In Britain, by contrast, Houlihan (1997) suggests, "the absence of a voice at Cabinet level" (p. 96) has been a major disadvantage for sports policy. Journalist, Paul Kelso (2004) noted that France made their bid for the 2012 Olympics with a Sports Minister who was a full member of the French Cabinet. It has often been proposed that the British Sports Minister should also be in the Cabinet. Two press articles, by Charlie Whelan (1999) and Ian Ridley (2001), illustrate this point of view:

It is all very well for the Government to back the World Cup bid and to get high-profile brownie points for doing so, but so much more needs to be done for grass-roots sport, particularly in schools, and in order that the sports minister has clout to do that she should be in the Cabinet (Whelan: p. 7).

There is one signal that Tony Blair might send out to sport as a guide to intent when he comes to consider the composition of his next government on Friday morning. It is to grant Hoey, as a minister, a Cabinet position so she can keep sport on the main agenda (Ridley: p. 8).

Whelan was writing shortly after Kate Hoey had been appointed as the Minister for Sport in succession to Tony Banks. Ridley made his suggestion just before the 2001 election. Not only was Hoey sacked as a Minister the following week, the post remained firmly outside of the Cabinet. In 2005, a report co-authored by Kate Hoey and Colin Moynihan on the future of British sport, also called for a Cabinet-level Sports Minister (Hoey and Moynihan, 2005; Mackay, 2005c). According to Hoey and Moynihan (2005), "it is essential that we have a Secretary of State for Sport – a strong voice for sport within the Cabinet" (p. 5).

It is thus implied that a Minister for Sport in the Cabinet would be much more powerful than one outside. This presumes that the Cabinet is the main constitutional instrument of British government and policy-making. But there has been much discussion by political scientists and politicians over many years as to whether or not it is true. For instance, John Mackintosh’s (1968) classic account still rated the Cabinet as a key institution in British government in the 1960s, though not as important as it had been in the nineteenth century. He informs us:

The point is that the Cabinet is no longer the nineteenth-century body which
took virtually all decisions, where legislation was worked out, the parliamentary programme devised and in which ministers could raise any issue. The importance of the Cabinet is, as has been indicated, that it reconciles, records and authorises (pp. 611-12).

Other commentators in the 1960s detected a gradual erosion in the power of the Cabinet. For example, George Brown as Foreign Secretary was convinced that Harold Wilson was introducing a presidential system. Brown (1971) describes how this led to his resignation from the government in 1968:

I resigned on a matter of fundamental principle, because it seemed to me that the Prime Minister was not only introducing a “presidential” system into the running of the Government that is wholly alien to the British constitutional system – others have been tempted to do it that way too – but was so operating it that decisions were being taken over the heads and without the knowledge of Ministers, and far too often outsiders in his entourage seemed to be almost the only effective “Cabinet” (p. 169).

In a single long sentence, George Brown encapsulates the view held by many other Ministers, then and later, such as that of Ian Gilmour (1993) a former Thatcher Cabinet Minister. He asserts that key decisions were taken outside the Cabinet by small groups of Thatcher intimates during his time as Lord Privy Seal 1979-81. Michael Heseltine was Defence Secretary when he resigned in January 1986 over the “Westland affair”. The final straw for him was a critical decision, taken without his knowledge, by the Prime Minister and her close advisers in December 1985. Heseltine (2001) writes in his autobiography:

The Prime Minister refused to allow a discussion in Cabinet that day. I insisted that the Cabinet secretary should record my protest in the Cabinet minutes. When the minutes were circulated there was no reference to any discussion about Westland and consequently no record of my protest (p. 538).

Between Wilson and Thatcher, Edward Heath acted in a similar way, with his domination over Cabinet and a tendency to take key decisions with a handful of close advisers. James Fox (1975) examined the work of the Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS), a body set up by Heath to advise the Prime Minister. He writes that Heath had a, “quasi-autocratic style of government in Cabinet” (p. 278). Furthermore, “Heath’s concentration of power obviously gives the idea that presidential power is slowly creeping up on No. 10” (p. 279). Hennessy (1990) takes a more charitable view of Heath, seeing the CPRS as a very important managerial and policy-making
innovation that he introduced.

A more recent perspective on the Cabinet has been provided by Burch and Holliday (1996). They pay tribute to Mackintosh, whose, “broad historical sweep” they acknowledge (p. 3). However, using a series of case-studies of policy decisions, they illustrate the growing importance of the Cabinet Office and Prime Ministerial patronage, to the Cabinet’s detriment. They recognise that the Cabinet, while not as significant as in former times, can still be a powerful force in policy-making. In their view, “Over time the cabinet itself has become marginalised, though it can – and does – still take major decisions” (p. 44).

Burch and Holliday (1996) studied a period up to the mid-1990s when the Conservatives were in office. The process of declining Cabinet importance seems to have gone even further under New Labour. Many current writers have concluded that important decisions are taken by individuals outside Cabinet, that Cabinet meetings are short and infrequent, and that the power of the Prime Ministerial office has reached new heights. In a more recent assessment King (2007) observes, “Modern cabinets are far too large to be effective decision-making bodies” (p. 329), having reached a twentieth-century high point under Callaghan in 1976-79.

The literature is still growing, but Hennessy (1990, 2000, 2004), Burch and Holliday (2005), and Heffernan (2005) are amongst those who have described the changes over the last twenty years or so. One of the leading commentators in the field, Hennessy (2000), sees the Blair style of government as fitting in to a model of concentric circles, rather than a pyramidal or hierarchical one. Hennessy (2004) suggests that when Ministers meet with Blair:

Policy discussion takes place in smaller, more informal groups – more sessions on the sofa in the prime minister’s study; less formal occasions round the cabinet table (p. 6).

This idea of concentric circles at the heart of government, with greater power residing with the innermost ones, is also used by Budge et al (2004), who describe this inner-circle as the “core executive”, comprising of the most senior Cabinet Ministers, trusted policy advisers, senior civil servants, and other influential people. Those whose position is in the outer circles, including junior Ministers, have very little
influence on policy-making. This concept will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

Most close observers agree that a Cabinet Minister’s role is likely to be a very powerful one, compared with that of a junior Minister, in terms of controlling resources and having access to the Prime Minister and policy networks. Although not all Cabinet Ministers will be part of the “core executive” Cabinet office gives Ministers greater authority. Headey (1974) analysed the skills and ambitions of Cabinet Ministers, after interviewing a large number of them. While most saw themselves as effective and influential, few seemed to have any clear idea of policy objectives; their main aim was simply attaining Cabinet office. It was Headey’s perception that, “A Minister may cast himself as a policy initiator but in reality make no contribution to policy whatever” (p. 172). An understanding of a Minister’s work, and his delegation of tasks to junior Ministers such as Sports Ministers, is important when considering their role, something which Theakston (1985) examined. He concluded that the influence of junior Ministers depended a lot on their relationships with their Secretaries of State, who were rarely willing to cede much power.

While some Cabinet Ministers may not necessarily be effective as policy-makers, most junior Ministers are ambitious for Cabinet office because of its enhanced status and influence. It is not so much that Cabinet is important in itself, but rather the perception of power that attaches to its members. Headey (1974) suggests that some junior offices are much more likely to lead to the Cabinet than others, particularly ones attached to the Treasury. In Chapter 4, Table 3 it can be seen that first appointments in the Whips, Treasury, Defence, and Education are much more likely to lead to Cabinet office than any others. However, relatively few junior Ministers ever reach the Cabinet. Theakston (1987) puts the figure at approximately a quarter. The calculations set out in Table 4 confirm a figure of 24% for all Ministers in the 1964-2005 period. In addition, a comparison of Ministers for Sport with other junior Ministers confirms that the former are amongst the least likely to be promoted.

Some ex-Cabinet ministers, including Tony Benn (1988-2002), Richard Crossman (1975-77), and Barbara Castle (1980) have published diaries of their time in office. Unfortunately, no Minister for Sport has yet published a diary. Indeed, diaries or memoirs by junior Ministers are quite rare. Amongst the few who have produced diaries are Giles Brandreth (1999), Edwina Currie (2002), and the three volumes by
Alan Clark (1993, 2001, 2003). They all speak of the tedium of a junior Minister’s life, the dogsbody tasks given to them by senior Ministers, and the burning desire for promotion which never came. Edwina Currie (2002) writes amusingly of this when she says, “And if the only way to get a promotion to Minister of State was to go to Scotland I’d do that willingly and have a whale of a time up there” (p. 44). Currie never had to make the sacrifice of going to Scotland, and was never offered promotion either. Her career as an Under-Secretary lasted only from 1986 to 1988 (Butler and Butler, 2000).

It is now almost mandatory for ex-Cabinet Ministers to produce their memoirs. A few examples include George Brown (1971), Denis Healey (1989), Lord Hailsham (1975 and 1990), Nigel Lawson (1992), Barbara Castle (1993), Michael Heseltine (2001), and John Nott (2002). All were eager for the ultimate promotion to Prime Minister, and write about this with varying degrees of candour, but none of them achieved their goal. Regrettably, they have little to say about Ministers for Sport.

Memoirs by junior Ministers are almost as rare as diaries. Gerald Kaufman (1997) has written entertainingly about a junior Minister’s fairly tedious, routine job, where promotion is the main aim. The Minister is likely to carry out the most mundane tasks for his or her boss, the Secretary of State, while being patronised by the civil servants. Kaufman (1997) writes that on moving from the backbenches to junior office:

The new minister may turn out to be rude, lazy, irascible, dirty, a drunkard or – worst of all – stupid. To begin with, they [the civil servants] operate on the safest principle, namely that he is an imbecile (p. 23).

The creator and head of the Prime Minister’s Policy Unit under Wilson and Callaghan 1974-79, Bernard Donoughue, became a junior agriculture Minister 1997-99. In his memoirs (2003) he wrote of the limitations of his ministerial role:

I quickly realised that today being a junior minister in any Whitehall department feels very insignificant, and certainly much more inconsequential than when I was previously in the government in the 1970s (p. 338).6

Donoughue (2003) was very close to Denis Howell from the 1950s, describing him as, “my closest political friend” (p. 92), who appointed him as a member of the Sports Council in 1965. Only Howell amongst ex-Sports Ministers has written his
autobiography (1990). It is a full account of his life in politics, showing his intense commitment to promoting sport. Neil Macfarlane’s book (1986) is semi-autobiographical, describing some of his activities as Minister for Sport and his views on various sports topics. Both of these monographs will be discussed in the next section.

According to Headey (1974) and Dorey (2005), junior Ministers are almost always imposed on Cabinet Ministers by the Prime Minister. However, the memoirs of all the Prime Ministers in the 1964-1997 period reveal little of their Sports Ministers’ (or other junior Ministers’) appointments. Harold Wilson (1971) briefly mentions Howell’s appointment in 1964:

In Education, Denis Howell, who had an unrivalled knowledge of sporting problems, was appointed as a junior minister with special responsibility for sport. Indeed he rapidly acquired the title throughout the press and the sporting world of “Minister of Sport” (p. 10).

Wilson (1979) also deals with Howell’s reappointment in 1974 (although he got the dates wrong). He noted that the Ministers for Arts and Sport had helped to improve the quality of life in Britain during his first administration, so he intended to retain the positions:

Denis Howell, responsible for sport, was able to spend twice as much in 1970-71 as in 1963-64, and had revolutionised the provision of sports facilities for young people in general and particularly for competitive sports, swimming, athletics and cycling (p. 18).

John Major (1999) deals with sport at some length. He describes the establishment of the Department of National Heritage in 1992, and enthuses about his vision of Lottery funding to improve participation and performance in sport. He had a high regard for Iain Sproat whom he appointed as the Minister for Sport 1993-97:

Iain was enthusiastic as I had hoped he would be. He was no respecter of seniority or bureaucracy, and trod on many toes, but he was very effective and knew he could rely on my full support (p. 412).

Major does not mention Robert Key, his Minister for Sport from 1992 to 1993. The other Minister for Sport during his premiership was Robert Atkins, who was in post from 1990 to 1992. Major (1999) talks of him as a friend who entered the Commons
on the same day in 1979, but does not discuss him as Minister for Sport. Thatcher (1993) notes only that, "Neil Macfarlane (as Sports minister)" (p. 279), who was part of a small committee set up in 1982 to devise policies for a second term. Interestingly, Thatcher (1995) reveals a little of her own unsuspected sporting achievements. When her son caught chickenpox in 1960, the family missed a summer holiday in Brittany:

To compensate, still more adventurously, we decided to go skiing at Lenzerheide in Switzerland at Christmas. None of us had ever skied before, so we joined a ski club in Sloane Square and took a course in skiing from Lillywhites before we went. The holiday was a great success, and we went back to the same hotel year after year. I loved the scenery and the exercise. And I loved the hot chocolate and pastries afterwards even more (1995: p. 105-6).

Of the other Prime Ministers who appointed Ministers for Sport in the 1964-1997 period, only James Callaghan and Edward Heath have nothing whatsoever to report on the subject. Callaghan (1987) appeared to have had no sporting interests at all, according to his personal account, though his biographer, Kenneth Morgan (1997) observes that when he was sixteen:

He took to running in Fratton Park before school began and played in the school football team in 1928, although apparently with limited skill. He also took part in athletics on behalf of Wallington House: he was not a great athlete (p. 12).

Morgan goes on to report that, "After his youthful efforts at rugby and tennis, he played no games and took little exercise apart from some hiking expeditions on holiday" (p. 125). Heath (1998) claimed to be a lifelong Arsenal supporter and he was also devoted to sailing. He wrote movingly of the sinking in a storm of his beloved Morning Cloud and the drowning of two friends when he recorded, "The October election [1974] came in the wake of a personal tragedy, the loss of my third Morning Cloud in September" (p. 526). As Geoffrey Howe (1994) describes it the yacht, "foundered in a force-nine gale off the Sussex coast" (p. 87). Luckily for Heath he was not on the vessel at the time, but was campaigning for the forthcoming election.

Tony Blair has not yet written his account for 1997-2007. When he does, he may have something to say on the Minister for Sport, given his backing for events such as the 2012 London Olympic bid, and his own contribution to ensuring its success. More specific literature on the Ministers for Sport will now be examined, including some
written by themselves and other politicians.

1.7 Ministers for Sport

There is a relative paucity of literature by the Ministers for Sport themselves. Being junior Ministers, they are not normally famous enough to find a market for their publications. Junior Ministers in general are fairly anonymous in most government departments. The three who published their diaries, Brandreth (1999), Clark (1993, 2001, 2003), and Currie (2002), acquired fame or notoriety outside their ministerial jobs. Gerald Kaufman (1997), who produced a humorous guidebook for aspiring Ministers rather than a diary, is something of an elder statesman who missed Cabinet office mainly because his party was out of power for many years. As an ex-junior Minister, Kaufman (1997) generously said of Denis Howell that he was, “an inevitable minister of sport” (p. 5), because of his great knowledge of the subject.

From their positions inside the Sports Council as Deputy Director 1980 to 1988 and Director 1988 to 1993 respectively, John Coghlan (1990) and David Pickup (1996) give their views on all Ministers for Sport from Howell to Hoey. These accounts stem from first-hand meetings with the respective Ministers. As sporting administrators, they regarded some of the Ministers much more highly than others, with Howell and Moynihan at the top of the ability and industriousness range. On the other hand, Sproat was seen by them as the most abrasive and Tracey as the least noticeable.

When the Sports Council became an independent body in 1972, with a chairman from outside the government arena, Coghlan (1990) feels that it lost this valuable influence. He speaks highly of Howell’s role as a Minister and chairman of the Sports Council. He also praises Eldon Griffiths and Hector Monro for taking a, “bi-partisan approach to sporting issues” (p. 208), compared with their more ideological successors such as Neil Macfarlane, whom he was pleased to see departing, “to the obscurity of the backbenches” in 1985 (p. 208).

Denis Howell is a rare exception amongst junior Ministers. He was fairly well-known to the public during the 1960s and 1970s, for activities both inside and outside sport. He produced his autobiography (1990) at the age of 67 when his ministerial career was clearly over. It is not an especially well-written book, since he seems to have
eschewed the assistance of a ghost writer or editor. Nevertheless, he devotes around two-thirds of the 400 pages to his work as Minister for Sport, such as establishing the Sports Council, and dealing with football hooliganism. Howell describes being born into a working-class family in Birmingham on 4 September 1923. After school he worked in a bicycle factory, became a Labour Councillor at 27, and entered Parliament in 1955 for the Birmingham All-Saints constituency. He was a football referee at the highest level in England, as well as being heavily involved in other sports, including athletics through Birchfield Harriers. For many years as an MP, Howell was an advocate of what “New Labour” was later to call “joined up government” for sport and recreation. In Howell’s (1990) own words:

The Sports Council, the Countryside Commission, the Nature Conservancy Council, the water industry and the local authorities (including the education authorities) ought to be working together under ministerial leadership to provide unlimited possibilities from which people can choose their leisure time enjoyment. No such policy exists. I have always believed that the Arts Council and the tourist industry should be added to these to provide a new department of state (p. 375).

Howell was, in effect, writing his own job description here for a Cabinet post, which John Major created with the Department of National Heritage in 1992, later transformed into Culture, Media and Sport by Tony Blair. Neil Macfarlane (1986) suggests that Howell would have really liked to be called the, “Minister for the Quality of Life” (p. 63). Macfarlane goes on to comment:

Although Denis never made a Department for the Quality of Life, he seemed to end up with just about every other ministerial task that was going, because it is a Prime Minister’s prerogative to bestow upon a junior member of the Government any current problems which might need some form of trouble-shooting (p. 63).

Macfarlane then gives the examples of drought, floods, snow, and oil slicks which Callaghan and Wilson delegated to Howell. Harold Wilson respected Howell as an influential Labour figure in the 1950s, through the Campaign for Democratic Socialism. Six years after Howell’s death Tam Dalyell (2004) said of him, “He thus had a power-base in the party; Harold Wilson, from a different political stable, could never ignore Howell” (p.496). Dalyell’s portrait of Howell in The Dictionary of National Biography (2004), and Howell’s anonymous obituarist in The Times (20 April 1998), both concentrated on his achievements for sport. Howell retired from the
Commons in 1992, without ever attaining Cabinet rank. In Theakston’s view (1987) Howell was, “trapped in a political ghetto” and “his career suffered as a result” (p. 156). He quotes an unidentified political colleague of Howell who observed, “He’s almost a person you can’t take seriously in a higher dimension after all these years with Sport, but he could be a very useful member of the Cabinet” (p. 156).

This is a view shared by Bernard Donoughue. As already mentioned (p. 39) they had a close political and personal relationship going back to the 1950s. Donoughue has now published his diary of this period (2005), in which he makes frequent reference to his friend Howell, someone with whom he shared a similar political philosophy. He writes that in 1974, “I was then personally closest to Denis Howell and William Rodgers, both right-wing Gaitskellite MPs” (p. 1), and frequently describes him as, “my old friend Denis Howell” (p. 128). After the February 1974 election Donoughue sympathises that Howell has not been promoted by recording, “He is disappointed at again being Minister of Sport” (p. 64). By January 1975, Howell, “resents still not being made a Privy Councillor” (p. 273), an honour that would have been a recompense for not being given Cabinet office. He observes sadly in November 1975 that, “Denis must be frustrated, doing a job little different from 11 years ago” (p. 551), although he was promoted to Minister of State in October 1969.

When Wilson retired in March 1976, Callaghan retained Howell as Minister for Sport but gave him no promotion. Denis Howell went to the House of Lords with a life peerage in 1992, still a vigorous advocate for sport to the end, and died on 19 April 1998. He held no other ministerial office, because Labour had been out of power since 1979 (The Times, 20 April 1998).

Howell was succeeded by Eldon Griffiths, who was born on 25 May 1925. He was educated at Cambridge and Yale, pursued a career in journalism, then worked at the Conservative Research Department from 1962 to 1964. He entered the House of Commons as MP for Bury St. Edmunds in 1964 (Who’s Who, 1997). As Minister for Sport, Griffiths’ main achievement was to oversee the independence of the Sports Council. In doing so, Coghlán (1990) describes him as, “Charming, non-interventionist, more concerned with other ministerial duties apart from sport but determined to carry out his party’s policy to establish an independent body” (p. 127).
Denis Howell profoundly disagreed with this policy because the Sports Council was effectively his creation. He was annoyed that Griffiths had not discussed the matter with him beforehand. As he recorded in his autobiography (1990), “There was no consultation with me by Eldon Griffiths about the Charter proposal” (p. 214). Howell evidently still saw himself as heir-apparent to the job and upholder of its integrity.

As a colleague from the same political party, Neil Macfarlane (1986) paints a more sympathetic picture of Griffiths:

Eldon Griffiths held office before I entered the house, but by all accounts he was a most energetic member of what he accurately described as the smallest and most unimportant trade union in the House. Performing an opening ceremony at a swimming pool, he was quite likely to challenge the local mayor to a race over a couple of lengths, and would invariably come first (p. 63).

Griffiths held no other ministerial office before or after sport, although he was an Opposition spokesman on trade and industry, then Europe 1974-76. He later became a backbench spokesman for the Police Federation. Griffiths impressed Douglas Hurd when he was a Home Office Minister in 1983. According to Hurd (2003) who was piloting through the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, Griffiths was a staunch defender of the status quo, who represented a traditional Conservative Party view of law and order.

He was given a knighthood in 1985 and left the Commons in 1992 to pursue a business career in the USA (Who’s Who, 1997; Butler and Butler, 2000), a country to which he had a lifelong attachment. In his autobiography, Geoffrey Howe (1994), describes him as, “a leading Conservative Americanist” (p. 328).

Hector Monro had the misfortune to be Minister for Sport during Mrs Thatcher’s first government, which meant that he had to deal with the consequences of her support for President Carter’s proposed boycott of the 1980 Olympic Games, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Denis Howell (1990) rated him highly for his, “proper sporting pedigree having been a former president of the Scottish Rugby Union” (p. 345). He also says of him:

He is relaxed in his approach and easy to talk to, so it is regrettable that he did
not survive the 1980 Moscow Olympic fiasco. I doubt very much if Hector approved very much of his Government’s boycott policy and he was certainly not allowed to take part in the famous debate in the House (p. 345).

Neil Macfarlane (1986) felt that Monro was on the verge of resigning over the Olympic boycott issue because of the way in which he was treated. Macfarlane recalls that, “The following year he was removed from office by the Prime Minister and I succeeded him” (p. 225).

As a Minister for Sport Monro was quite highly regarded during his two-year stint in office. In Coghlan’s (1990) opinion, “Monro was quiet, knowledgeable and effective: constructive in all he did” (p. 127). One of his sporting interests was shooting. Douglas Hurd (2003) remembers that as a Home Office Minister in 1988, he was given the task of introducing legislation to control firearms after the Hungerford massacre of 1987. Hector Monro organised an expert lobby to oppose this, without success. Hurd (2003) later came to see that Monro was right, especially when further legislation was introduced post-Dunblane, “which destroyed a sporting activity far removed from the Dunblane killings” (p. 356).

It is notable that he was the only MP from a non-English constituency who ever held the office (although Iain Sproat had previously represented a Scottish seat from 1970 to 1983). He had a long career in the House of Commons as MP for Dumfries 1964-97 and in the Lords with a life peerage from 1997. He was junior Minister in the Whips’ Office from 1970 to 1971 and in the Scottish Office from 1971 to 1974. Monro was born in 1922, of an upper-middle-class farming family, with extensive landholdings in the south-west of Scotland. After his sacking as Minister for Sport in September 1981, he was given a knighthood, but attained no further office under Thatcher. In 1992-95 he was brought back to the Scottish Office as a Parliamentary Under-Secretary by John Major (Who’s Who, 1997; Macfarlane, 1986; Butler and Butler, 2000).

Neil Macfarlane (1986) explains in the preface to his book that it is, “not intended to be a memoir of four years as minister for sport” (p. 8). Unlike Howell’s book (1990), it is not autobiographical, but it contains a wealth of detail on some the most important issues he dealt with, including, sporting contact with South Africa, Zola Budd’s passport application in 1984, tobacco sponsorship, drugs, and football.
hooliganism. When he was appointed in September 1981, Michael Heseltine was his boss, as Secretary of State for the Environment. He asked Macfarlane, “You do like sport, don’t you? (p. 69). Macfarlane continues:

He omitted to ask whether I was interested in gypsies and gems, ancient monuments, sites of special scientific interest, national heritage, zoos, national parks, Royal parks and palaces, nature conservation, planning and land reclamation. All of these and more come under the umbrella of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for sport. No other Minister for Sport in the world has comparable duties (p. 69).

Macfarlane seemed to work well with Heseltine and became a close ally of his in the longer term. When it came to the Conservative leadership election of 1990, Crick (1997) records that, “Heseltine was proposed by Sir Neil Macfarlane, his junior sports minister from DoE days” (p. 346), who also campaigned for him. These activities particularly annoyed Thatcher, since Macfarlane was a frequent golf partner of her husband Denis. Macfarlane was not a Minister at this time, but had Heseltine been successful there may have been a route back to government office for him.

Alan Clark’s three volumes (1993, 2001, 2003) of amusing diaries, at different times mention Monro, Macfarlane, Atkins, and Sproat, usually in a political context. However, he saw the Minister for Sport as purely a public relations job, since there was no Minister for the navy or many other policy areas. Clark (2001) describes an accidental meeting on a train with Macfarlane in 1982:

I don’t especially like Neil Macfarlane and I was offensive to him on the floor of the House about two months ago when I questioned him on the subject of the World Cup team Logo. When I returned after breakfast there sat Macfarlane, his rather common (but painted up) personal secretary and a bearded civil servant – who presumably keeps him straight, i.e. progressive, on such matters as apartheid in sport (p. 308-9).

Denis Howell (1990) refers to Macfarlane on a number of occasions in his memoirs. He is complimentary about his sporting background, but not his ability as a Sports Minister:

Neil Macfarlane became the Sports Minister in late 1982. [it was actually September 1981], succeeding Hector Monro. Macfarlane was a good club cricketer and took a passing interest in sports politics but he never really understood how sport is governed (p. 258).
Like Howell, Macfarlane’s ministerial career at Westminster was also over by the time his book was published, at the age of 50 in 1986, with no further office after sport. He had previously had a career in business, before entering Parliament for Sutton and Cheam in 1972. From 1979 to 1981 he was Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department of Education and Science. He received his knighthood in 1988 and left the Commons in 1992 (Who’s Who, 1997; Butler and Butler, 2000).

Richard Tracey became Minister for Sport in 1985, after Neil Macfarlane, and remained there until 1987. He is one of the least-known of all the post-holders. Houlihan (1991) describes some of his attempts to bring in measures for curbing football hooliganism. He notes that, “the ‘partnership’ between the government and the football authorities was not a mutual one, as the Minister was forcing the issue of membership against a background of limited enthusiasm from the clubs” (p. 188). It was a difficult time to be a Sports Minister, when football hooliganism and stadium disasters were amongst the most significant sporting issues. However, Coghlan (1990) thinks that his time as Minister was productive. When appointed, he was:

A surprise choice as Minister for Sport as he was largely unknown in the sports world. He played a quiet supportive role to the governing bodies of sport and the CCPR, BOA and Sports Council. He did not attempt to dictate or impose his will and in the short time he was given did a useful job for sport in and out of Parliament (p. 155).

Tracey took a strong line against tobacco sponsorship of sports events. Although in public he favoured a voluntary code, it was probably about as much as he could achieve politically at the time when he spoke in a House of Commons debate on a Private Member’s Bill to curb the practice (Hansard: House of Commons Debates, 21 February 1986, vol. 92, col. 628-45; see also Table 9 in Chapter 4). Neil Macfarlane (1986) detected Mrs Thatcher’s hand behind Tracey’s reluctance to press for an outright ban. This may also have been a factor in his attitude towards apartheid in sport. Mike Rowbottom (1997) observed that, following Macfarlane’s departure:

Tracey, a supporter of retaining sporting links with South Africa and a proponent of capital punishment, was installed as a tougher operator. But circumstances worked against him – he was soon complaining that he spent only 20 per cent of his working day on sport (p. 30).
Richard Tracey was born on 8 February 1943 and educated at Birmingham University. He was a magazine and broadcasting journalist (concentrating on motoring issues) before entering Parliament for Surbiton in 1983, which he represented as a Conservative MP until losing his seat to the Liberal Democrats in 1997. His only ministerial appointment was that of Minister for Sport (Who’s Who, 1997; Dod’s Parliamentary Companion, 1996; Butler and Butler, 2000).

After Tracey, Colin Moynihan became Minister for Sport from 1987 to 1990. At only 31 years of age, he was the youngest ever. Houlihan and White (2002) suggest that he was an exception to the other Ministers for Sport during the Thatcher years, in that he was competent and effective. He, "actively promoted work on sport for people with disabilities and those in inner-city areas, which proved to be precursors of later work on sports equity" (p. 28).

When David Pickup took over as head of the Sports Council in 1988, Colin Moynihan was the first Minister with whom he had to work. He was apprehensive about meeting him for the first time, commenting that, “I had little idea of what the serving minister, Colin Moynihan, might be expecting of the Director General” (Pickup, 1996: p. 2). Pickup soon went on to forge a close working relationship with Moynihan, whom he came to regard highly, in areas such as trying to reduce the sale of school playing fields, encouraging sport for the disabled, and drug control. He was also in favour of, “Moynihan’s sensible decision to reduce the size of the Sports Council from an unwieldy 32 to 14” (p. 8).

John Coghlan (1990) also thought highly of Moynihan from his vantage-point in the Sports Council. He saw him working well with Sebastian Coe, who had just been appointed as a Vice-Chairman of the Sports Council. He wrote admiringly of him, “Britain had a young, dynamic Minister for Sport with the charisma of a silver Olympic medal and a knowledge of what it was like at the top of his sport” (p. 155). However, Coghlan felt that Moynihan became too bogged down with the issue of the proposed football membership and ID scheme, behind which he saw the Prime Minister’s hand.

Houlihan (1991) takes a more charitable view of Moynihan’s work in drafting the Football Spectators’ Bill and ID scheme. He observes that progress was slow...
although, “A Working party, chaired by Moynihan and with representatives of the football authorities, produced a report which became the basis of the Football Spectators Bill, introduced into the House of Lords in January 1989” (p. 189). Houlihan (1991) also praises Moynihan for his work on anti-doping, one of the areas where he worked closely with Sebastian Coe. Moynihan argued, “for a strong anti-doping stand by the governing bodies” (p. 206), and as the Minister responsible gave, “strong political support” (p. 208) to the Sports Council on this issue.

The sprinter, Linford Christie, provides an athlete’s view of Moynihan. He describes a visit by him to the athletes’ village at the 1990 Commonwealth Games in Auckland, Australia, in his capacity as Minister for Sport. Christie (1995) writes disapprovingly, “I didn’t want to meet him and I think a lot of my fellow athletes felt the same. I am generally wary of politicians; I think they are always concerned about what’s going to be good for them” (p. 116). It is interesting that Christie saw him as a politician, rather than an Olympic silver medallist. Christie himself had won Olympic silver in 1988 at Seoul, followed by gold in 1992 at Barcelona (Wallechinsky, 2004), so he was a member of the same elite.

Colin Moynihan was born in 1955, the son of the 2nd Baron Moynihan. He was educated at Oxford University, where he was a rowing “blue” and Olympic silver medallist in Moscow 1980. He was MP for Lewisham East from 1983 to 1992, when he lost his seat to the Liberal Democrats. Moynihan later succeeded to his father’s seat in the House of Lords and later still became an “elected hereditary”, after an involved dispute with his half-brother for the title. After his time as Minister for Sport, he moved to energy at the same level of Parliamentary Under-Secretary 1990-92 (Who’s Who, 1997; House of Lords Information Office; Butler and Butler, 2000).

In 2003, Moynihan was appointed as the Conservatives’ shadow Minister for Sport while in the House of Lords, a post he held until 2005. He also worked closely with Kate Hoey, with whom he co-chaired the “Independent Sports Review” 2004-05. Writing in the The Daily Telegraph in April 2005, Hoey said of him:

The announcement that Colin Moynihan, the shadow sports minister, has stood down from the front bench to devote more time to being chairman of his company, will be greeted with sadness by most sports governing bodies (p. 14).
Moynihan certainly did not remove himself from the sports arena. In September 2005 he successfully stood against the former Olympic athlete and 1968 gold-medallist David Hemery for the chairmanship of the BOA (Mackay, 2005d). In the months following this, he made himself unpopular with the government by urging increased funding for sport to ensure greater British success at the 2012 Olympics (Cuff, 2006).

Moynihan’s successor as Minister, Robert Atkins, was in office at the time when sport was transferred from the Department of the Environment to the Department of Education and Science in 1990, leading to a period of uncertainty over the government’s priorities. This transfer, according to Pickup (1996):

came at an unfortunate time in that continuity of a shared understanding was fractured. Barely had we adjusted to a new Ministerial personality than we found ourselves also required to familiarise ourselves with a totally new Department with different traditions and – in comparison with DOE – notably archaic ways of conducting business (pp. 64-5).

Despite this setback, Pickup went on to work well with Atkins, who was a friend of the cricket-loving Prime Minister, John Major. It helped that Atkins shared Pickup’s view of sport’s new home in Education. Pickup writes that, “Even Robert Atkins complained that DES appeared to be staffed exclusively with superior Oxbridge products, all of whom possessed extremely long noses down which they distantly regarded him” (p. 65).

Atkins himself did not go to university, which perhaps explains his disdain for the “Oxbridge types” and his friendship with John Major. Alan Clark (2001), ever the snob, talks of Atkins’ wife being, “extraordinarily plain and common” (p. 292). He seems to have had something of an antipathy to Ministers for Sport. After an accidental meeting in Pratt’s restaurant in 1982, he said of Atkins:

Of course, we dislike each other quite strongly – a true example of “incompatibility”. He has an unpleasant, cruel face, and I am certain that he is by inclination a subversive. But I must admit that he does have a very fast wit (p. 292).

Clark (2001) was convinced that Atkins was on the left of the Conservative Party at this time, in 1982, when Thatcherism was at its height. He later recognised (1993), in 1986, that Atkins had a talent for political gossip with, “a keen political sense of a
below-stairs kind” (p. 108). Cecil Parkinson (1992) records that Atkins and a number of future Ministers (including John Patten, William Waldegrave, and Douglas Hogg) formed the “Blue Chip” dining club in 1979 although he stresses, “in these early days the ‘Blue Chips’ were certainly not Thatcherites” (p. 12).

As a Minister for Sport, Atkins appeared to have been perfectly competent. Pickup (1996) felt that he was, “committed and accessible” (p. 68) without having Moynihan’s enthusiasm and better knowledge of sport. After the 1992 election, Atkins was promoted to Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office from 1992 to 1994 and at the same level in Environment from 1994 to 1995. Before sport, he had been a junior Minister at Trade and Industry from 1987 to 1989 and at Transport from 1989 to 1990 (Butler and Butler), when Cecil Parkinson became Transport Secretary. Parkinson (1992) notes that, “Robert Atkins joined the department with me. He had acquired a reputation in Whitehall for being able but idle”, though he went on to, “do an important job and he did it extremely well” (p. 285). Of all the Ministers for Sport, he therefore held the largest number of government jobs.

Atkins had held his South Ribble seat since 1983, when he lost it to Labour in 1997 (previously it was Preston from 1979 to 1983). John Major (1999) recalls watching the gruesome election results on TV in 1997. He records with some despair, “Robert Atkins and Graham Bright, friends for nearly forty years, were out. David Mellor lost Putney” (p.724). Atkins was rewarded with a knighthood after leaving the House of Commons. He continued with a political career, and at the age of 53 in 1999 was elected to the European Parliament, where he is still a Member (Robert Atkins’ web page, 2005).

When the Department of National Heritage (DNH) was created after the election in April 1992, the Sport and Recreation Division was transferred to it after two years at the Education Department. At the same time, says Pickup (1996) Robert Key, “a former schoolmaster, bluff and hearty, enthusiastic and well-intentioned” (p. 103), was appointed as the new Minister for Sport. The Secretary of State at DNH was David Mellor who, according to Pickup, “Immediately made it apparent that he intended to involve himself in our affairs to a degree unprecedented by any previous Minister of Cabinet status” (Pickup, 1996: p. 103).
Mellor lasted for just a few months, and was replaced by Peter Brooke in September 1992. Brooke took only a little interest in sport at first, and subsequently made a single visit to the Sports Council, in January 1993 (Pickup, 1996). Pickup suggests that Mellor's removal from the DNH, "deprived it of the dynamic leadership and commitment that was so badly needed" (p. 197).

Robert Key was in post for barely a year and scarcely had time to make a mark. One of the few decisions he seems to have taken was to abolish the Children's Play Unit from March 1993, which incongruously came under the Sports Council's remit, as Pickup (1996) has pointed out. He notes that, "Responsibility for Children's Play had been foisted upon a reluctant Sports Council in 1987 by Colin Moynihan, none of whose successors had been prepared to take the subject seriously" (p. 129).

Key departed as Minister for Sport just after this decision was implemented. Before sport, he had been a Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Environment Department from 1990 to 1992. In this period he was given the unenviable task of coming up with an alternative to the poll tax (Crick, 1997). He afterwards went to transport from 1993 to 1994 at the same level (Butler and Butler, 2000). Key, who was born in 1945, has been Conservative MP for Salisbury since 1983, a seat he retained at the 2005 general election (Robert Key's web page, 2005).

Robert Key was succeeded by the ultra-Thatcherite Iain Sproat, whom Pickup did not rate very highly at all. Amongst the many criticisms that he made of him, his lack of interest in sport is the most consistent. He was fifteen months in office before visiting the Sports Council (Pickup, 1996). Pickup observes that, "He was to prove to be the least communicative politician responsible for the sport portfolio in my experience" (p. 125). This criticism of Sproat's sports knowledge may be somewhat unfair, since he produced a whole series of books on cricket from 1980. Indeed he was editor of the annual Debretts Cricketers' Who's Who for many years.

Sproat was the last Minister for Sport with whom Pickup worked directly (he left the Sports Council in 1993) although he knew both Kate Hoey and Denis Howell. As a Minister, Sproat was not interested in any equity agenda for sport at a time when many in Britain were becoming aware of the issue. For instance, he refused to attend the Women in Sport Conference in 1994 or endorse the Brighton Declaration, which
was intended as a means of widening access for women and promoting their participation in sport. When asked about it by Tom Pendry (Labour’s sports spokesman) in the House of Commons, he said, “I read the declaration: it was political correctness in excelsis, but it nevertheless said some useful things” (*Hansard: House of Commons Debates*, 23 May 1994, vol. 244, cols. 7-8). According to Houlihan and White (2002), “It was not until May 1998, on the eve of the second world conference in Namibia, that the Labour government adopted it” (p. 65) when Tony Banks, gave it his endorsement.

Iain Sproat was considered to be on the right of the Conservative Party, by observers such as Pickup (1996), and a firm believer in the virtues of the marketplace. This commitment to freedom of choice extended to sport. Replying to an adjournment debate proposing the abolition of boxing, he said:

> We believe strongly that in a free society, which this country thankfully enjoys, individuals should have the freedom to participate in a sport of their choice, so long as it is within the law and that they are fully aware of the risks involved (*Hansard: House of Commons Debates*, 10 May 1994, vol. 243, col. 297).

In September 1981, Sproat was appointed Under-Secretary at Trade and Industry, where he remained until 1983. He then spent nine years out of Parliament and one year as a backbencher before his only other appointment, which was sport. He was first an Under-Secretary from May 1993, and promoted to Minister of State from July 1995 until the 1997 election. Sproat was born in 1938 and educated at Oxford University. He was MP for Aberdeen South from 1970 to 1983 and Harwich from 1992 to 1997, when he lost his seat in the Labour landslide (*Who’s Who*, 1997; *Dod’s Parliamentary Companion* 1995; Butler and Butler, 2000).

On the subject of Sproat’s succession Pickup (1996) observes, “Optimistically a more competent and sympathetic politician will replace him” (p. 205). That replacement came with the 1997 election. The first Labour Minister for Sport since Denis Howell in 1979 turned out to be Tony Banks, appointed in May 1997, a campaigner against fox hunting, hare coursing, deer hunting, and other country sports. Mike Rowbottom (1997) reviewed the record of all Ministers for Sport up to that point. He saw Banks as arriving, “In the footsteps of the invisible men”. He went on to claim that, “In truth Tony Banks does not have many hard acts to follow” (p. 30).
As a politician, Banks was regarded as a leftwing firebrand from his days as a member of the Greater London Councillor (GLC). Even in his early days as an MP (1983-84) he almost brought parliamentary business to a halt by tabling huge numbers of questions on London local government after the abolition of the GLC (Ryle and Richards, 1988). However, he later accommodated himself well to New Labour and was rewarded with the sports portfolio. He was so conformist as a Minister that he almost got the Labour nomination as London mayoral candidate in 1999 to oppose Ken Livingston. According to Andrew Rawnsley (2002), “Alastair Campbell pushed Tony Banks, the jesting Sports Minister, as an acceptable retread from the old GLC” (p. 344). But Banks always had something of an image problem. Weaver (2001) claimed that the, “dandy Banks was viewed as a witty and talented backbencher” until he became a junior Minister. Then he became, “The minister for Stamford Bridge, who looked like Reg Varney with a silly coiffure. Little wonder no one took him seriously” (p. 26).

Tony Banks was more of a football Minister than a Sports Minister, with contacts such as Ken Bates, chairman of Chelsea Football Club and with the Football Association. Mihir Bose (2001) comments that he was instrumental in 1999 in persuading Manchester United to drop out of the FA Cup and play instead in the World Club Championship in Brazil to help support the 2006 England World Cup bid. He was also heavily involved in the abortive plan to rebuild Wembley as a stadium to host the World Cup, but not at all keen for it to be used as a venue for the World Athletics Championships in 2005. Referring to his attitude towards Wembley, Stephen Robson (2001) claims that:

> It was revealed by the former Minister for Sport, Tony Banks, that he and his successor, Kate Hoey, had “not had a conversation” about the project in the six months following his departure from the post (p. 113).

This was at a time when he was the country’s “ambassador” for the World Cup bid. The Wembley scheme was very much alive, as was its intended use for the 2005 World Athletics Championships. All three projects failed for one reason or another, although Wembley was later revived without Ken Bates. Tom Bower (2003) has described Banks’ relationship with Bates, who was adamant that football and athletics could not co-exist in the same stadium. The grandiose scheme collapsed, following which both Bates and Banks ceased to be involved with it.
Banks was given no other ministerial office after his departure from sport, nor had he held any before. He was born in 1943 and went to York University. After many years as a GLC councillor, he entered the Commons as MP for Newham North West in 1983 and stood down in 2005 (*Dod's Parliamentary Companion*, 1995; Butler and Butler, 2000). Just before leaving the Commons, he described his 22 years' constituency work as, “intellectually numbing, and tedious in the extreme” (*The Sunday Times*, 10 April 2005: p. 12). Following the 2005 election he was given a life peerage to help bring Labour's representation in the House of Lords up to parity with that of the Conservatives’ (Hurst, 2005). He thus became the fourth former post-holder to go to the House of Lords, after Denis Howell, Hector Monro, and Colin Moynihan.

Tragically for Banks, his time in the Lords was very brief. While on holiday in Florida he suffered a severe stroke on 5 January 2006. He did not recover from this, and died in hospital on 8 January 2006 at the age of 62. Many fulsome tributes were paid to Banks by obituarists and political writers in the press during the days that followed his death. However, the unattributed obituary in *The Daily Telegraph* hinted that a non-smoking, vegetarian, fitness regime had not rewarded him well with such an early death (9 January 2006). Michael White, political editor of *The Guardian*, said of him, "He was not comfortable in ministerial office and had an uneasy relationship with sports journalists who treated him more roughly, he complained, than their political counterparts did" (White, 2006: p. 8). This could be explained by the fact that, in political terms, he was relatively unimportant, and therefore not considered worthy of attention by serious political reporters.

As a former international high jumper for Northern Ireland, Kate Hoey had experience of sport at a relatively high level. When she replaced Banks in 1999, she was widely welcomed as the first woman to hold the job, and for her sporting pedigree. Martin Lipton (1999) declared that she, “has soared into what is perhaps the highest profile non-Cabinet role in government” (p. 90). When Minister for Sport, she made headlines at times with the audacity of her statements. For instance, Meek (2003) notes that she believed, “it makes good sense for PE teachers to start their working days at noon and finish at 7pm. They would be there when children are most likely to pursue sporting activities” (p. 16). He goes on to note that this was far too sensible and put her at odds with Labour Party thinking on this and other matters.
Before her appointment to sport, she had been assiduous in the House of Commons, asking many questions on sport and participating in debates on the subject. Although it is parliamentary convention to be non-controversial in a maiden speech, she used hers to oppose Colin Moynihan’s football club ID scheme. She set out her position early in the speech:

The Minister for Sport cannot possibly believe that compulsory identity cards will solve the problem of football hooliganism. They will create a nightmare of bureaucracy that will do nothing to stop the hooligan element but much to prevent the genuine football lover from attending matches (Hansard: House of Commons Debates, 27 June 1989, vol. 155 col. 883).

In the end she was vindicated when the identity card scheme was not implemented. Foster (1993) comments that this, “hare-brained idea was firmly put in its place by the Taylor enquiry” (p. 20) although the Football Spectators’ Bill later became the Football Spectators’ Act 1989.

Commenting on her early days as Minister, Charlie Whelan (1999) Gordon Brown’s former press secretary, expressed the view that Kate Hoey should be in the Cabinet because, “Being a woman just adds to the media interest” (p. 7). Indeed, there was a great deal of favourable press comment on her performance as Minister. An admiring Guardian interview by Jim White (2001a) was published just a few weeks before her removal from office in June 2001, describing her as, “a passionate enthusiast for both politics and sport” (pp. 16-17). Only a week before she was sacked, Ian Ridley (2001) in The Observer was also calling for her to be in the Cabinet. He suggested, “If sport is as important to the nation’s well-being as the manifestos insist, then it should be at the top table” (p. 8).

However, she did not always attract a favourable press. Just before the 2001 election, Neil Drysdale (2001) was saying that she was, “a woman of many words, little action” (p. 17). After the 7 June election, she revealed, “her brutal sacking by phone” to Patrick Collins (2001) in The Mail on Sunday (pp. 22-23). Nevertheless, in an appreciative post-election article, Matthew Norman (2001) in The London Evening Standard said she was a bit too independently minded and able. In his view, “She did a terrific job in her own right, seeking to represent all sports at all levels instead of devoting herself to sucking up to the tunnel visioned misogynists who control football” (p. 43). Mihir Bose (2001) identified the issues of fox hunting and
reactionary football authorities as being instrumental in her downfall. He also felt:

Hoey was always a maverick in Labour ranks for her support for unionism in Ulster - being a Protestant farmer's girl - and for fox hunting. She returns to the back benches comforted by the thought that she was always willing to be unpopular even within her own party (p. 8).

Kate Hoey is a former PE teacher and lecturer. She was born in 1946 and educated at the Ulster College of Physical Education and London University, becoming a Labour MP after winning the Vauxhall by-election in 1989. Her only previous ministerial appointment before sport was as Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office 1998-99. After her sacking as Minister for Sport in 2001, she has held no further government office (Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1995; Butler and Butler, 2000).

However, Hoey has continued to take a close interest in sport, including co-operating with Colin Moynihan, as mentioned earlier, to undertake an independent report on British sport that was published in September 2005 (Hoey and Moynihan, 2005; McKay, 2005c). She also became chair of the Countryside Alliance in 2005, a group formed largely to oppose the ban on fox hunting (Gerard, 2005).

With the appointment of Richard Caborn to succeed Hoey, Labour has gone full circle. Not since Denis Howell has there been a working-class male as Minister for Sport. Like Howell, Caborn did not go to university, although he attended Sheffield Polytechnic for an engineering course. He is a former steelworker, born in 1943, with a long history in Sheffield local government. He was an MEP from 1979 to 1984 and MP for Sheffield Central since 1983. Before being appointed as Minister for Sport, Caborn had been a Minister of State at Environment 1997-99 and a Minister of State at Trade and Industry 1999-2001 (Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1995; Butler and Butler, 2000). James Naughtie (2002) suggests that his friendship with John Prescott may have been a factor in his securing various ministerial jobs. He asserts that Prescott would not organise a Cabinet revolt against the Prime Minister to get his way on policy or appointments but that:

There have been manoeuvres on regional policy and transport and efforts to promote the careers of his loyal friends, Caborn being the most obvious, running regional policy at the DETR then becoming trade minister and finally
Peter Corrigan (2001) welcomed Richard Caborn as the new Minister, "who has a rippling physique, politically speaking at least, and has seen plenty of action in the alleys of power both as a trade union official and parliamentarian over the past 20 years or so" (p. 20). Corrigan also believed that, as a friend of John Prescott, Caborn had more political gravitas. Jim White (2001b) interviewed the new Minister, "who was brought in by Tony Blair to replace the ambassadorial, populist, committed Hoey in order that he might bring some clear-headed strategic thinking to the post" (pp. 14-15).

Caborn has generated a great deal of publicity for himself from the beginning, not all of it favourable. He appeared on a radio programme in June 2001, and was unable to answer a few simple questions on sport, posed by Clare Balding of the BBC. One exchange, described by Chris Bunting (2001) of The Times, went as follows:

Radio 5: Who is the current England cricket coach?
Caborn: The Aussie? (p. 12)

The correct answer was Duncan Fletcher, who was actually from Zimbabwe. Caborn also failed to answer correctly three other questions on tennis, horse racing, and golf. He complained to Jim White of The Guardian (2001b) that he was unfairly treated in being given the equivalent of a pub quiz.

While serving as an MEP for the Sheffield area, he had previously been closely involved in the World Student Games project of 1991. The Games were a financial disaster for Sheffield, though as John Goodbody (2001) points out, "they did provide the city with facilities which have continued to be used daily by local people" (p. 15). Caborn has since gone on to play a supportive role as Minister for Sport, while still managing to make the news for the wrong reasons. Nicholas Watt (2003) reported Caborn's displeasure at being ordered back from the rugby World Cup in Australia to take part in a vital vote in the Commons on social care, as a result of which, "he made no attempt to hide his anger" (p. 5).

However, his wide political contacts, and unstinting support for the anti-apartheid movement have paid dividends. He worked hard on London's successful bid for the
2012 Olympics, apparently gaining the support of Nelson Mandela. Duncan Mackay (2005) suggested that although Sebastian Coe has played a major part, "It also owes a lot to the sports minister, Richard Caborn, a key figure in the anti-apartheid movement and a friend of Mr Mandela" (p. 3).

By 2005, and nearing the end of his political career, Mackay (2005) speculated that Caborn had been expected to, "step down after the election" (p. 2). However, Mackay tipped him to stay on as Minister after the May 2005 election to ensure continuity at the political level in the Olympic bid for 2012. In fact, this continuity was ensured when he was reappointed to the job on 9 May 2005. As Mihir Bose (2005) wrote, "until Caborn, nobody had matched Howell's record of serving a full parliamentary term" in the post, (p. 7). According to Tom Knight (2005), the London bid chairman Seb Coe, "went so far as to ask Blair to keep Caborn" in order to signal political support at the highest level for the Olympic bid (p. 3). He was reappointed at the Minister of State level outside the Cabinet in May 2005 and remained in post until June 2007.

On 27 June 2007, Gordon Brown replaced Tony Blair as Prime Minister and reshuffled his Cabinet, as well as many of the junior Ministers. Caborn retired to the backbenches and has therefore continued the tradition of the Minister for Sport never achieving Cabinet office in any post. His replacement as Minister for Sport is Gerry Sutcliffe. He was appointed at the lowest ministerial level, Under-Secretary (Kelso, 2007). At 54 years of age, Sutcliffe thus continued the tradition of Ministers for Sport being male, middle-aged, and quite junior within government. In fact, part of his job was even removed, since Tessa Jowell (former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport) was given responsibility for the 2012 Olympics in a new post within the Cabinet Office. As a result, the Minister for Sport job has been doubly downgraded in ministerial terms and in terms of responsibilities (Mott, 2007).

1.8 Conclusion

This review has demonstrated that government has always been involved in British sport from the earliest times to the present. Writers such as Brailsford (1992), Birley (1996), Hargreaves (1986), Holt (1989) and others have described the process from various perspectives. The extent of involvement has accelerated from the 1960s
onwards, with the appointment of the Minister for Sport, the establishment of the Sports Council, and in many other ways. These include taxation, promotion of health, regulation of fans’ behaviour, and national prestige, as discussed by Henry (1993) and others. The sport and leisure industry has become bigger than ever as a source of employment and wealth, hence ever-growing government interest. This can be traced through the parties’ election manifestos, where there has been a steady increase in the attention given to sport.

Although there is some disagreement about the nature and extent of the post-war consensus (for example Jordan and Richardson (1987) are not convinced of its timing and extent), most authors agree that the main parties accepted a broad range of social and welfare policies after the Second World War through to the 1970s. Sport was one of the beneficiaries of this consensus about the role of the state, in terms of increased funding and support. Gamble (1981, 1994), Letwin (1992), and others, date the breakdown of the consensus in many areas to the Labour government of 1974-76, rather than to Thatcher in 1979. However, as Henry (1993) and Haywood (1995) have suggested, sport was not adversely affected at that point, since the consensus in this area was largely maintained.

While the position of the Cabinet is not as powerful as it once was, scholars from Mackintosh (1968) to Burch and Holliday (1996) have seen it as one of the most significant decision-taking bodies in the country. Others, such as Hennessy (1990, 2000, 2004), have noted the increasingly “presidential” style of Prime Ministers up to and including Blair, further diminishing the Cabinet’s role. Some observers, including Smith (1999) and Dorey (2006), feel that the term “core executive” is a more appropriate way of describing where policy-making power lies in government, by including senior civil servants, key policy advisers, and other senior people of influence in the network.

Most government Ministers outside the Cabinet aspire to be in it, because it is likely to give greater access to people and institutions of great influence. Thus, there have been many calls for the Minister for Sport to be in the Cabinet in order to enhance the office’s stature. As this review has shown, few scholars have written about junior Ministers who are outside the Cabinet, such as the Minister for Sport. One of the few who did so was Theakston (1985, 1987, 1999).
Relatively little has been written about the Minister for Sport in academic literature. Houlihan (1991, 1997, 2002) has done so in various works, as have Holt and Mason (2000), Henry (1993) and a few others. Sports administrators, such as Coglan (1990) and Pickup (1996), provide many scattered references. Newspapers have journalistic opinions on the Ministers for Sport, rather than factual accounts of what they did. There are some mentions in political works, such as the Alan Clark diaries (1993, 2001, 2003).

Only Denis Howell (1990) and Neil Macfarlane (1996), among former Ministers for Sport, have produced personal accounts of their time in office. With such a small amount of material, we have only a limited understanding of what they achieved in office, what they did in Parliament, or how much of their time was dedicated to sport or other activities. This is a gap in the literature that is worth filling. From definitive records, such as those provided by Butler and Butler (2000), it can be stated with confidence that no Ministers for Sport have ever attained higher office than that of the junior Minister level. This is explored further in Chapter 4, as are ministerial appointments, the parliamentary activity of Ministers for Sport, and related topics. However, before this the methodological and theoretical approaches to this study will be discussed in the following two Chapters.
2.1 Research Methodology: Introduction

This study poses the research question: "What is the role of the Minister for Sport in the policy-making process for UK sport?" We have looked at some of the available evidence in the literature review as a guide towards ways of answering this question. A brief outline of the careers of all the Ministers for Sport from 1964 to 2009 has already been provided, including biographical details of each of the 13 post-holders, as part of this project. The study now aims to build on these foundations and provide new evidence from which an attempt will be made to answer the research question more fully.

The distinction has first to be drawn between methodology and methods. Both Grix (2001) and Burnham et al. (2004) are careful to separate the two. According to Burnham et al. (2004) methodology is, "a study of the principles and theories which guide the choice of method" (p. 4), and which are guided in turn by ontological and epistemological assumptions. Research methods are the techniques for gathering evidence. Grix (2001) remarks that the latter, "come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from in-depth interviews, statistical inference, discourse analysis and archival research of historical documents to participant observation" (p. 30). This section will set out the methodological approach, while the next will deal with the actual methods of data collection.

2.2 Research Methodology: Ontological Issues

Marsh and Furlong (2002) assert, "Each social scientist's orientation to their subject is shaped by their ontological and epistemological position" which is, "a skin, not a sweater" (p. 17). In other words, it is something that cannot be taken off, even though it is implicit rather than acknowledged for many people. Grix (2002) suggests, "Ontology is the starting point of all research, after which one's epistemological and methodological positions logically follow" (p. 177).

According to these writers, and others, the key question is, "what is out there in the
world?" Is there an existence outside of social reality, or are events largely shaped by our social interaction with them? For example, are some racial groups more likely to produce naturally gifted athletes, or are the attributes of the athletes shaped by the societies that nurtured them? Indeed, is there any such thing as racial difference, or are we simply referring to socially-constructed difference?

Grix (2002) identifies the two main ontological perspectives of "objectivism" and "constructivism", which may help to address these questions. Objectivism implies that the world around us (what is out there) exists quite separately from human influence. Bryman (2001) offers the following definition: "Objectivism is an ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors" (p. 17). From this point of view athletes would be born with innate talent, rather than have it made by their native societies. They would be malleable only to a certain extent because of their willingness to endure particular training regimes.

Hay (2002) also places ontology at the beginning of a directional dependency chain. In a diagrammatic representation, he sets out the relationship between ontology, epistemology, and methodology. An adaptation of this diagram is also used by Grix (2002) to illustrate the interrelationship between the various building blocks of research. Figure 1 below sets this out in summary form, although it should be noted that Bates and Jenkins (2007) argue that the Marsh and Furlong/Hay/Grix model is not necessarily definitive. In their view, "We do not wish to argue that this directionality is wrong. Instead, we wish to argue that this position must be explicitly recognised as a contested perspective, rather than a given" (p. 60). They suggest that ontology and epistemology are interrelated, rather than one coming before the other.
An example of the objectivist approach is given by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), who identify “seven moments”, or time phases in the history of qualitative research. In the earliest of these (circa 1900-50):

Researchers wrote “objective” colonising accounts of field experiences that were reflective of the positivist scientist paradigm. They were concerned with offering valid, reliable, and objective interpretations in their writings (p. 12).

The second “moment” identified by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) is 1950-1970. They describe this as, “the modernist or golden age” when, “Postpositivism functioned as a powerful epistemological paradigm” (p. 14). The third stage, 1970-1986, was one of “blurred genres” when many theories competed for attention. It was here that, “The naturalistic, postpositivist, and constructivist paradigms gained power” (p. 15). They describe the fourth stage of 1986-1990 as being a, “crisis of representation” when, “new models of truth, method, and representation were sought” (p. 16).

These “moments” have become progressively shorter, with the fifth or postmodern stage of experimental and new ethnographies lasting only from 1990 to 1995.
Similarly, the postexperimental inquiry sixth stage spanned 1995-2000. The seventh "moment" from 2000 to the present is one of moral discourse, in which such issues as class, gender, race, and globalisation are subject to critical analysis.

At the time of the first "moment" researchers were anxious to emulate the way in which natural scientists were thought to carry out their work, and to thereby give scientific credibility to it. There was a belief in the timelessness of the phenomena which they were observing, and over which human beings have no control. According to this way of viewing reality, the scientist is a disinterested observer who records what he can see without influencing the given world.

The objectivist mode of conducting social science research is summarised by Loy and Booth (2000). They see the key determinants as a realist ontology, a positivist epistemology, a deterministic view of human nature, and a nomothetic (a search for large-scale, explanatory theories or laws) methodology. Although Denzin and Lincoln (2000) date the "first moment" in modern qualitative research from 1900, Loy and Booth (2000) suggest that objectivism was well-established before this time.

Constructivism (some authors, such as Bryman (2001) use the term constructionism as a synonym), on the other hand, suggests that human intervention is all-pervasive and unavoidable. The hand of man is everywhere present in determining his own consciousness, rather than it being determined by impersonal forces. It was during the "third moment" of 1970-1986, as identified by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), that the constructivist paradigm became widely accepted. In this view of the world, a successful athlete would be the product of his or her society to a large extent. He or she would be the beneficiary of particular training methods, coaching, diet, medicine, and many other factors.

In Hay's (2002) view of constructivism, "The social and political world is not a given but an inherently intersubjective domain – a product of social construction" (p. 24). The real everyday world that we inhabit is constructed by individuals and organisations, which shape reality through their own actions. Schwandt (2000) defines this more comprehensively:

Constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge
so much as we construct or make it. We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we constantly test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience (p. 197).

In the constructivist paradigm, the researcher unavoidably interacts with the social world when looking at how reality is constructed by the people or institutions he is studying. Indeed the researcher him or herself is likely to influence events during the process of reconstructing the reality he or she is examining, for example, by asking particular questions in interviews. Furthermore, the same questions asked by a different interviewer might elicit different answers, and thus the reconstruction will not be identical.

A summary of the basic beliefs of various research paradigms is shown in Table 1 below. The term “paradigm” has come into use from the 1960s onwards, following the work of Thomas Kuhn (1996, first published in 1962) who used it to denote an accepted or standard academic way of looking at a problem. Kuhn believed that each era was dominated by a particular “paradigm”, amongst those closely involved in a field of study. In defining paradigms, Kuhn (1996) says, “These I take to be universally recognised scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners” (p. x).

Table 1: Basic Beliefs of Enquiry Paradigms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Post-Positivism</th>
<th>Critical Theory et al.</th>
<th>Constructivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>Native realism</td>
<td>Critical realism</td>
<td>Historical realism, shaped by social, political, ethnic, economic, and gender values</td>
<td>Relativism – local and specific constructed realities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Objectivist – findings true</td>
<td>Modified objectivist – findings probably true</td>
<td>Transactional/ subjectivist – value-mediated findings</td>
<td>Transactional/ Subjectivist – created findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Experimental – verification of hypotheses; mainly quantitative methods</td>
<td>Modified experimental; falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative methods</td>
<td>Dialogic/dialectical</td>
<td>Hermeneutical/ dialectical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Lincoln & Guba (2000), p. 165
2.3 Research Methodology: Epistemological Issues

While an ontological position establishes a particular way of looking at the world, the epistemological stance that follows is concerned with the investigation of knowledge. Epistemology looks at how knowledge is acquired and the validity of that knowledge as real evidence. It is a way of focusing on the "truth" of data to help answer the initial research question. In the words of Marsh and Furlong (2002) epistemology asks, "what can we know about the world and how can we know it" (p. 19).

In the directional relationship shown in Figure 1 above, epistemology is a logical progression from ontology, according to Grix (2002) and Hay (2002). Marsh and Furlong (2002) also suggest that epistemology follows from ontology and proceed to outline the positivist, realist, and interpretivist standpoints. They suggest that, "A positivist looks for causal relationships, tends to prefer quantitative analysis and wants to produce 'objective' and generalisable findings" (p. 21). They concede that realism is more difficult to classify because:

Realists are looking for causal relationships, but think that many important relationships between social phenomena cannot be observed. This means that they may use quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data will only be appropriate for those relationships that are directly observable. In contrast, the unobservable relationships can only be established indirectly (pp. 21-22).

The positivist epistemological stance, in which social investigation was traditionally undertaken, is discussed by Burgess (1993). An "ideal type" approach involving problem identification, sampling, data collection, analysis, and report, would be, "based heavily on the hypothetico-deductive model that many social researchers thought natural scientists always used" (p. 1). But Burgess then suggests that projects such as the discovery of DNA, "involves some guesswork, competition, rivalry and lucky breaks" (p. 1), in addition to empirical scientific methods.

With specific reference to sports studies, Gratton and Jones (2004) look in detail at positivism and interpretivism, which they see as the, "two broad approaches to the nature of knowledge" (p. 15). The main features of the positivist epistemology are control, replication, and hypothesis testing. Interpretivism is more concerned with "rich" descriptions and interpretations, based on direct observations. They use a
number of examples from sport to illustrate the contrasting ways in which positivists and interpretivists conduct investigations. For instance, they describe a positivist study of football fans, using questionnaire survey techniques and an interpretivist study of sports sub-cultures where a small number of in-depth interviews were carried out.

The characteristics of athletes were used above to illustrate differing ontological positions, in relation to the question, “What is out there?”, posed by Grix (2002) and Hay (2002). This can be taken a stage further, to help answer their epistemological question, “What can we hope to know about the world?” In this case, it would be “What can we hope to know about the athlete or athletes in the world?” For example, a researcher using a positivist epistemology might measure the athlete’s heart rate, \( V_{O_2} \text{Max} \), lap times, recovery rate, personal best, race performance, and so on. He or she might undertake a quantitative approach using accurate measuring instruments to do this, in which the measurements would be reproducible later, by different researchers, on the same or on other athletes. It would then be possible to make comparisons over time, or between individuals.

By contrast, someone employing an interpretivist epistemology might argue that there is more to a person than just numbers. The athlete’s relationship to other athletes could be examined, how he felt in training and racing, or the performance in relation to the importance of the competition. There can be no absolutes because ever-changing factors are at work, such as the weather, altitude, drug-taking amongst opponents, or the relative poverty of the athlete’s country. There are many different ways of seeing “success”. For example, the UK’s performance of a single medal at the winter Olympics of February 2006 could be viewed as “good” because Britain has few natural advantages in winter sports and only a small number of participants. Conversely, the USA’s 26 medals (and “only” second place in the table) could be seen by them as a failure, given their resources and large number of world-class competitors.

Hay (2002) also looks at the ways in which social enquiry has tried to emulate the natural sciences in discovering knowledge. He asserts that the dominant epistemological strand in political science is rationalism, which encompasses rational choice theory. In his view:
Rationalists are positivists, committed not only a unity of method between the natural and social sciences (*naturalism*), but to the idea that the natural sciences provide a model of good practice to which the social sciences should aspire. In short, they seek to model political analysis upon the natural sciences (p. 38).

Although the number-counting and algebraic notations often employed by rationalists give the impression of rigorous analysis, Hay (2002) casts doubt as to whether this is better than using words to convey knowledge. He suggests that it is not necessarily possible, “to render mathematically anything even vaguely approximating the rich complexity of political life” (p. 38). The same could also be said of sporting life, where the beauty of a performance does not always result in victory. Nevertheless, Hay does not discount the use of quantitative methods in political analysis where they are appropriate, using a positivist epistemology.

Hay (2002) discusses what he calls the, “retreat from positivism” (p. 81), particularly the influence of Karl Popper in this trend. He goes on to suggest that, “his contribution should certainly be seen as a *revision* rather than a rejection of positivism”. Popper’s work, first published in 1935, spanned the natural and social sciences. He turned traditional thinking of the time on its head by asserting that theories should be evaluated by their ability to falsify a hypothesis, rather than to prove it. Scientific theory could offer only provisional truths, not absolute ones. As Popper (2002) himself said:

> In point of fact, no conclusive disproof of a theory can ever be produced; for it is always possible to say that the experimental results are not reliable, or that the discrepancies which are asserted to exist between the experimental results and the theory are only apparent and that they will disappear with the advance of our understanding (p. 28).

Thomas Kuhn was, according to Gerring (2001) a, “longtime adversary” (p. 15) of Popper. Kuhn (1996), who unlike Popper worked exclusively in the natural sciences, believed that scientific revolutions occur when a paradigm becomes exhausted or substantially revised. When this happens, there is what Grix (2001) calls a, “paradigm shift” (p. 138) to a new way of looking at situations and problems.

Thus, for many social scientists, there has been a paradigm shift in the period after the Second World War to post-positivism, or interpretivism as better ways of discovering
new knowledge. Specifically, there was the "second moment" from 1950-70, as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), when, "Postpositivism functions as a powerful epistemological paradigm" (p. 14). Indeed, even Popper (2002) observes that, "statements of experimental results are always interpretations of the facts observed" (p. 90). This is echoed by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) who say, "All research is interpretive; it is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (p. 19). Here they are highlighting the point that the ultimate analysis of data must be carried out by human beings. This is true, whether the data are in numerical form, or derived from interviews, questionnaires, experiments, observations, photographs, or in other ways.

Bryman (2001) sees interpretivism as a means of understanding human behaviour, compared with the positivist approach that seeks to explain it. He says that:

"Interpretivism is taken to denote an alternative to the positivist orthodoxy that has held sway for decades. It is predicated upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action (p. 13).

Whereas a positivist epistemology has been associated with quantitative techniques, interpretivism is more likely to use a qualitative approach. Indeed, Cresswell (1994) says simply, "qualitative research is interpretative research" (p. 147). He also notes that qualitative researchers are interested in the meanings of people's lives, the social structures they have created, and the ways in which they interact with each other. Marsh and Furlong (2002), in agreement with Bryman (2001), explain this further:

A researcher from within the interpretivist tradition is concerned with understanding, not explanation, focuses on the meaning that actions have for agents, tends to use qualitative evidence and offers its results as one interpretation of the relationship between the social phenomena studied (p. 21).

While Bryman (2001) and Marsh and Furlong (2002) use the term "understanding", Schwandt (2000) traces the meaning of the equivalent German word verstehen as used by German historians and sociologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In its modern sense, to achieve verstehen is to achieve understanding through an interpretive process. Bevir and Rhodes (2002) discuss a variety of
interpretive theories, including ethnology and hermeneutics. They examine criticisms of *verstehen* by some political scientists who remain committed to positivism.

A summary of the qualitative and quantitative paradigms, as identified by Cresswell (1994) is set out in Table 2 following:

Table 2: Quantitative and Qualitative Paradigm Assumptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>What is the nature of reality?</td>
<td>Reality is objective and</td>
<td>Reality is subjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>singular, apart from the</td>
<td>and multiple, as seen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>researcher</td>
<td>by participants in a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>What is the relationship of the researcher to</td>
<td>Researcher is independent from</td>
<td>Researcher interacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the researcher to the researched?</td>
<td>the research</td>
<td>with the research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>What is the process of research?</td>
<td>Deductive; cause and effect;</td>
<td>Inductive; design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>context-free; predictions;</td>
<td>emerging through the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>explanations; accuracy</td>
<td>research process; context-bound;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and reliability through</td>
<td>accuracy and reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>validity</td>
<td>through verification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Cresswell (1994), p. 5

Sometimes it is possible to use a variety of techniques to study a problem, an approach referred to as triangulation. This use of a variety of complementary approaches is discussed by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), in terms of providing a more rounded perspective. They observe that, “the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (p. 5). An example could be checking data collected from an interview with a published source such as a reference book or a statistical database if appropriate.

The case for triangulation in both quantitative and qualitative research strategies is also set out by Bryman (2001), “whereby more than one method would be employed in the development of measures, resulting in greater confidence in findings” (p. 274).
Although Bryman (2001) dates the use of triangulation in the social sciences from the 1960s, it has actually been in use in other disciplines, such as cartography and geography, for much longer. For example, when Britain was comprehensively mapped for the first time in the nineteenth century, a network of “trig points” was established. There are thousands of them on hills and mountains all over the country, but these have now been superseded for their original purpose because of satellite technology which gives a much better overview. However, surveying from triangulation pillars did not involve a mixing of methods, but simply looked at the same feature from different angles using the same technique. Triangulation in the social sciences has come to be associated with using a mixture of different methods, including employing quantitative and qualitative methods in combination.

The combination of methods has been discussed by many scholars, including Burgess (1993), Denzin and Lincoln (2000), Bryman (2001), Cresswell (1994), Read and Marsh (2002), and Burnham et al (2004), with an emphasis on drawing on the strengths of each. Some scholars, such as Burnham et al (2004), caution against the combining of methods because these may have different epistemological assumptions. Conversely, there are others who show how such combinations can be fruitfully employed. For instance, Cresswell (1994) sets out a variety of, “dominant – less dominant designs” (p. 179), where the epistemological basis would centre around the dominant component. Bryman (2001) takes a similarly flexible view:

> The idea that research methods carry with them fixed epistemological and ontological implications is very difficult to sustain. They are capable of being put to a wide variety of tasks (p. 445).

Just as triangulation is apparently redundant in map-making, some scholars take a similar stance towards its use in the social sciences. Richardson (2000) believes that an overview, which she terms “crystallization” is a better way of verifying knowledge. In her opinion, “We recognise that there are more than ‘three sides’ to approach the world” (p. 934). She is supported by Janesick (2000), who comments that crystallization is, “a better lens through which to view qualitative research designs and their components” (p. 392).
2.4 Methodological Approach

The third question addressed in Figure 1 was, "How can we go about acquiring that knowledge?" This is something that may be answered by the methodological approach to a study and will follow from a researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions. It will underpin how the research will actually be carried out. For instance, a researcher who is comfortable with a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology will tend towards a qualitative approach. Conversely, someone favouring an objectivist ontology and a positivist epistemology is more likely to utilise quantitative means to investigate a problem.

The ontological stand taken in this study will be constructivist, since its purpose is to look at the actions of human beings who have shaped events in a particular way. An objectivist paradigm would be inappropriate, since all the events being studied are the result of human actions rather than impersonal, timeless forces. They are not in Bryman's (2001) words, "external facts that are beyond our reach" (p. 16) in an objectivist sense, but reconstructions of social reality.

Following from a constructivist ontology, an interpretivist epistemology will be adopted in relation to gathering and examining the data, and providing what Bryman (2001) describes as, "acceptable knowledge" (p. 10). As illustrated in Table 2, an interpretivist epistemology assumes that the researcher interacts with the research, rather than standing independently apart from it. In the present study, this will largely involve interpreting the actions of a small number of individuals who have held a particular political office. As such, the study lends itself to the collection of qualitative data, rather than quantitative. The data will then be examined to provide insights into the contribution individuals made to government and the policy-making process.

Although a broadly constructivist/interpretivist standpoint will be taken, this will be complemented by positivist analysis of numerical data. King et al (1994), while arguing for a more "scientific" methodology, believe that, "neither quantitative nor qualitative research is superior to the other, regardless of the research problem being addressed" (pp. 5-6). Burgess (1993) states that, "There is no 'best' method of conducting social research" (p. 2). He then goes on to set out a variety of methods,
such as case studies, surveys, ethnographies, and experiments, which can follow from the research question. Some of these data-collecting techniques will be discussed below, as the proposed research methods for this study are set out.

2.5 Research Methods: Introduction

The research methods for this study follow from the ontological/epistemological viewpoint set out in the previous section. As Grix (2002) states, "we should guard against 'method-led' research, that is allowing ourselves to be led by a particular research method rather than 'question-led' research, whereby research questions point to the most appropriate research method" (p. 180). Researchers should not use convenient and easy data sources, around which research questions can be fitted.

Thus, this project has used the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm as the basis upon which to choose the research methods. It assumes that there is no objective reality that we can know about. The real world of government and sports policy is constructed by individuals and organisations, the actions of which need to be interpreted for their meanings. However, some of the activities of these individuals in the processes of government, as distinct from policy-making, can be measured numerically, and it is here that positivist insights will be helpful in giving a more rounded picture of events.

When choosing research methods, from both the quantitative and qualitative traditions, there are some that are clearly inappropriate, since they would not be able to provide worthwhile new knowledge in an epistemological sense. For example, a sample survey of Ministers for Sport would not be suitable, since there have only been 13 of them, three of whom are dead. In looking at the behaviour of Ministers, participant observation or an ethnographic study would not achieve very much due to the problems of access and the fact that only one is currently in office. An experimental model of ministerial behaviour, under controlled conditions would clearly be impossible. Although Gerring (2001) argues that the experimental method is probably the best one for social science analysis he concedes, "the pure experiment is rarely applicable to social science problems" (p. 228).

In the objectivist/positivist paradigm, a researcher would look for indicators of behaviour that are tangible, measurable, and reproducible. Someone repeating the
work at a later date should be able to produce very similar, if not identical results, as is commonly believed to be the case in the natural sciences. Qualitative researchers eschew the notion of exact reproducibility, but look instead for verification of data. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that, in the constructivist paradigm:

Terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity (p. 21).

Methods of data collection which embody these concepts, such as content analysis, secondary analysis of material already published, and interviews, have therefore been selected as suitable means of gathering new evidence to study the research problem. These will now be discussed in turn below.

2.6 Research Methods: Content Analysis

A content analysis of Hansard, the parliamentary record, was undertaken. Bryman (2001) has described the usefulness of this method from the point of view of being systematic and objective. He describes it as being, “firmly rooted in the quantitative research strategy” (p. 178). Such a study can be replicated by others, who Bryman (2001) considers should be able to produce the same findings:

The content analyst is simply applying the rules in question. The quality of being systematic means that the application of the rules is done in a consistent manner so that the bias is again suppressed. As a result of these two qualities, anyone could apply the rules and (hopefully) come up with the same result (p. 178).

Krippendorff (1980) has observed that content analysis has a long history, beginning in eighteenth century Sweden with a collection of ninety hymns. He shows that the modern use of this method can be dated to the late nineteenth century USA, with the advent of widespread literacy and mass-circulation newspapers. While the measurement of text in column inches was first used by journalists, this method was soon taken up by scholars. Writing in the early 1950s, Berelson (1952/1971) saw content analysis as a legitimate way to acquire knowledge, using units such as articles, paragraphs, sentences, words, or quantity of text:
Thus an analyst may classify an entire news story into a given category, and then report the result in terms of column inches. Here the news item is the unit of classification and the column inch is the unit of enumeration (p. 136).

Berelson (1952/1971) believed that such methods have a high degree of validity and reliability because, “different coders should produce the same results when they apply the same set of categories to the same content” (p. 172). Holsti (1969), on the other hand, cautions against using quantitative content analysis when looking for deeper meanings in text, while endorsing it for discovering relative proportions, such as the amount of newspaper space devoted to national/international subjects.

*Hansard* provides by far the greatest source of what the Ministers for Sport actually said. Junior Ministers normally answer oral questions in the House of Commons on one day every three or four weeks, but they can also be involved in piloting legislation through Parliament, participating in adjournment debates, and answering written questions almost every day. In addition, they are likely to be involved in a range of committee work (Theakston 1987, 1999). This has produced a massive amount of text over the past forty years, all recorded in *Hansard* and in the public domain. May (1993) discusses the use of *Hansard* and other “official” publications by researchers. Whilst he is aware of the shortcomings of such evidence for some purposes, he argues that, “They can tell us a great deal about the way in which events were constructed at the time” (p. 133).

This rich source material shows the kind of work that each Minister for Sport has been involved in over the years, in addition to sport. For example, Denis Howell was initially in the Department of Education and Science. As a result, many of the issues he dealt with related to education rather than sport. Similarly, Eldon Griffiths (his successor from 1970 to 1974) was in the Department of the Environment, where he concentrated mainly on transport. A similar pattern emerged for all the others who followed, with sport taking up only a proportion of their time. It was the exact proportion which was devoted to sport that remained to be discovered.

A detailed longitudinal analysis of *Hansard* 1964-2005 has been carried out, resulting in the quantification of the time Ministers spent on sport, in terms of column centimetres, compared with other duties and what these other duties were. Since the entire period has been completely covered, there was no need for sampling techniques.
to be used, thus avoiding the potential for error noted by Berelson (1952/1971), Holsti (1969), Bryman (2001), and others.

A coding scheme is something that Bryman (2001) describes as, "a crucial stage in doing a content analysis" (p. 186). However, over-elaboration was unnecessary because of the way in which the data have been used. It is of no special interest for this study whether the non-sport activities fall into particular categories, such as transport, environment, or tourism. It is enough to determine if the Ministers were involved in sport or not. Thus, there were only two categories in the coding scheme, comprising of sport and non-sport.

In addition, the actual number of parliamentary questions for each Minister were recorded in each session and a figure calculated in terms of their "productivity" in relation to dealing with sports or non-sports issues. Both the amount of text and the number of questions are considered to be suitable "units" in Berelson's (1952/1971) terms. From this data, a series of tables and graphs were produced, summarised in Figures 2 and 3 (p. 124 and p. 127), to show what Ministers actually did in Parliament, followed by the number and type of debates in which they took part.

This specific method of measuring text has been used recently by Eastman and Billings (2000), who measured the amount of newspaper coverage in the *The New York Times* and *USA Today* over a period of months to show the gender bias in favour of men in terms of sports reporting. In another illustration of recent practice, Crompton (2004) used the approach to measure the effectiveness of sports sponsorship advertising in the broadcasting and printing media in the USA.

Both de Vaus (2001) and Bryman (2001) discuss the merits of undertaking a longitudinal analysis. This type of design is often used in panel studies of interviewees, as described by Moser and Kalton (1971), where changes in people's opinions are being sought over a period of months or years. However, there is no reason why it should not be applied as part of a content analysis or any other data source where a time-series is available. A longitudinal design has also been used for the secondary analysis described below.
2.7 Research Methods: Secondary Analysis of Published Material

The possibilities of using secondary analysis are considered by Bryman (2001) who looks at the cost advantages, ease of availability, quality of data, and opportunity for longitudinal analysis. He suggests, "Secondary analysis of existing data offers the prospect of being able to explore research questions of interest to you without having to go through the process of collecting the data yourself" (p. 211). Similar views are expressed by Burgess (1993) who also suggests that high-quality data can often be obtained at relatively modest cost and effort.

Butler and Butler (2000) have amassed a wealth of information on political parties, governments, elections, and many other areas of politics in Britain. Their aim was to produce an authoritative source for scholars and others to draw on and cite. They describe the amount of effort that they invested in producing definitive lists of governments from 1900 to 2000 and emphasise the, "importance of pedantic accuracy and clear presentation" (p. xviii) which were necessary in drawing up their lists. Accurate tables of Ministers attaining and leaving office were amongst the most time-consuming and difficult that they compiled.

The careers of all government Ministers who held office 1964-2005 have been tracked to see how many eventually entered the Cabinet, using the tables presented by Butler and Butler (2000). These were supplemented by original collection of data from the fortnightly tables in Hansard of all government Ministers to take the study up to 2005, since the Butler and Butler (2000) series ends at 2000. It has thus been possible to calculate the true figures for those who have achieved promotion in each government and compare this with Ministers for Sport.

The first ministerial jobs of all junior Ministers (165 individuals) who made it to the Cabinet between 1964 and 2005 were also examined to see what offices are more likely to lead to the Cabinet. Theakston (1987) suggests that first jobs in the Whips' Office or the Treasury are more likely to lead to high office. It may be that some MPs are identified early on as high-fliers, and are thus given an early opportunity to shine and prepare for promotion. The first jobs of Ministers for Sport can therefore be compared with them to see if any were ever in a position to be high-fliers.
The careers of a few selected junior Ministers to specific named appointments, namely Arts, Defence Procurement, Social Security, and Local Government, were also examined to test how likely they were to gain promotion and enter the Cabinet. In this way, a comparison has been made with the Ministers for Sport. This may tell us something about the quality and the career ambitions of the people appointed to the sports portfolio in relation to some of the other junior ministerial offices, and also shed some light on the relative esteem with which some ministerial posts are held in relation to others.

2.8 Research Methods: Interviews

It was felt at the outset of the study that interviews with the politicians who held the office of Minister for Sport would provide a unique perspective on their activities, since there are only two insider accounts currently available (Macfarlane, 1986; Howell, 1990). Interviews would provide a new source of data, and build on the limited amount of existing material. Burnham et al (2004) consider the value of such interviews and suggest, “The majority of work by political scientists is concerned with the study of decision-makers and hence a key research technique for political scientists is what is known as elite interviewing” (p. 205). They describe the strengths and weaknesses of interviews, the best way of arranging them by gaining access through “gatekeepers”, preparing interview schedules, conducting the interviews, and analysis of the data.

Interviews have the advantage that the objects of the study can be asked for their own views. But, like any method of data collection, they also have their limitations and disadvantages. For instance, there may be bias of the interviewer in recording and interpreting answers, the rapport established with the respondents during the interviews may become too close, and respondents may be unable to recall events or be unwilling to provide answers. They may even give misleading or inaccurate answers. According to Fontana and Frey (2000), recent trends in interviewing have led to a reappraisal of the technique:

Interviewers are increasingly seen as active participants in interactions with respondents, and interviews are seen as negotiated accomplishments of both interviewers and respondents that are shaped by the contexts and situations in which they take place (p. 663).
These issues are probably of more concern to a researcher working within a positivist paradigm who seeks reproducibility over a large number of cases, using identical standardised questionnaires. In an interpretivist paradigm this is less problematic, since the process of interaction is unavoidable. Nevertheless, the researcher must be aware of potential bias and guard against it as far as possible in the search for validity and reliability.

Structured interviews rely on having a prepared interview schedule of specific questions which may be sent in advance to respondents. Indeed, there may be no need to meet at all, since the questionnaires could be sent by post or email. This method has the advantage that direct comparisons can be made between each respondent and data tabulated over a large number of cases. On the other hand, structured interviews with only a small number of respondents are less useful. There is no opportunity for supplementary questions to be asked, or for discussion to range more widely to related topics which arise in conversation.

Semi-structured interviews, using broad headings, have been described by a number of scholars, including Gratton and Jones (2004) and Marsh and Stoker (2002). This is seen as a more flexible approach, by allowing the possibility of asking additional questions and to probe more deeply on important issues that arise as the interview develops. It also allows for more interaction between interviewer and subject. If there is good rapport, it is possible to gain deeper insights into the subject’s behaviour and decisions. Gratton and Jones (2004) also discuss unstructured interviews, in which the interviewer has only rough idea of what to ask and therefore lets the discussion roam freely. As they note, it is likely, “much of the data will lack focus” (p. 142).

For the present study, the semi-structured approach proved to be more appropriate in practice. Each respondent has taken decisions in a different time-frame from the others, dealt with different issues, and contributed different amounts of their time to sport. Thus, a highly-structured identical questionnaire administered to each of the relatively small number was not suitable. Semi-structured interview schedules or questionnaires were therefore devised with some standard questions in each, followed by more specific questions tailored to each individual’s personal experience. This gave some continuity across interviews, yet allowed for flexibility in probing particular policy areas dealt with by the respondents.
Interviewing ex-Ministers, and other senior figures, raised problems of access. There are "gatekeepers" who see their role as protecting him or her. For example, the civil service machine has control over the current Minister's diary and engagements, while ex-Ministers may still have a secretary or other staff who perform similar functions. Burnham et al (2004) and Bryman (2001) suggest ways in which access can be gained through negotiation and by explaining the value of the research as a way for the respondents to tell their side of a story which may not have been told before. This tactic was used when requesting interviews and many interviewees responded positively.

It was initially intended that the interviews would focus mainly on the politicians who have held the office of Minister for Sport. In practice it proved difficult to gain cooperation from all former Ministers for Sport, and a wider trawl was undertaken to include other politicians with knowledge of the subject, sports administrators, civil servants, and others who could possibly contribute, based on their knowledge of the policy process for sport.

In the first instance, letters (including stamped addressed envelopes) were sent to some ex-Ministers for Sport in September/October 2006, which elicited no response. These were followed up by telephone calls and emails where contact details were known. When there was still no response, further letters were sent on Loughborough University headed paper, but these did not prove fruitful either. However, a letter to Mr David Pickup, former Director General of the Sports Council, resulted in the first successful interview in Bromley, where he lived, at the end of November 2006. Pickup provided contact details for Mr David Macdonald, a former senior civil servant who had worked with him, and he in turn was interviewed early in 2007. Around this time Sir Neil Macfarlane also agreed to be interviewed. Several of those interviewed, such as Mr Macdonald, were contacted at the suggestion of the interviewees themselves. Once access was gained to a few, it became much easier to approach others in the political and sports communities.

Due to these breakthroughs, and a decision to contact members of the House of Lords, further interviews were quickly achieved. Some of them were carried out in person and some by telephone. In practice, many of the respondents preferred to speak on the
telephone because this involved committing less of their time and effort. The decision
to look further than Ministers for Sport proved to be successful, especially in relation
to former MPs who are now in the House of Lords. A number of ex-Cabinet Ministers
and MPs who are in the Lords were particularly co-operative.

The main sports representative organisations, such as UK Sport, Sport England, and
the CCPR were also very helpful, by allowing visits to their headquarters and
interviews with relatively senior personnel. At one point it was considered contacting
some of the governing bodies of sport. However, it quickly became apparent from the
interviews (especially with ex-Sports Ministers) that individual governing bodies had
little influence on government sports policy because there were so many of them and
that they were collectively represented by the CCPR in any case. This approach was
therefore not pursued because it was felt that little significant data would have been
yielded.

A total of 28 interviews were carried out between November 2006 and April 2008. In
addition, email responses were received from Sir Eldon Griffiths in the USA. The
respondents have included five former Ministers for Sport and five former Cabinet
Ministers, two of whom were responsible for the department dealing with sport (one
under a Conservative and one under a Labour government: Virginia Bottomley and
Chris Smith). The Cabinet Minister formerly responsible for sport in Scotland, Ms
Patricia Ferguson, was also interviewed, as were others in the devolved
administrations. The interviews lasted from around half an hour up to almost two
hours, (with Mr Iain Sproat in London). The overall average was around three-
quarters of an hour. No one actually declined to be interviewed, but some merely
failed to respond to all forms of communication. A list of the respondents is attached
as Appendix 5 and the transcripts of five interviews with former Ministers for Sport
are attached as Appendix 6.

Many of the interviews were recorded, where interviewees agreed and where it was
possible to do so, while others were written up from notes immediately afterwards.
The data arising from the interviews were transcribed and interpreted manually. With
such a small number of cases, there was no need of computer-aided analysis to make
calculations or carry out cross-tabulations.

83
Although the interviews with politicians were highly productive, they were viewed with caution. Politicians are likely to take a particular view of events and issues that are most favourable to themselves. Attaining ministerial office of any kind, even at the junior level, may enhance their self-importance. Gerald Kaufman (1997) describes this as "ministerialitis". He goes on to illustrate this further:

The most immediately observable symptom of ministerialitis is a perceptible swelling of the head. Ministerialitis may be defined as a preoccupation and satisfaction with holding ministerial office to the exclusion of almost all other considerations (p. 10).

Since most former Ministers for Sport have long left office, "ministerialitis" was not such a problem. Nevertheless, these interviewees still wanted their own accounts of events to reflect well on them. In view of this, Burnham et al (2004) advise that, "The key guideline must be not to base any piece of work entirely on elite interviewing" (p. 206). Therefore, wherever possible, information gained from interviews was cross-checked against other sources, such as Hansard or newspaper reports. Interviews with other leading figures from the sports world (for example the Sports Council, CCPR, and civil servants) were also useful as a means of verification of Ministers’ versions of history.

It was noted above that some respondents were not been willing to give face-to-face interviews but suggested speaking on the telephone instead. While this may not be ideal in terms of building up a rapport with the individuals, as Bryman (2001) suggests, telephone interviews were carried out because of the need to speak to the key people who were contacted. Conversely, Bryman (2001) identified a number of advantages of telephone interviewing, including lower cost, speed of administration by avoiding travelling, and easier access. He also suggested that, since the interviewer and interviewee do not see each other, there is less possibility of bias in terms of factors such as social class or ethnicity.

In practice, the telephone interviews were very successful in that the respondents tended to keep to the point and answer the questions which were asked. Face-to-face interviews were sometimes much longer, though the content could be less useful since respondents often diverged into non-relevant areas of their careers and family lives. Some respondents spontaneously replied by telephone to letters, offering to be
interviewed right away. These offers were accepted because individual interview schedules had been prepared in advance for each person contacted and the interviews could take place speedily.

Utilising email as a means of conducting interviews was not initially considered, although it was used for contacting potential interviewees. However, in one case an email correspondence was conducted with a respondent (Sir Eldon Griffiths), in the USA. Although elderly, this was his preferred means of communication. A short questionnaire was sent and returned. A few weeks later, he followed this up with a lengthy written account of his time as Minister for Sport, which is likely to be adapted for his published memoirs.

While the use of email is now quite widespread in social research, there is little literature as yet available to assess its efficacy as a method of data collection. However, Meho (2006) reviews and discusses a number of studies that have used it. He concludes that it has similar advantages to telephone interviews, such as low cost, easy access, speed of administration, and elimination of social, ethnic, or gender bias. It is also similar in a negative sense, in that there is no direct interaction between interviewer and interviewee, and it may not be possible to follow up with supplementary questions. In the one case where it was used for this study, it was felt that the information could not have been provided by any other route, and was well worth having.

2.9 Research Methods: Purpose of the Interviews

Interviews with senior politicians and civil servants were intended to shed some light on the policy-making processes of government generally. Those with Ministers for Sport provided more specific data showing how the Ministers were concerned with sports policy-making. They also covered the day-to-day work of each post-holder to give an insight into what they actually did and how much of their time was spent on sport. It was felt to be important that they estimated their own contribution to sport, whether or not they made any difference to sports policy, with whom they worked closely in terms of a sports policy community, and their own influence on sports issues. Interviews with other figures from the sporting world contributed to an evaluation of the Minister for Sport’s role from a wider perspective.
The data obtained from interviews are presented in Chapter 5. It describes the role of the civil service, the Prime Minister, and Secretaries of State in British government and the policy-making process, as well as the sources of policy. It goes on to discuss the contribution they and non-government bodies made to the sports policy-making process, and also the sources of sports policy. The contribution made by the devolved governments in the UK is also considered. Finally, the role of the Minister for Sport in the policy-making process for sport is set out in more detail, illustrated with examples of policy-making.

When evidence is gathered and presented, it must be tested in some way. De Vaus (2001) is at pains to emphasise that an analysis, "must be guided by theory" (p. 221) and should not simply be an exercise in fact-gathering. The theory can either be developed as a result of a case study, or be used as a means of interpretation of a case study. In other words, it can be inductive or deductive. He goes on to explain:

The difference between the theory testing and theory building approaches is that in the former we begin with a set of quite specific propositions and then see if these work in real life situations. In the theory building model we begin with only a question and perhaps a basic proposition, look at real cases and end up with a more specific theory or set of propositions as a result of examining actual cases (p. 223).

Thus, in line with de Vaus's (2001) suggestions, relevant theoretical models, such as the Rhodes model of a policy community described by Marsh and Rhodes (1992), the advocacy coalition framework proposed by Sabatier (1988), and Kingdon's theory of multiple streams outlined by Zahariadis (1999), can be used as aids to policy analysis. In Chapter 6, some of these theories of the policy-making process are therefore used to help analyse the contribution made by Ministers for Sport to the policy-making process. A variety of such theoretical models is discussed in more detail in the next Chapter.

2.10 Conclusion

This study has mainly used a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, based on material provided from interviews with a range of participants involved in government and the policy-making process for sport. However, a minor contribution was made using the positivist techniques of content analysis and secondary data analysis to look at
Ministers' role in government and in the parliamentary process. Within the context of an interpretivist narrative, figures are used to illustrate particular activities, such as the amount of time spent by Ministers on sport and the number of junior Ministers who gained promotion. But as Ball (2006) observes, "Data does not speak for itself" (p. 4); it has to go through a creative process of interpretation.

This combination of methods has helped to provide a more rounded picture of the Ministers' work, by using both insider accounts and outside observations. In looking at the wider picture in this way, a process more akin to "crystallization" than "triangulation", as suggested by Janesick (2000), has been utilised. The techniques used in this research design should, as Burnham et al (2004) suggest, "provide complementary data which can strengthen the findings" (p. 31), without compromising the epistemological assumptions of an interpretivist methodology.
Chapter Three:  Theoretical Approaches: Policy Frameworks and Models

3.1 Introduction

The previous Chapter set out the methodological approach to be used in this study, based on a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm. This Chapter looks at a range of theories of the policy-making process, some of which may be helpful in analysing sports policy. But firstly, however, it is necessary to seek to define policy and to consider how it is related to power.

Richard Rose (1989) offers a fairly simple definition of public policy. He tells us that, when studying government, “public policy concerns what government does rather than who governs” (p. 4). Similarly, Birkland (2005) proposes that policy is, “a statement by government of what it intends to do or not to do, such as a law, regulation, ruling, decision, or order or a combination of these” (p. 139). By contrast, Brian Smith (1978) defines policy in a more complex, twofold way. He sees it in general initially as aspiration or action, then goes on to define what “public policy” actually is:

Policy may be defined as a deliberate course of action or inaction taken by those in office under the influence of values and pressures on the way resources (expenditure and coercion) are to be used in pursuit of objectives or in pursuit of other policies. Public policy is the outcome of decisions about the political allocation of resources and is therefore characterised by the use of legal and coercive sanctions; by being of general concern; and by the application of political values to problem solving (p.15).

It is notable that both Smith (1978) and Birkland (2005) consider inaction, or doing nothing at all, to be a form of policy in itself. This is a concept considered by many writers, including Dorey (2005), Burch and Wood (1995), and Martin J. Smith (1999). Steven Lukes (2005), in his study of power, returns to this theme a number of times. He, and others, draw heavily on the work of Bachrach and Baratz (1963) to show how issues can be kept off the policy agenda. Bachrach and Baratz (1963) suggest that non-decision-making is:
A means by which demands for change in the existing allocation of benefits and privileges in the community can be suffocated before they are even voiced; or kept covert; or killed before they gain access to the relevant decision-making agenda; or, failing all these things, maimed or destroyed in the decision-implementing stage of the policy process (Bachrach and Baratz, 1963: p.44).

For Lukes (2005), it is the exercise of power which determines what issues get on to the political agenda and which do not. He looks at the nature of power and sets out three models, comprising of one, two, and three dimensions. It is in his three-dimensional model that he shows how an acceptance of the existing order can be sustained by considering the many ways that issues may be stifled or kept out of the political process. Ingrained practices and social forces, or the innate conservatism of government bureaucracy can act as agents of power and ensure that non-decisions become the accepted norm. Power is necessarily an unequal relationship, in which those with a monopoly over, or command of resources seek to dominate those with little access to the levers of influence. As he says, “I have defined the concept of power by saying that A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B’s interests”, although he goes on to note that, “the notion of ‘interests’ is an irreducibly evaluative notion” (p.37). By this he means that the outcome of a policy could actually benefit B, though B does not necessarily recognise this.

Brian Smith (1978) was referring to power above when he spoke of, “legal and coercive sanctions” (p. 15) to implement policy, instead of keeping issues off the policy agenda. Power enables policy to be implemented in a positive sense. Without power, for example gained by winning elections, policy is only an aspiration and cannot be action or inaction in government. When a party wins office in an election it is then in a position to implement policies or to be positively inactive. Inaction in government is very different from inaction in opposition, where the party out of office has neither positive nor negative power. According to Martin J. Smith (1999), those who possess the most resources in government may not be the most powerful; this depends on how these resources are used:

Although some actors have more resources than others – the Prime Minister has
more than a single minister – those with the most resources do not necessarily have the most power. Resources do not equal power; capabilities in deploying resources and the strategic settings are critical to understanding who influences outcomes (p. 31).

Thus, a political party in office can start to deploy its resources by engaging in a programme of policy implementation, or a “policy process”. Many writers have tried to understand this by establishing a theoretical basis for the study of policy-making, rather than simply describing political events and outcomes. For instance, Burch and Wood (1995) dismiss the, “straightforward, factual description of British politics”, in favour of what they call the, “policy approach” (p. 3). They suggest that:

There is a deeper, more compelling reason for openly adopting a theoretical approach: quite simply there is no choice. We cannot make sense of the political universe around us without some prior notion of the scope of that universe and the nature of the elements within it (p. 4).

For Burch and Wood (1995), the “policy approach” is, “concerned with examining what government does (or chooses not to do, or neglects to do) why and with what consequences for the citizen” (p. 12). In common with Lukes (2005), they recognise that the policy process could result in having a policy of doing very little or nothing at all, and that the recipients of such a policy may not recognise its benefits to them or others.

Many policy-process theories have emerged from a positivist epistemological standpoint. However, as Fischer (2003) has observed, “all research is fundamentally interpretive” (p. 160). He casts doubt on the stand taken by theoreticians who profess to be working in the positivist tradition. They may see themselves as neo-positivists, but he still considers them to be using an unacknowledged interpretivist paradigm. It is to these theories that we now turn, beginning with one of the more traditional models, that of the “policy cycle” or, as Sabatier (1999) describes it, the “stages heuristic” (p. 6).
3.2 Policy Cycle or Stages Models

Burch and Wood (1995) view policy-making and decision-taking as part of a "policy process", that operates in a "policy cycle", in which they identify three main phases of initiation, formulation, and implementation. Hogwood and Gunn (1984) provide a more comprehensive analysis of the policy process. Their model has nine stages from, "deciding to decide" (issue search), issue definition, objective setting, through to implementation, evaluation, and beyond. They carry through the analysis to policy termination, although as Hogwood (1992) elsewhere notes, "Policy termination in its ideal-type form rarely occurs in practice" (p. 19). Hogwood and Gunn (1984) emphasise this point more fully by suggesting that, "One thing which does emerge from the termination literature is that complete terminations of programmes are rare; i.e. some replacement is normally provided" (p. 241).

Jordan and Richardson (1987) review the Hogwood and Gunn (1984) model favourably, and see it as one of the most sophisticated to emerge at the time when they were writing. They note that, although the model has nine stages, "The list is not definitive and can be adjusted, and that it is not a description of what happens to every issue, but it is a framework for organising what does happen – or does not" (p. 9).

It was noted by De Leon (1999) that the "stages heuristic" was the conventional wisdom up until the 1980s. He himself was one of its main proponents in a previous book (Brewer and De Leon, 1983), published in the USA, where much of the early work was carried out. Indeed, he acknowledges a debt to Harold Laswell (1951), who set out the early foundations of a policy science, and to Brewer (1974) who continued his work on policy cycles.

De Leon (1999) shows how the main challenge to the stages model came from Sabatier (1988, 1991), who set out early versions of his advocacy coalition framework. Sabatier (1991) described the stages model as having, "outlived its usefulness" (p. 147), because it was not a predictive model of policy change and it tended to ignore the role of ideas. It is
also criticised by John (1998) because it presents policy-making as a linear, simplistic process. According to John (1998) it, “is more relevant for elucidating the presentation of policy then in detecting the reality of bargaining” (p. 27). In his view, the complex process of negotiation between actors, who may be ever-changing within a policy network or community, is not captured in the stages model.

As a long-term advocate, De Leon (1999) vigorously defends the stages approach. He suggests that Sabatier’s criticisms are misplaced, since the approach never was, “a theoretic model as ascribed by Sabatier” (p.24). It was not intended to be a predictive model, capable of hypothesis testing but instead was, “a device (a heuristic, as it were) to help disaggregate an otherwise seamless web of public policy transactions” (p. 24) into a more simplified series of stages to help better understand them. Indeed he suggests that Sabatier has isolated a particular stage in the policy process, that of policy initiation, “to explain how new (or seriously revised) programs are brought into being, sometimes over at least a decade” (p. 25), by means of an “advocacy coalition”. In other words, Sabatier is looking at a fairly narrow part of the entire policy process, which he then analyses by means of the advocacy coalition framework model.

3.3 Policy Communities and Networks

Some writers have used the concepts of “policy communities” and policy networks” to show how particular issues in the policy cycle are dealt with and how policy is made in relation to them. One of the most elaborate conceptualisations is that of Marsh and Rhodes (1992), who developed the “Rhodes model” over a number of years. In this model they postulate that, “There are five types of networks ranging along a continuum from highly integrated policy communities to loosely integrated issue networks” (p. 13).

Marsh and Rhodes (1992) emphasise that, “The term “policy network” is used as the generic term encompassing all types” (p. 249). At the policy community end of the spectrum, there is a limited number of participants with shared aims, high integration, and a dominance of professional or economic interests. An issue network is much looser, with
a large and fluctuating membership, less agreement over aims, and fewer focussed aims (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992). However, as Fischer (2003) notes, "not everyone agrees on the distinction" (p. 32).

The types of networks or communities that develop in particular policy areas shape the outcomes of policy. For instance, Marsh and Rhodes (1992) discuss how the relatively tight agricultural policy community, led by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Foods in conjunction with the National Farmers' Union, has been successful in having its policies adopted by government, whereas communities or networks in other policy areas exhibit less success. Marsh (1998) takes this work forward and uses cross-national comparisons and case studies to show how communities operate in different contexts and cultures. He also offers a more precise definition of the terms used:

Policy communities are tight networks with few participants who share basic values and exchange resources. They exhibit considerable continuity in membership, values and outcomes. In contrast, issue networks are loose networks with a large number of members with fluctuating access and significant dispute over values. There is little continuity in membership, values or outcomes (Marsh, 1998: p. 14).

However, some writers have criticised the Rhodes model for failing to account for how policy communities relate to the state, because different sectors of policy have their own ways of regulating themselves. Furthermore, it may not be applicable in countries other than the UK and the USA, where the model has been mainly developed, because of different state traditions. John (1998) illustrates these and other shortcomings, but as he points out, "It is possible that the critics expect too much from the policy network approach" (p. 89). Rather like the policy cycle/stages model, "the policy network approach can never be a theory of public policy" (p. 89). It cannot explain policy formation or change, but can only help illustrate the context in which these occur. Others commend the model for its use of ideas in cementing the interests of a community, as well as shared aims and values. As Fischer (2003) notes, "It assumes that what keeps networks functioning are common ideas about solutions to public problems." (p. 32).
3.4 Institutional Rational Choice

The institutional rational choice model stresses the role of institutions, such as government departments, agencies, or quangos in shaping policy. The general framework was set out by Kiser and Ostrom (1982). Influenced by the basic philosophy of classical political economy, actors in any situation are thought to weigh the costs and benefits of their actions, together with the likely outcomes. This assumes that participants have full knowledge upon which to base their decisions. To have a real choice, as Ostrom (1999) suggests, it is essential for actors to have, “complete and well-ordered preferences and complete information, and that they maximise the net value of expected returns to themselves” (pp. 44-45), although she recognises that this is seldom the case in real-life situations.

Ostrom’s theoretical structure follows directly from the work of Herbert Simon (1957) and others. Writing initially in the 1940s and 1950s, Simon set out a “rational model” of policy-making. This assumed that a decision-maker would gather together all the facts about a problem with a completely open mind and identify a range of possible solutions. He would then take an objective, rational decision that would translate into the best outcome from the alternatives available. Simon (1957) was convinced that too many important decisions were based only on guesswork:

The fact of the matter is that momentous decisions are made every day as to the allocation of resources to one or another competing purpose, and that, particularly in noncommercial organizations, the decisions are made in an almost complete absence of the evidence which would be necessary to validate them (pp. 189-90).

Simon (1957) uses the term “bounded rationality” to describe what human beings do in relation to decisions. The quality of a decision, “will depend on the environment that bounds the area of rationality of the person making the decision” (pp. 243-4). Therefore, people are not completely free to take the best possible decisions. They are instead often hemmed in by realities, such as political or organisational constraints.
Ostrom (1999) uses ideas about organisational structures such as these to illustrate how the theory can be applied to institutions as well as individuals. She emphasises the use of “rules” in defining and analysing action situations, and identifies seven types. These are: entry and exit rules, position rules, scope rules, authority rules, aggregation rules, information rules, and payoff rules, the effects of which will vary in different situations, according to how the trained expert applies them. As she observes, “The same set of rules may yield entirely different types of action situations depending upon the types of events in the world being acted upon by participants” (p. 54). She goes on to specify three levels of rules: operational, collective-choice, and constitutional choice, thereby adding further complexity to the structure.

Fischer (2003) sees rational choice theory as being in the mainstream of the positivist tradition. Whilst recognising that interpretivist paradigms are increasingly used in social science, he makes the observation, “rational choice is very much on the ascendancy” (p. 119), using tools borrowed from economics. As a committed interpretivist, he notes regretfully that rational choice, “now constitutes one of the leading theoretical orientations in political science and sociology” (p. 119). Rational choice theory is viewed more favourably, but not uncritically, by John (1998). He believes that, “rational choice is good at explaining what actors do once the objectives of a policy are set, but is often silent on why decision-makers select a particular course of action” (p. 142), because of its focus on institutions rather than people.

3.5 Multiple Streams

Kingdon (1995) originally developed the theory of multiple streams, building on the work of others, including Simon (1957) on bounded rationality. His approach utilises a so-called “garbage can” concept, in which ambiguity is everywhere, participants vary in the decision-making process, and the processes of technology in organisations are constantly developing. The model assumes three streams, consisting of problems, policies, and politics, each with its own operational parameters. As Zahariadis (1999) describes it:
At critical points in time, the streams are coupled by policy entrepreneurs. The combination of all three streams into a single package enhances dramatically the chances that an issue will receive serious attention by policymakers (p. 76).

The policy windows that occur when all three streams come together may be very narrow, but these are the moments when major shifts in policy can take place, such as in times of national crisis, or when a new government comes to power. For example, a new government in Britain gave independence to the Bank of England in 1997, but did not join the Euro then or later. The opportunity to do the latter disappeared, possibly for many years until another conjunction of policy streams occurs in a favourable combination, or possibly forever. Policy windows open for only a short time. In Kingdon's (1995) view, "An idea's time comes, but it also passes. There is no irresistible momentum that builds for a given initiative" (p. 169).

The model is seen by Zahariadis (1999), "as particularly useful because it integrates policy communities with broader events" (p. 78), unlike other models which tend to ignore the real world. It can also cope with, "agenda setting and policy choice in several national settings" (p. 81). Another important concept is that of the "policy entrepreneur", someone who is skilled at seizing opportunities for personal gain, and who may invest a great deal of time and effort in preparation for a key moment to profit. The idea of a "policy entrepreneur" has also been used in other disciplines. For example, Ball (2006) uses it in educational studies, where, "The policy entrepreneur is committed to the application of certain techniques and solutions to organisations" (p. 61).

While generally praising the model, Zahariadis (1999) also finds fault with it on several grounds. For example, he does not think it is a good predictor of policy change, because much policy-making is incremental and does not depend on a combination of streams or opening of windows. There are actually only a few situations when sudden policy change occurs, during the confluence of the three streams. He suggests, "MS strives for understanding and explanation more than prediction" (p. 86), and is thus more clearly in the interpretive paradigm. It is more of a descriptive device than a means of falsifying a
hypothesis in the sense of the term used by Popper (2002). So far, the theory of multiple streams has been mainly used in qualitative studies, but Zahariadis (1999) believes that its use in quantitative studies would add more weight to its value for predictability.

John (1998) also commends the model for its contribution to an understanding of the agenda-setting process and for celebrating, “the importance of ideas in public policy” (p. 174). However, “it concentrates too much on agendas and not enough on how ideas feed into the implementation process and back again” (p. 176). While it focuses mainly on the US policy-making process, he feels it could be transferred to a European setting, since Western societies are becoming more alike in some government programmes, as they are in many other aspects of social and economic globalisation.

3.6 Punctuated Equilibrium Theory

The punctuated equilibrium theory has its origins in the work of Baumgartner and Jones (1993), who combined political institutions with Simon’s (1957) concept of “bounded rationality”. The theory looks at how issues are defined and how they get on to the policy agenda. Baumgartner and Jones (1991, 1993, 2005) postulate that there are long periods of stable or incremental policy-making, punctuated by policy leaps in response to emerging issues. Each leap is followed by another period of relative calm, in which policy-making returns to its evolutionary trend. As True et al (1999) note:

Punctuated equilibrium theory seeks to explain a simple observation: Political processes are often driven by a logic of stability and incrementalism, but occasionally they also produce large-scale departures from the past (p. 97).

Policy change happens within policy communities, networks, or “iron triangles”, the last-named of which is applied to the United States. An “iron triangle” is defined by John (1998) as consisting of, “relationships between congressional committees, executive agencies and producer groups” (p. 79) in the USA. There may also be other sub-systems in which policy is made, but as True et al (1999) comment, “Whatever the name one gives to these communities of specialists operating out of the political spotlight, most
issues most of the time are treated within such a community of experts” (p. 99).

There are obvious similarities between the punctuated equilibrium and the multiple streams theories. In simple terms, they both suggest that policy-making generally carries on in a steady, incremental way until an external shock occurs. A major change then takes place, followed by another period of relative tranquility until the next destabilising event, and so on.

The theory thus offers a conservative view of policy-making, which occurs within rationally bounded parameters. John (1998) criticises it for being mainly descriptive, for viewing policy change as emerging from the bottom up instead of top down, and for neglecting implementation processes. He also believes that too often it reaches outside the model to explain exceptions. Nevertheless, he sees it as, “an excellent and theoretically well informed model” (p. 182).

3.7 Advocacy Coalition Framework

The original concept of an advocacy coalition framework (ACF) was developed by Sabatier and others over some years from the mid-1980s, when searching for something to replace what he called the “stages heuristic” or policy cycle model. Although it was the dominant paradigm for many years, according to Sabatier (1991) the stages model had, “outlived its usefulness” (p. 147), and needed be superseded by better theories.

In one of his earliest papers on the subject, Sabatier (1988) used the advocacy coalition framework to examine pollution control in American cities. In this conceptualisation, policy change could best be understood through, “policy subsystems, that is the interaction of actors from different institutions interested in a policy area” (p. 131). These subsystems went beyond the “iron triangles” and networks, to include university researchers, journalists, and policy analysts. Journalists, “who play important roles in the generation, dissemination, and evaluation of policy ideas” (p. 131) were seen as particularly important. This is reiterated by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999), when
setting out a more developed version of the theory. In an attempt to make the ACF more relevant outside of the USA, Sabatier (1998) has addressed how it can be applied in Europe, where countries tend to have parliamentary systems of government.

A central part of the theory is the importance of "core beliefs" held by the main participants in a coalition. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) feel that early versions of their theory were not clear enough about core beliefs. They now suggest that, "the principal glue holding a coalition together is agreement over policy core beliefs" (p. 123). Core beliefs are very resistant to change, and therefore policy can remain fairly stable over a decade or more. It can take a shock from outside the subsystem to change policy, since the members of a coalition, and the core beliefs that they hold, tend to remain constant over a long period of time.

According to Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999), coalitions come together to alter government policy, in order to, "achieve the policy objectives in their respective policy cores" (p. 142). Coalitions use a variety of techniques to do this, including influence on public opinion, manipulation of the communications media, changing the personnel on important committees, boycotts, demonstrations, exchange of information, and so on. Another key concept in making these things happen, is that of "policy brokers". These are individuals (similar to the "policy entrepreneurs" in the multiple streams model) who can broker compromises within or between coalitions.

Fischer (2003) sees the advocacy coalition model as being based firmly on policy network foundations. It is also one that purports to be empirical and predictive, by claiming to explain policy change. He asserts that it does not actually do this, but instead, "it seems better at explaining policy stability" (p. 99). Furthermore, while its authors see it as empirical it is, "infused with interpretations" (p. 100). He goes on to observe, "What they fail to concede is that their own work remains as much in the realm of interpretation as in that of empirical proof" (p. 100).

The model is also viewed by John (1998) as very much a derivative of network theories.
John accuses Sabatier of trying to present a simple concept in a very complex manner, whereas, “it boils down to a simple formulation. Policy-making is stable until a large socio-economic event changes the coalitional pattern” (p. 172). This is little different in essence from older-established network theories, apart from having a wider range of potential participants in the coalitions. It is also similar to the multiple streams and punctuated equilibrium theories in looking for sudden events as catalysts of change. While neither Fischer (2003) nor John (1998) believe that the model actually explains policy change, they both see it as an important contribution in trying to move the debate forward. It remains an influential theoretical framework, although recent scholars, such as Young-Jung and Chul-Young (2008) have looked at how it can be developed to make it more effective.

3.8 Core Executive Framework

Budge et al (2004) postulate that the most important aspects of policy-making happen in the innermost circle around the Prime Minister, which they refer to as the “core executive”. They describe it in this way:

Frustrated by endless controversy about whether we have Prime Ministerial or Cabinet government, some political scientists have pointed out that both are embedded in a wider network of power relations that spread well beyond Downing Street and the Cabinet room. Increasingly during the twentieth century, and especially under Thatcher and Blair, the power of the political executive has been strengthened and centralised, and far from including only the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, its tentacles use and control many other influential bodies, agencies, committees, and individuals in Whitehall and Westminster. This network of power and influence at the apex of government has been termed the “Core Executive.” (p. 132)

As well as the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, the core executive includes Cabinet committees, the most senior Whitehall civil servants, favoured policy advisers, and a few other influential people who are often little-known outside of the elite circle. It is a fluid, ever-changing network, with constant renewal of personnel and is therefore not easily defined as an institution. Nor can its numbers be stated with precision.
The literature on the core executive is now quite extensive, with Rhodes and Dunleavy (1990, 1995) amongst the earliest to establish a theoretical base as to how issues get on to its political agenda. Smith and Marsh (1995) suggest that, within the core executive most policy originates in government departments. They assert that, "departments are the key policy makers for the majority of policies within British central government" (p. 41). In particular, they identify the Treasury as the most significant department, since securing finance is the key to effective policy-making, a view shared by Burch and Hollliday (1996). Smith (1999) builds on this and attributes the dominance of the core executive to the growth in state activity over the past hundred years, particularly from the Second World War. This growth was only possible because of increasing affluence, higher taxation, and thus greater power for the Treasury to control the resources of government.

Dorey (2005) looks at the key individuals who comprise the core executive. He suggests that a tiny elite of Whitehall civil servants are especially influential since, "It is these senior civil servants who have long played a major role in the formulation and administration of public policy" (pp. 71-2). Hennessy (1990) analyses the role of the civil service in great detail and emphasises the hugely important role that civil servants play in policy-making. This is a view echoed by John (1998), who looks at how many policy ideas originate in Whitehall and how the most senior civil servants have a major impact on the policy-making process. In his view, the core executive framework, "is a valid attempt to shift the focus of research away from the analysis of the formal working of institutions." Instead, it shifts it towards the, "complex processes and alliances within the central state" (p. 47), from which government policy emerges. Conversely, Budge et al (2004) identify the changing alliances as a weakness in the framework, because the composition of the core executive may differ on key issues.

Some of these concepts were examined in Chapter 1 (1.6), when the role of the Cabinet in relation to the Prime Minister was discussed. Although the Prime Minister has control over significant resources, Heffeman (2003) asserts that to effectively exercise power, the Prime Minister must share these resources with others, especially senior Ministers. He or she must recognise that this requires a constant process of bargaining. According to
Smith (1994), Mrs Thatcher over-reached herself in 1990 by failing to recognise that she was dependent on Cabinet colleagues to govern effectively, and by trying to dominate them in a “presidential” style. As Heffeman (2005) observes, Britain does not have a presidential system so Mrs Thatcher (or any other British Prime Minister) must retain the confidence and trust of key people to stay as head of government in a parliamentary democracy. Like Mrs Thatcher, Tony Blair also had a long premiership in which to amass resources. In the view of Burch and Holliday (2004) this allowed him to reinforce central control without becoming “presidential”. He kept in line with British traditions and practice of observing the proprieties of Cabinet government, while cleverly working around it when it was convenient to him.

3.9 Interpretivist Theories of the Policy Process

Fischer (2003) argues that the dominance of the empiricist or neo-positivist paradigm has neglected the social meanings of human interaction. Topics of investigation have become ever narrower and the use of quantitative techniques ever more common. He suggests that a different approach should be tried:

The constructionist view is not just a new idea about how to reconstruct our research methodologies; it provides in fact a better picture – even empirical description – of what social scientists already do. By stripping away the outdated pretences of empiricism, it makes it easier to deal with social scientific practices in a way that is both more cogent and more relevant (p. viii).

The post-war dominance of Lasswell (1951), Simon (1957), Lindblom (1980), and others concerned with “rational” decision-making, is something that Fischer (2003) feels has led to an arid way of trying to explain human behaviour. The measurement of costs and benefits, following the techniques of economists, are not always appropriate. He feels that an analyst should look for the social meaning of events and try to understand the significance of particular actions. As he puts it, “interpretive policy analysts seek to determine not only ‘what’ a particular policy means, but ‘how’ it means” (p. 142). However, social interaction with participants is essential, rather than studying an area though documentary evidence alone. He sees interpretation as being at the heart of all
analysis and comments, “The question then is not whether or not there is interpretation, but rather how much interpretation is involved in a particular analysis” (p.160).

Another scholar working in the field of interpretative policy analysis is Yanow (2000). She outlines her way of thinking thus:

> It is not possible for an analyst to stand outside the policy issue being studied, free of its values and meanings and of the analyst’s own values, beliefs, and feelings. The argument assumes that knowledge is acquired through interpretation, which necessarily is “subjective”. (p6).

Yanow (2000) states that, “‘interpretation’ does not mean ‘impressionistic’ (p. 93), since she asserts that interpretive scholars use systematic and rigorous methods. But it does mean that there is no such thing as objective knowledge: all knowledge is socially constructed in her view, and cannot be value-free. Nevertheless, Yanow (2000) struggles to present a convincing, theoretical method of policy analysis. Her work tends to concentrate on data collection (interviews, observations, documents, etc.), which are really no different from the empirical methods that she criticises.

Likewise, Fischer (2003) fails to offer a new theoretical method of interpretive policy analysis, contenting himself with the assertion that all theories are essentially interpretive. However, he does suggest that storytelling and narrative analysis may be promising challenges to empirically-based theories, something that Yanow (2000) also discusses and favours.

### 3.10 Policy Models for Sport

The policy-making models that have been set out above are by no means an exhaustive list. Others noted by Sabatier (1999) include “arenas of power”, “cultural theory”, and “policy domain framework”. What they all have in common is that none of them has been devised with sport issues in mind, but have instead been used to examine policy-making in fields such as the environment, transport, or education. However, some of them may be
adapted to help provide insights into the policy-making process for sport, as might observations derived from those looking at the use of power.

For example, sport has never been high on any government’s policy agenda, compared with national issues such as defence, education, or welfare. As discussed earlier (3.1), power may have been exercised in the way that Lukes (2005) and Dorey (2005) have suggested, to keep sport off the agenda and thus avoiding spending much money on it. Where sport has made it on to the national policy agenda, for instance with an Olympic or World Cup bid, the government has become involved at the highest level of Cabinet and Prime Minister. Sport may therefore have suffered by being sidelined as a low priority of government, which has the power to set the policy agenda. This illustrates how the power to make no decision at all can be utilised effectively by government in relation to sport, whereas it cannot ignore foreign policy, agriculture, health, education, welfare, and so on, in the same way.

Few scholars have attempted to look at sport policy-making from a theoretical perspective, with Houlihan (1991, 1997, 2005), Bramham (2001), and Green and Houlihan (2004), being amongst the rare exceptions. For example, Houlihan (1991) applies the Hogwood and Gunn (1984) model of a policy cycle to sport. The nine stages of their model are set out, with some specific examples drawn from sport to illustrate how the model could be used in this context. For instance, football spectator violence could cut across policy community areas and be either a sport or a law and order issue. He agrees with Jordan and Richardson (1987) that, “Not all issues will exhibit all nine stages”. However, as an analytical tool, Houlihan (1991) suggests, “The framework can be used, therefore, within a broader pluralist analysis of society and sits comfortably alongside an incrementalist description of the policy process” (p. 159).

Following this, Houlihan (1991) then applies the concepts of policy communities and policy networks to see if these exist for the sport area. The main actors in the sports policy community could be local authorities, the governing bodies of sport, voluntary organisations, political parties, international organisations, the Minister for Sport, and so
on. He then observes, "the range of actual and potential actors with an interest in the policy area is obviously enormous" (p. 161). Taking the Minister for Sport, civil servants, and the Sports Council as central actors, he shows how there could be a sports policy community. An updated model might show the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the National Lottery, UK Sport, Sport England, and others at the heart of such a community.

Houlihan (1991) also uses a series of case studies on football hooliganism, drug abuse by athletes, and school sport to illustrate how these issues get on to the policy agenda and move through a policy cycle. He discusses whether or not networks or communities exist in these areas. While there may be networks for some individual issue he argues, "In the policy area of sport a mature community does not yet exist. Nevertheless some of the characteristics of a policy community are evident" (p. 258). He lists some of the characteristics, such as a stable membership, involving Ministers, civil servants, and voluntary bodies, which show that a community is emerging. On the other hand there are missing elements which include, "weak value consensus" and lack of professional guidance, "to help give policy development a clear direction" (p. 258). Networks were therefore found for some issues, but not a fully-fledged sports policy community. Despite this, "However, it seems that it is possible to have effective networks in the absence of a mature policy community "(p. 260).

While in another work, Houlihan (1997) discusses the policy process for sport, using cross-national comparisons with Australia, Ireland, Canada, and the UK, very few other writers have taken this issue seriously. Bramham (2001) makes some attempt, but merely restates the Hogwood and Gunn (1984) model without giving any examples in relation to sport. He then looks at the ideologies of conservatism, liberalism, and New Labour without really showing how these affect sport. Bramham (2001) makes the observation that:

"New Right ideologies argued that government subsidy in sport was inappropriate. Individuals should be free to meet their sporting wants through the commercial or voluntary sectors rather than having their
sporting needs defined by distant quangos or central or local government (p. 16).

It was shown already (Chapter 1, paragraph 1.4) that this view is at variance with that of Haywood et al (1995) and Henry (1993), who suggest that post-war British governments have not lessened their contribution to sport, and involvement in it, whatever their ideological positions. Indeed, there has been a steady encroachment by government into almost every aspect of sport in the post-war period, without it being allowed to become the focal point of a true sports policy community.

Houlihan (2005) has now attempted to move the debate forward from the “stages heuristic” or policy cycle models by examining the usefulness of other theories to the sports policy process. The stages model is compared with institutional analysis (rational choice), multiple streams, and the advocacy coalition framework, all of which have been described above. He concludes that a modified version of the advocacy coalition, “provides a framework that enables the researcher to acknowledge, and also systematically investigate, the complexity and ‘messiness’ of contemporary sports policy making” (p. 182). The advocacy coalition framework recognises the importance of the belief systems of policy-makers, has a long-term view (ten years or more), and has been widely tested in other policy areas. It also acknowledges the role of the “policy broker”, which may be a factor in current UK sports policy.

Green and Houlihan (2004) have tested the advocacy coalition framework in elite sports policy change in Canada and Britain and found evidence in the UK of an elite sport advocacy coalition, though not one for mass-participation sport. Such coalitions are effective, but are constrained by government objectives in terms of what they can achieve. As for the effectiveness of the advocacy coalition framework, it “offers a sophisticated and powerful tool for an exploration of sport policy change” (p. 481).
3.11 Choice of Models

Despite being the main architect of the advocacy coalition framework, Sabatier (1999) advises that researchers should use a variety of theories in looking at a problem, not just one with which he or she is familiar. He stresses the valuable contribution of other theories, such as rational choice, to his own work and observes that the use of more than one theory, "provides some guarantee against assuming that a particular theory is the valid one" (p. 270). No theory can ever claim to be the final word or the "best" at offering explanations of behaviour, nor should it be dismissed because it is currently out of fashion. John (1998) echoes this advice, when he proposes a framework that combines the ACF with policy streams and punctuated equilibrium. This is later taken further by John (2003), when he suggests that such a framework could be based on evolutionary theory. Burton (2006) also reviews a number of the models discussed here and assesses how they can be adapted and used to produce better policies.

In different situations, different approaches may be appropriate, including the use of the stages model. It was discussed earlier (see 3.2) that some scholars, such as De Leon (1999), believe the stages model is by no means dead and is one of its strongest advocates. Indeed, in the Hogwood and Gunn (1984) stages model, agenda-setting and issue search are still worthwhile ways of looking at the first steps in the policy-making process. They ask the question, "How and why do some issues get on to the policy agenda for discussion and perhaps action, while others do not or, if they do, receive only cursory or belated attention?" (p. 67). They then proceed to try to answer the question by suggesting six ways in which issues are likely to make it on to a policy agenda. These are: when issues have reached crisis proportions; when they have achieved particularity (i.e. large public awareness); there is an emotive or human interest angle; they are likely to have a wide impact; they raise questions of power and legitimacy; or they are somehow fashionable (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984). It is possible to give examples of how issues in sport can fit into these categories and how the above theories can help to illuminate them, some of which are discussed below.
For example, Hogwood (1987) has looked at how crises can shape the public policy agenda, compelling the government to act on an issue that was not previously seen as important to it. When the immediate crisis is over, the government may well lose interest in the subject until the next crisis arrives. Hogwood (1987) suggests that football hooliganism is a classic case of government in the 1980s being forced to act in a crisis:

Timing and recurrability of crises are important. The Bradford fire disaster in 1986, coinciding with incidents of football hooliganism in Britain and by British fans at the Heysel stadium disaster in Belgium led to an upsurge in political interest, including the involvement of the prime minister (p. 37).

Such an issue could also be fitted in to the multiple streams theory. A window of opportunity arose when the three streams of policy, problems, and politics came together, and public opinion was demanding action. The government had to act swiftly to deal with problems in football in a unique conjunction of circumstances that have not recurred.

The National Lottery was set up in 1994 after much consideration, with the Sports Council appointed as one of the agents to distribute the proceeds. Its advocates had achieved particularity, or wide public awareness, by constant lobbying and campaigning. According to Pickup (1996), proposals had been around for many years in the sporting world as a means of generating more money for grass-roots sport. The football pools had tended to benefit only professional football clubs, which were already relatively rich. It had been resisted by Mrs Thatcher who, “regarded a Lottery as no more than an iniquitous device whereby the undeserving got something for nothing” (p. 66).

In the years leading up to the establishment of the Lottery, many influential people from the charitable, sports, arts, music, and other creative industries had steadily built up a case for it. By 1992, the Chairman of the Arts Council (Lord Palumbo) and the Chairman of the Sports Council (Peter Yarranton) were vigorous advocates, as was David Mellor, the newly-appointed Secretary of State for National Heritage. They convinced John Major, himself a keen sports fan, of its desirability. Thus, this could be viewed as a success for an advocacy coalition, spanning many disciplines, using the methods of publicity, ideas,
lobbying, with the type of core beliefs as described by Sabatier and Jenkins Smith (1999), and with a timescale of a decade or more that they see as optimal.

A human interest angle is often cultivated by the tabloid press. The Zola Budd affair of the 1984 Olympics shows how a publication like The Daily Mail can place an issue on a public policy agenda, despite limited involvement of the sports community. The seventeen-year-old South African was quickly granted a British passport, and allowed to run for the UK, following the intervention of The Daily Mail, which used her story to promote sales. The anti-apartheid movement protested vehemently at what they saw as means of avoiding the sporting boycott of South Africa. But as Guelke (1986) observes, “It was recognised that even if she wore a British vest in the Olympics, the controversy had ensured that the whole world would identify her as a South African runner” (p. 140), who represented an ostracised regime. Something that began as a human interest story for the British press, quickly became embroiled in international politics.

It is difficult to see how any of the theories set out above can really account for the workings of the British tabloid press. The one that comes closest is the advocacy coalition theory, which places some emphasis on the ability of journalists to influence events. However, Sabatier and Jenkins Smith (1999) apparently had in mind the dissemination of serious policy ideas by concerned and informed reporters, rather than editors picking and choosing random events to sell copies of tabloid newspapers.

The use of drugs in sport is believed to have a wide impact on performance, without the true extent yet being known. According to Houlihan (2003), “Doping in sport is a problem that just will not go away” (p. 218). He continues:

Soon after the end of the war, evidence began to accumulate of the increasingly widespread use of synthetic drugs in sport. Dramatic evidence appeared during the 1960s, when a series of high-profile fatalities occurred, including that of a Danish cyclist at the 1960 Rome Olympic Games who had taken amphetamines (p. 224).

Since then, there have been many instances of drugs being implicated in fatalities, such as
that of Tom Simpson in the 1967 Tour de France (Fotheringham, 2003). There is believed to have been widespread and systematic drug-taking by East German athletes for many years, while some athletes who have been caught, including Ben Johnson at the 1988 Olympics, may only be the tip of the iceberg (Pound, 2004).

Network theory could be used to help explain the pervasiveness of drugs in sport. For example, there might be a loose network, in terms of the Marsh and Rhodes (1992) definition, of coaches, scientists, athletes, suppliers and others, in whose interests drug-taking persists. On the other hand, there may be a parallel network of administrators, testers, scientists, and athletes opposed to drugs in sport. Indeed, there could even be a covert advocacy coalition, working to make drug-taking acceptable in sport, or at least so widespread as to be ineradicable.

In 1988, the decision of Colin Moynihan to reduce the size of the Sports Council from 32 to 14 members raised questions about the power and legitimacy of government to control the sports community. The Sports Council had been granted independence though its Royal Charter in 1972, placing it nominally outside the control of government and therefore responsible for its own organisational structure. It may be argued that the government had no power to interfere in this way with an independent body; that it was legitimate only for the government to provide it with funds, which the Council would then spend on worthy projects as it saw fit and decide on the size and structure of its own membership.

The then newly-appointed head of the Sports Council, David Pickup, was not opposed to the reduction. Pickup (1996) even called it a “sensible decision” (p. 8), since the Council was unwieldy in its present form. It is possible to view Moynihan’s decision in terms of the Kiser and Ostrom (1982) model of institutional rational choice. Moynihan had attended previous meetings of the Sports Council and observed how the institution did not function well as a large forum. Following a rigorous evaluation of the options (restructuring, reduction, abolition, and so on), he decided that the most rational course of action was a reduction in the numbers to a more manageable figure.
Finally, it has been fashionable at different times over the post-war years to bemoan the lack of international success amongst British sports competitors. Before the second world war, British sportsmen could win a large number of medals at the Olympics, while the English football team were undefeated at Wembley. Holt (1989) illustrates how this has changed in the modern age:

The growing importance of the media, especially radio and television, highlighted the relatively poor performance of British sportsmen and women at an international level. Britain won one gold medal at the 1952 Olympics and that was in an equestrian event (p. 345).

Interpretative theory could provide some insight into why these perceptions have come about. It could, for instance, suggest that observers are looking at things from the wrong angle by concentrating on a few relatively unsuccessful sports, such as football or tennis. Since the dawn of organised sport in the nineteenth century, Britain has actually been successful over a far wider range of disciplines than all but a handful of countries in the world. Some countries have great success in a few small areas, such as Kenya with runners or Austria with skiers. By contrast, there are very few events in which Britain has never been a considerable achiever at some time in the last hundred years, ranging from winter sports to golf, rowing, equestrianism, or sailing, though no single one has ever dominated the British sporting landscape.

3.12 Conclusion

The issues addressed above, amongst others, have found their way on to the policy agenda for sport. Rational choice theory is useful in looking at how sporting issues have made it on to the policy agenda. For example, national institutions and governing bodies now accept that there will be two main stadiums in London, of which one will be for the 2012 Olympics (and perhaps a World Athletics Championships) and the other the rebuilt Wembley for football. It may not be “rational” to end up with this outcome, when modern engineering and architecture could have combined to design a single stadium capable of coping with a range of sporting events (as in Paris). Indeed, it is planned to
modify Hampden Park in Glasgow to include a temporary running track for the proposed 2014 Commonwealth Games and remove it afterwards. However, the politicians and sports governing bodies have not been able to compromise on this issue for London and the result has been disjointed policy-making.

Arguably, this example of confused policy-making also reveals the absence of a mature policy community, or an advocacy coalition, capable of making "rational" decisions about large-scale investment in sport. In this case, network theory or the advocacy coalition theory could be used as a means of analysis. A tight-knit policy community would surely have made an objective assessment of the policy options and chosen a one-stadium "rational" solution. This suggests that instead there is a loose "issue network" operating in sport, in which the major actors did not closely co-operate. This fits well with the "Rhodes model" (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992).

On the other hand, there may have a relatively closed policy community in football, or a strong advocacy coalition, which was determined to get its own stadium, to the exclusion of all other sports. No matter how high the cost, the football authorities wanted exclusive control over Wembley, even if this proves to be economically crippling to the football governing bodies in the long-term. This example of a football policy community also appears to conform to the "Rhodes model".

To take another example from football, the rebuilding of Wembley was initially driven by the chairman of Chelsea FC, Ken Bates. He could be viewed as a "policy entrepreneur" who took risks and bargained, negotiated between competing factions, and essentially pursued a personal agenda. In this sense, he could be fitted into the multiple streams model, or described as a "policy broker" in the advocacy coalition framework. Another such figure may be Bernie Ecclestone in relation motor racing and tobacco sponsorship, or Lord Coe in terms of securing the 2012 Olympics for London. These, and others, have held core beliefs over many years, and have used a variety of tactics suggested by the advocacy coalition model to hold a coalition together and drive through their aims. The outcomes may be ultimate personal triumphs, but they have also been successes for the
coalitions that they brokered.

While these various theoretical models may be useful in examining the larger policy picture, they may not be so appropriate when looking at the role of Ministers for Sport in policy-making. Ministers have consistently been in relatively junior government offices. The opportunities for them to act as policy brokers or entrepreneurs are likely to have been fairly limited; so too would their capacities to participate in or cement advocacy coalitions. The theories are designed for larger aspects of policy, which would tend to ignore the contribution and abilities of junior Ministers who are the focus of this study. However, As Sabatier (1999) expressed it, there is, “The need for better theories” (p. 3) to help explain relatively low-level policy-making. The core executive theory may therefore be the best model for explaining what Ministers for Sport could and, more pertinently, could not do. What core executive theory does is show how those with the greatest access to the centres of power and resources are the most likely to shape policies. This study will try to show where Ministers for Sport were located in relation to the core executive, and thus how influential they were.

Nevertheless, as the above examples have illustrated, a wide range theories can be used to help illuminate the policy-making processes relating to particular sporting issues in which the Ministers participated. It is therefore intended to follow the advice of John (1998) and Sebatier (1999) by using several theories where they are able to shed light on particular problems or issues. This is also the view of Ball (2006), who believes that, “in the analysis of complex social issues – like policy – two theories are probably better than one” (p. 43). None of the theories are truly comprehensive or universally applicable to every situation, but by using them in a selective way, it is hoped that the strengths of each can be used to best advantage when the data collected for this study are analysed in Chapter 6. But firstly, the data itself will be presented in the next two Chapters (Chapters 4 and 5).

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter will examine the position of the Minister for Sport in a parliamentary context. The office itself will be compared with that of other junior offices and office-holders. The Chapter will track the careers of all junior Ministers appointed from 1964 to 2005, with special reference to their first appointments, as a means of determining if there are any favourable posts which can lead to higher office. Ministerial appointments in each government from 1964 to 2005 will also be explored to see if some administrations were more likely to lead to promotion than others, and to ask whether this was true for Ministers for Sport. It is hoped that this data will cast some light on where the office of Minister for Sport, and its post-holders, are situated in the machinery of British government.

Leading on from this will be an examination of what the Ministers for Sport actually did in Parliament. Using a content analysis of the parliamentary record *Hansard*, data will be presented showing what proportion of their work was devoted to sport and what to other subjects. To complement this, a similar analysis will be carried out on the number of parliamentary questions that each Minister answered, in terms of sport and non-sport subjects. A third strand of the parliamentary analysis will look at the debates on sport in the 1964-2005 period, of which there were only a relatively small number.

4.2 Junior Ministers

Before 1964, almost all junior Ministers carried the generic titles of Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (PUSS) or Minister of State within their respective departments. With a few exceptions (such as Minister of Food, 1939-54) only Cabinet Ministers were given titles which clearly identified their offices. Theakston (1987) shows how this changed significantly in 1964 when Prime Minister Harold Wilson created various posts which
were given a particular title that was directly related to their government jobs. Wilson (1971) himself describes it thus:

within the field of ministries already in existence, I appointed a number of junior ministers with special responsibilities for subjects essential to Britain’s economic and social development which had not been given an adequate priority in the past (p. 10).

The most significant of Wilson’s new appointments were Ministers for Sport, Arts, and Overseas Development. These have been followed over the years by many others, including the Disabled, Information Technology, Consumer Protection, and Housing, some of which have survived whilst others have been abolished. The full range of offices is set out by Butler and Butler (2000), the main source that was used for this analysis.

Wilson also set a trend in significantly increasing the number of junior posts by 40%, (Rose, 1975). It has been noted by Budge et al (2004) that the overall number of Parliamentary Under-Secretaries increased from 23 in 1945 to 68 in 2003, an important factor in the enhancement of the Prime Minister’s patronage. With around a hundred Ministers of all ranks, plus the Parliamentary Private Secretaries (or PPSs) who support senior Ministers, this large “payroll vote” is committed to continuous support for the government.

4.3 Junior Ministers in Named Offices

It was shown in Chapter 1 (paragraph 1.7) that failure to advance far within the parliamentary hierarchy is something that all Ministers for Sport have had to endure. Of the 13 Ministers who held the office 1964-2009, none were promoted to the Cabinet. Only four Ministers for Sport (Monro, Moynihan, Atkins, and Key), all of whom were Conservatives, moved to another government office after Sport. No former Labour Ministers for Sport have managed to attain other positions subsequently. While Ministers for Sport have generally failed to gain promotion, this may not be unusual for junior ministerial offices in general.
In order to test this proposition, four named junior ministerial offices have been selected to allow for comparison with the Minister for Sport: Arts, Defence Procurement, Local Government, and Social Security. These were chosen because they represent a good cross-section of government activity, because they have been established for a reasonable length of time over several governments, and because they have offered continuity across different parties in government. They were all established at junior level, though occasionally the Arts Minister was in the Cabinet during the 1979-97 Conservative governments. Others were considered but rejected for various reasons. For example, the post of Minister for Overseas Development has sometimes been a junior office but was predominantly held at Cabinet level. Information Technology lasted only four years 1983-87, with two Conservative Ministers. The Minister for Women was established in 1997 and has been in existence only during Labour governments.

Of the 15 Arts Ministers 1964-2005, it is quite striking that nine of them eventually entered the Cabinet (60%). None of them reached the very highest offices (Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Secretary, or Home Secretary), but they found themselves in ministries as varied as Transport (Paul Channon), National Heritage (David Mellor), Northern Ireland and National Heritage (Peter Brooke), Health and National Heritage (Virginia Bottomley), and Education (Estelle Morris). It seems that the Arts portfolio has been a training ground for higher office, and also one with responsibility for sport at National Heritage in the cases of Mellor, Brooke, and Bottomley.

Defence Procurement shows a different pattern from Arts. There were 14 Ministers appointed between 1971 and 2005, of whom only four entered the Cabinet (19%). However, Norman Lamont reached one of the four highest offices when he became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1990. Ian Gilmour also held high office at Defence and as Lord Privy Seal (effectively the Foreign Secretary in the Commons while Lord Carrington held the substantive post in the Lords).

The Minister for Local Government is the most recently established of the four comparators chosen, being created in 1979. Its 13 post-holders have been highly-
successful in achieving promotion. Nine of the holders (70%) have attained Cabinet office, with both Kenneth Baker and Michael Howard becoming Home Secretary. The latter also became leader of the Conservative Party. Tom King and Michael Portillo were both Defence Secretary at different times, and John Gummer held Cabinet offices at Agriculture and Environment.

The last junior office to be considered in this section is Social Security, to which the first appointment was made in 1976. There have since been 12 Ministers, of whom five reached the Cabinet (42%). One of these, John Major was the most successful junior Minister of all the 66 holders of the five junior offices (including Minister for Sport) reviewed here. Major successively became Foreign Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Prime Minister. William Hague became Welsh Secretary and eventually leader of the Conservative Party.

The four junior offices considered above have produced a total of 27 Cabinet Ministers. These have included holders of the four highest offices (Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Home Secretary). While some scholars, such as Budge et al (2004), see junior office as a type of apprenticeship for Cabinet, it is quite clear that the junior office of Minister for Sport is definitely not in this category. It may be that appointment to the first ministerial office is a better guide to who eventually reaches the Cabinet. This will be examined next.

4.4 First Ministerial Appointments

Table 3 below sets out the first appointments for all 165 junior Ministers who at some point in their careers attained Cabinet office between 1964 and 2005, calculated mainly from the tables in Butler and Butler (2000). Some departments have been combined into logical categories to make the findings more concise. Where appropriate, these are indicated in the notes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of First Ministerial Appointment</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whips</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasury</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Includes Economic Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Includes Admiralty &amp; Air Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Includes Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Office</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Offices</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Includes Lord Chancellor's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Includes Pensions and National Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Includes Board of Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Includes Housing &amp; Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Includes Ministry of Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Includes Aviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Includes Overseas Department &amp; Commonwealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duchy of Lancaster</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Office</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
House of Commons Hansard 1997-2005

It can be seen that a first appointment in the Whips’ Office is considerably more likely to lead to a Cabinet post than any other, something that is recognised by ambitious MPs. When taking up his first appointment as a whip in 1974, Cecil Parkinson (1992) believed Jack Weatherill the Conservatives’ deputy Chief Whip when he told him that he would receive the “hothouse treatment” (p. 121) and progress easily to the Cabinet. Parkinson eventually joined the Cabinet in 1981 as Chairman of the Conservative Party, with the title of Paymaster General.
Of the Ministers for Sport, only Hector Monro began his ministerial career in the Whips’ Office. Unfortunately for him this did not translate into anything other than his four appointments at PUSS level. The Treasury is the second most significant department in which to begin a ministerial career. No Minister for Sport was ever given a job here, or in Defence which is the third most significant.

Denis Howell began his ministerial career as Minister for Sport at Education, which lies in fourth place, but still never went beyond junior office. Neil Macfarlane also started in Education, though not as Minister for Sport, while Robert Atkins went to Education when Sport was transferred back to that department briefly in 1990-92. The Home Office, in sixth place, was Kate Hoey’s only previous job before Minister for Sport. Nine of the Ministers for Sport worked at Environment at some point, several of them having their first appointments as Minister for Sport. The Environment Department, more than any other, seems to be the nadir of political ambitions for Sports Ministers.

In summary, Ministers for Sport have not begun their ministerial careers in the most propitious departments for promotion, particularly the Whips’ Office. John Major began his ministerial career here and immediately saw its importance for getting on. Major (1999) notes that, “once in the Whips’ Office I realised that it was one of the main engine-rooms of government” (p. 78). He used the opportunity to the full, as did Edward Heath, Willie Whitelaw, Cecil Parkinson and many others, though Hector Monro did not. None of the other Ministers for Sport gained a first foothold in any of the top three departments, thus handicapping their chances of promotion from the outset.

4.5 Junior Ministerial Appointments

As noted above (paragraph 4.3), the four junior offices discussed (excluding the Minister for Sport) produced 27 Cabinet Ministers out of the 54 office holders, an average success rate of 50%. This is actually quite a high rate when the figures are compared with junior ministerial appointments in general. Tables 4 and 5 that follow show the details of all ministerial appointments from 1964 to 2005.
Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Junior Ministers who Achieved no Promotion</th>
<th>Percentage of Junior Ministers not Reaching Cabinet</th>
<th>Ministers who Achieved Cabinet Office</th>
<th>Ministers who Joined Cabinet with no Junior Ministerial Office</th>
<th>Total Cabinet Ministers</th>
<th>Percentage of Ministers Reaching Cabinet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Ministers 1964-2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>643</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>165</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Junior Ministers who Achieved no Promotion</th>
<th>Percentage of Junior Ministers not Reaching Cabinet</th>
<th>Ministers who Achieved Cabinet Office</th>
<th>Ministers who Joined Cabinet with no Junior Ministerial Office</th>
<th>Total Cabinet Ministers in each Government</th>
<th>Percentage of Ministers Reaching Cabinet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964-70</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-74</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-79</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-90</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-97</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-05</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Ministerial Appointments 1964-2005</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:

Table 4 sets out the total number of actual Ministers appointed in the 1964-2005 period. This shows that 76% of all Ministers never went beyond the junior level in any government during the period. In many cases, they were junior Ministers in several different governments when their parties lost and regained office.

Table 5 shows the number of individuals appointed in each government. This is a larger total figure because some Ministers were appointed in several different governments in the period. For instance, William Whitelaw was a Cabinet Minister in the two governments of 1970-74 and 1979-90 and is therefore counted in each. Using this method of calculation, 72% of appointments made were at the junior level. Taken together, both
tables indicate that it is actually quite difficult to gain promotion, something that around three-quarters of Ministers never achieve. If the figure was taken as a proportion of all MPs, it would show that only around 10% of them actually entered the Cabinet.

The figures vary somewhat from one government to another. In the Conservative government of 1970-74, junior Ministers were a good deal more likely to enter the Cabinet than in 1990-97. The government of 1997-2005 showed a relatively low turnover of Cabinet Ministers, thus creating fewer opportunities for promotion. An other interesting feature is that when a party is out of office for a long time, such as Labour during 1979-97, a large number of Ministers go straight to the Cabinet without junior ministerial experience.

It might be expected that when a party has been in office for many years there would be more time for junior Ministers, such as Ministers for Sport, to move through the ranks. Although it is certainly true for some offices this has never happened for Sports Ministers, even with the extended length of Conservative governments 1979-97 or with the current government now having been some 12 years in power and with a fourth Minister for Sport.

4.6 Parliamentary Role of Ministers for Sport

When Walter Bagehot (1867/1963) wrote *The English Constitution* at the same time as Disraeli was introducing the Second Reform Act, Parliament held a central position in the political life of the nation. It has since become much less significant as a forum of political decision-making. Hennessy (2000, 2004) Holliday (2000) and others have shown how real power has become more concentrated in political elites (both elected and non-elected) outside Parliament and in the core executive (as discussed earlier in 1.6 and 3.8). This is despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that the proceedings of Parliament are now more widely reported than ever through radio, television, and the press, as well as the traditional record of proceedings, *Hansard*, which is now available free on the Internet. From 1802, William Cobbett published an unofficial record of Parliamentary
proceedings, which became formalised and printed by the Hansard family from 1812. The title of the Parliamentary record still bears the name *Hansard* to this day (*Hansard* website, 2006).

Nevertheless, while the broadcasting media tend to concentrate on political personalities and elites, Parliament remains an institution of significant political discourse. As Richards (1977) observes:

> Much of this discussion, although faithfully recorded in Hansard, is little noticed. Just occasionally the Commons becomes the forum for a debate which excites the nation or reflects the excitement of the nation (p. 9).

The special occasions when the public notices Parliament are events such as debates on proposed wars or the presentation of the annual budget by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But most of the time it performs important functions quietly in its routine way, including the introduction of legislation, scrutiny of bills, examination of Ministers, and committee work. All of its everyday work is recorded in *Hansard*, though it may be little appreciated by the public. Ministers (including the Minister for Sport) answer a great number of oral and written questions in the Commons every week. In the case of Ministers for Sport, these very often have nothing to do with sport, as Howell (1990) and Macfarlane (1986) have told us.

Ministers also participate in debates or involve themselves in committee work, when bills are passing through the various legislative stages. Sometimes they are required to appear before committees. For example, a whole series of Select Committees of backbench MPs has been established since 1979 to examine the work of government departments. The Minister for Sport may thus have to appear before the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee to give evidence. This committee has now published many reports on subjects such as the National Stadium and the 2012 Olympic bid. On the other hand, the Minister for Sport is unlikely to have to pilot legislation through the Commons (unlike other departmental junior Ministers) because there is very little legislation on sport. However, he or she is required to play a full part in the parliamentary process and help maintain his
or her party's majority by voting on the floor and in legislative committees on subjects far removed from sport.

As a way of measuring the Minister for Sport's participation in Parliament, a content analysis of the House of Commons Hansard for 1964 to 2005 was carried out, as described in the methodology. Ministers' participation in debates on the floor of the Commons, the answering of oral and written questions, the issuing of statements, and so on, were measured in terms of column centimetres of text. The data were classified into sport and non-sport subjects to show the relative proportions of each during the period from 1964 to 2005. This was devised as a way of discovering and measuring what Ministers do with their time. Following from this, three types of analysis were carried to show: the amount of text relating to sport, the number of parliamentary questions on sport, and debates on sport,

4.7 Parliamentary Activity of Ministers for Sport

The first part of the analysis, showing the amount of sport and non-sport activity of each Minister on the floor of the Commons, is set out in Figure 2 below. This shows the totals for all parliamentary activity studied, that is oral and written questions, adjournment debates, written and oral statements, and legislative activity.
Figure 2
Comparison of Sporting and Non-Sporting Issues Dealt with in Parliament by Minister for Sport:
Quantity of Text in Hansard 1964-2005

Minister for Sport
1. Dennis Howell (1964-70)
2. Eldon Griffiths (1970-74)
3. Denis Howell (1974-79)
4. Hector Monro (1979-81)
6. Richard Tracey (1985-87)
8. Robert Atkins (1990-92)
9. Robert Key (1992-93)
10. Iain Sproat (1993-97)
11. Tony Banks (1997-99)
12. Kate Hoey (1999-01)
13. Richard Caborn (2001-05)
Figure 2 shows that Ministers have differed enormously in their overall level of parliamentary activity, as well as in the relative amounts devoted to sport and non-sport business. In terms of overall commitment to sport, the most active Ministers have been Macfarlane, Sproat, and Caborn, while the least active have been Monro, Tracy, Atkins and Key. Eldon Griffiths was a very active parliamentarian, but mainly in relation to his transport role when nominally Minister for Sport. Ian Sproat was also very busy with his National Heritage role, tourism, the National Lottery, broadcasting, and much else as well as sport. Only Robert Atkins, Tony Banks and Kate Hoey have devoted more time to sport than to their other duties.

Ministerial activity was also examined by parliamentary year, full details of which are set out in Appendix 3. In some cases, Ministers were appointed in summer (usually in July reshuffles). Where this has happened, it has been combined with the remainder of the year beginning October/November rather than allow this to time stand alone as a “year” of a few weeks. The lowest yearly sporting activity was recorded by Eldon Griffiths in 1971-72, when only 5% was devoted to sport. Although low in overall activity for sport, Robert Atkins’ relative figures showed that he devoted 86% to sport in 1991-92, the highest yearly percentage discovered for any Minister. The average figure for all Ministers was 23% of their time devoted to sport, and 77% to other activities, thus confirming the speculative figure of 25% proposed by Houlihan (1991).

The final part of this analysis looks at the figures for each ministerial term in office. Kate Hoey ranks in first place for time devoted to sport, with 78%, while Tony Banks is close behind with 64%. Of the others, only Robert Atkins at 57%, achieved over half. At the bottom end, Richard Tracey managed a mere 10%, the vast amount of his time being spent on local government and planning issues. Eldon Griffiths was only slightly better at 11%, while Denis Howell (1974-79) surprisingly recorded only 18%. In this period he was primarily concerned with environmental, sewerage, and water issues, while his earlier years (1964-70) were devoted to education, then local government and environmental problems.
Although Richard Caborn’s overall figure for 2001-05 was 42%, he started off in 2001-02 with 57% and declined to only 26% by 2004-05. This latter figure brings him back towards the average of 23% for the full 1964-2005 analysis.

4.8 Parliamentary Questions Dealt with by Ministers for Sport

A sub-set of the data explained above consists of oral and written Parliamentary questions. Ministers for Sport have usually answered oral questions roughly once every four to six weeks during the 1964-2005 period, depending on when their department has appeared on the rota. Written questions have normally been answered on several days each week during the parliamentary session. Calculations were therefore made for these questions, which could act as a cross-check for the data covering combined parliamentary work. Figure 3 which follows sets out a summary for parliamentary questions, while the complete data are presented in Appendix 4.
Figure 3
Comparison of Sporting and Non-Sporting Issues Dealt with in Parliament by Minister for Sport:
No. of Parliamentary Questions 1964-2005

Minister for Sport

1. Dennis Howell (1964-70)
2. Eldon Griffiths (1970-74)
3. Denis Howell (1974-79)
4. Hector Morro (1979-81)
6. Richard Tracey (1985-87)
8. Robert Atkins (1990-92)
9. Robert Key (1992-93)
10. Iain Sproat (1993-97)
11. Tony Banks (1997-99)
12. Kate Hoey (1999-01)
13. Richard Caborn (2001-05)
The pattern for parliamentary questions is broadly similar to that for all parliamentary work, although Richard Caborn emerges as the Minister who has answered the most questions on sport, with 819 overall. Kate Hoey, who served for less than half Caborn's time in office is second with 346, while Tony Banks is a close third with 332. It seems that the later Ministers have generally devoted more time to sport than their earlier predecessors. Robert Key answered a mere 25 sports questions during his single year in office, while Denis Howell dealt with a total of 455 over the course of 11 years and two separate appointments. Howell actually answered the highest number of non-sports questions during his 1974-79 stint, with 1,352, while Colin Moynihan was close behind with 1,342. A great many of Moynihan's questions were on water supply, sewerage, drainage, and pollution, rather than sport.

The number of questions answered in each parliamentary year were also calculated. The overall average figure of a 23% to 77% split for sport and non-sport is exactly the same as that for all parliamentary activity, thus tending to confirm the previous figure. The lowest number of sports questions answered in a single year was six, by Eldon Griffiths in 1973-74. He also jointly holds the lowest percentage at just nine in 1972-73, together with Richard Tracey in 1986-87 and Robert Key in 1992-93. The largest number in a single year was 350 in 2001-02 by Richard Caborn, while the highest percentages were 83% by Tony Banks in 1998-99 and 76% for Kate Hoey in 1999-2000. This again confirms the pattern that higher levels of parliamentary activity on sport are paralleled by larger numbers of parliamentary questions on sport.

The combined years for each ministerial term in office were also calculated. As with all parliamentary activity, the more recent Labour Ministers have been more likely to answer a larger number of sports questions. Kate Hoey is ranked first, with 76% of her parliamentary questions being focussed on sport during her term in office. She is closely followed by Tony Banks at 70%. The only other Minister to achieve over half was Robert Atkins, who managed 55%, while Richard Caborn is fourth with 45%. As with overall parliamentary activity, Caborn's number of sports questions steadily declined throughout his term in office to only 31% in 2004-05.
At the bottom is Robert Key on 9%, but this placing is probably distorted because Key spent only a single year in office. Eldon Griffiths almost matches his 11% for all parliamentary activity with 12% for parliamentary questions, while Richard Tracey is only a little better at 13% compared with 10%.

Two of the most prominent Ministers for Sport, Denis Howell and Colin Moynihan, answered relatively few questions on sport. Moynihan managed only 19% overall during his three years, while Howell achieved 23% during 1964-70 and 17% in 1974-79. In terms of overall parliamentary activity Moynihan is a little higher at 24%, with Howell on 23% for 1964-70 and 18% for 1974-79. It may be that Howell and Moynihan were more active in parliamentary debates on sport, a topic which will be pursued in the next section.

4.9 Parliamentary Debates on Sport

Debates on sport in the House of Commons, with the Minister for Sport participating, are relatively rare occurrences. The following series of tables will show that they took place on average less than once every two years where sport was the general subject, as distinct from single issues such as cycling or bowling. The data were drawn from the study of Hansard at the same time as the analysis of text and parliamentary questions.

According to Borthwick (1977), debates on the floor of the House of Commons are dominated by government business. When analysing his own figures he asserts, “Perhaps the most striking feature is the substantial place occupied by government legislation” (p. 57). In addition to government legislation, he notes that, “another substantial block of time is taken by non-legislative debates in government time” (p. 58). Since sport has been a low priority subject for governments, and rarely requires legislation, it seldom appears at all. Where sport has been debated, this has usually been through the device of adjournment debates.
Adjournment debates are the means whereby backbench MPs can express an interest in a pet subject, or perhaps impress electors in their constituencies by raising a local issue. Irwin (1977) describes the process by which Members enter a weekly ballot for the right to speak on a subject of their choice. John Garrett (1992), a former Labour MP, has also outlined the procedure in a book calling for major reform of Parliament. Until recent reforms in parliamentary procedure, adjournment debates of approximately half an hour were held at as close as possible to 10 pm. As Irwin (1977) observes, “The normal pattern of the daily debate is for the Member raising the issue to speak for about half the time available and for a responsible minister to reply” (p. 87). In the case of sport the reply is always made by the Minister for Sport, with very few other Members present or speaking.

Another route for sport to be debated is through the government or Opposition providing some of their allocated time. Norton (2000) illustrates how some time may be set aside, as part of the process of scrutiny and legitimation in Parliament. Since governments and oppositions are reluctant to give much time to such a marginal subject as sport, true debates on the subject are uncommon. Finally, sport may come on to the agenda through legislation in the Commons. However, there is very little of this required for sport, unless it is related to gambling or hooliganism.

By far the most frequent route for sport to be debated in the Commons is the adjournment debate. Table 6 below sets out 51 occasions when sporting subjects have been raised through this procedure. Members only have 30 minutes for their subject to be discussed, with about half of this to make their speeches initially. They have therefore tended to stick to narrow single issues, rather than roam more widely into sport in general. Only twice have Members, Neil Macfarlane and Martin M. Brandon-Bravo, attempted to look beyond a narrow subject.

The vast majority of Members to use this procedure have been obscure backbenchers, of whom only Jonathan Aitken and Sir George Young went on to be Cabinet Ministers (Jim Callaghan is not the former Prime Minister of the same name). Six of them became future
Ministers for Sport (Macfarlane, Monro, Moynihan, Banks, Hoey, and Sutcliffe), while Philip Noel-Baker, Tom Pendry, George Foulkes, Gerald Kaufman, and Ian Gibson were junior Labour Ministers at times. John Carlisle was well known for his support of sporting links with apartheid South Africa, and Ian Duncan Smith went on to be leader of the Conservatives from 2001 to 2003. The only MP outside of Labour and the Conservatives to lead a debate was Evan Harris of the Liberal Democrats. Debates of this kind are for taking note, and votes are not taken.
<table>
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<th>Lead MP</th>
<th>Length</th>
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<td>Chester Committee Report on Football</td>
<td>Edward Milne (Lab)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14/05/70</td>
<td>South African Cricket Tour</td>
<td>Philip Noel-Baker (Lab)</td>
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<td>15/07/71</td>
<td>Sailing &amp; Boating</td>
<td>Rear-Admiral Morgan-Giles (Con)</td>
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<td>Angling Clubs</td>
<td>Emile Money (Con)</td>
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<td>Sports Council</td>
<td>Joan Hall (Con)</td>
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<td>George Young (Con)</td>
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<td>Neil Macfarlane (Con)</td>
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<td>Arthur Davidson (Lab)</td>
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<td>Sporting Links with South Africa</td>
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<td>13/02/84</td>
<td>Rugby Tour to South Africa</td>
<td>John Carlisle (Con)</td>
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<td>21/12/84</td>
<td>Sport in London</td>
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<td>10/05/94</td>
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<td>Jim Callaghan (Lab)</td>
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<td>20/06/94</td>
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<td>Eric Wells (Lab)</td>
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<td>Jon Tricket (Lab)</td>
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<td>Evan Harris (Lib Dem)</td>
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<td>Harry Cohen (Lab)</td>
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<td>25/01/00</td>
<td>Football Safety</td>
<td>Bob Blizzard (Lab)</td>
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<td>23/01/01</td>
<td>Football Transfer Fees</td>
<td>Jim Murphy (Lab)</td>
<td>27 min</td>
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<td>11/12/01</td>
<td>Horse Racing</td>
<td>Richard Page (Con)</td>
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<td>Community Football</td>
<td>Colin Burson (Lab)</td>
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<td>10/04/02</td>
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<td>Alan Meale (Lab)</td>
<td>29 min</td>
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<td>09/05/02</td>
<td>Paul Edwards (drugs in sport)</td>
<td>Andrew Hunter (Con)</td>
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<td>13/12/04</td>
<td>Crown Green Bowling</td>
<td>Helen Jackson (Lab)</td>
<td>38 min</td>
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Source: Hansard: House of Commons Debates 1964-2005
In all of the debates above, the Minister for Sport replied on behalf of the government to the lead MP who initiated each. Almost invariably, there were the only two speakers, given the time available and the lateness of the hour. Richard Caborn replied on ten occasions, Neil Macfarlane on eight, Denis Howell on six, Ian Sproat on five, Colin Moynihan on four, and Robert Atkins also on four. The other five Ministers shared the remaining 14 between them. The major exception in terms of the normal course of adjournment debates was the one on the South African cricket tour to Britain in 1970. This lasted a full three hours, with some thirty speakers being involved, including Michael Foot, Reginald Maudling, Eric Heffer, Reg Prentice, and many others who were prominent at the time.

Sometimes the government of the day allocates a block of time for a subject to be debated in the House. This allows MPs of all parties to participate in debate and use their knowledge of a subject to good effect. In the case of sport, it is generally only backbenchers who participate, with the Minister for Sport and Opposition spokesman also taking part. Cabinet Ministers rarely attend or take part, unless it is a high-profile issue such as the 2012 Olympic bid. Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport led a debate on the Olympic bid in January 2003, while her predecessor, Chris Smith, attended debates in 1997 and 1998. Votes may be taken, but these are generally for endorsing the government's position on an issue.

The 23 government debates on sport, of which 16 were sponsored by Labour and seven by the Conservatives, where the Minister for Sport participated 1964-2005, are shown in Table 7 below. This is not a definitive list of all sports debates, since there are some in which the Minister has never taken part. The most significant of these was the debate on boycotting the 1980 Olympics, held on 17 March 1980, when Hector Monro was not allowed to speak.11 There have been other occasions, such as gambling or Wembley stadium where the Ministers for Sport have played no part.

Debates in this category are much longer than adjournment debates, sometimes lasting for up to five hours. There have thus been eleven occasions in the 41 year period studied.
when genuine debates on sport have been held. The *Hansard* record shows that over 20 MPs have sometimes spoken in them. They have given a real chance for wider issues in sport to be discussed, with contributors sometimes showing considerable knowledge of the subject. Naturally, all have been led by Conservative or Labour members, since no other party has held office during this time.

Table 7

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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<th>Length</th>
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<td>04/12/64</td>
<td>Recreation &amp; Leisure</td>
<td>Denis Howell (Lab)</td>
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<td>19/01/68</td>
<td>Sports Facilities</td>
<td>Tam Dalyell (Lab)</td>
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<td>Eldon Griffiths (Con)</td>
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<td>Sport &amp; Recreation White Paper</td>
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<td>Sport &amp; Recreation</td>
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<td>Sport</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/05/00</td>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Kate Hoey (Lab)</td>
<td>2 hr 59 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/11/00</td>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Chris Smith (Lab)</td>
<td>4 hr 45 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/11/01</td>
<td>Social Inclusion in Sport</td>
<td>Richard Caborn (Lab)</td>
<td>3 hr 0 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/12/01</td>
<td>World Athletics Championships</td>
<td>Gerald Kaufman (Lab)</td>
<td>2 hr 28 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/01/02</td>
<td>Football Club Funding</td>
<td>Roger Casale (Lab)</td>
<td>1 hr 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/04/02</td>
<td>Drugs in Sport</td>
<td>Gareth Thomas (Lab)</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/11/02</td>
<td>2012 Olympic Bid</td>
<td>Gareth Thomas (Lab)</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/01/03</td>
<td>2012 Olympic Bid</td>
<td>Tessa Jowell (Lab)</td>
<td>3 hr 2 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/01/04</td>
<td>Grass-Roots Sport</td>
<td>Andy Reed (Lab)</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/03/04</td>
<td>London Olympic Bid</td>
<td>Clive Betts (Lab)</td>
<td>1 hr 30 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Hansard: House of Commons Debates 1964-2005*

If the government is not willing to allocate time to a subject, sometimes the Opposition parties will do so. Table 8 below shows 11 occasions when this has happened, of which eight were initiated by Labour, two by the Conservatives, and one by the Scottish National Party. The Conservatives have been very reluctant to provide time for this purpose, allowing only one short debate in over 30 years. Just five of the Opposition debates overall could be considered as true debates on sport.

Only Roy Hattersley in 1990, then shadow Home Secretary, has been a Cabinet minister in this group (he was Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection from 1976 to
1979). Few serving Cabinet Ministers have attended the debates, unless the subject has been a matter of national importance such as football hooliganism or ground safety. While some of the debates have been informed discussions on sport, they have all been much shorter than government-sponsored ones. Although Labour was been willing to give time to sport when in Opposition, they could not control the parliamentary timetable the way the government does. Opposition debates on sport have therefore been fewer in number and shorter than government ones.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Lead MP or Minister</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15/07/71</td>
<td>Sport &amp; Youth Services</td>
<td>Denis Howell (Lab)</td>
<td>2 hr 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/03/75</td>
<td>Sports Council</td>
<td>Hector Monro (Con)</td>
<td>1 hr 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/03/87</td>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Tom Pendry (Lab)</td>
<td>1 hr 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/12/87</td>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Tom Pendry (Lab)</td>
<td>1 hr 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/07/88</td>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Denis Howell (Lab)</td>
<td>3 hr 01 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/01/90</td>
<td>Football Ground Safety</td>
<td>Roy Hattersley (Lab)</td>
<td>2 hr 50 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/11/91</td>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Denis Howell (Lab)</td>
<td>3 hr 11 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/04/95</td>
<td>Rugby League</td>
<td>David Hinchcliffe (Lab)</td>
<td>1 hr 29 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/10/96</td>
<td>British Academy of Sport</td>
<td>Kate Hoey (Lab)</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/03/01</td>
<td>International Sporting Events</td>
<td>Stephen Day (Con)</td>
<td>1 hr 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/03/03</td>
<td>Horse Racing</td>
<td>Alec Salmond (SNP)</td>
<td>34 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hansard: House of Commons Debates 1964-2005

The last category in this analysis, shown in Table 9, consists of legislative debates. These are quite unusual since sport does not generate much direct legislation. There is legislation on matters such as competitive tendering, football hooliganism abroad, or broadcasting which may have a significant impact on sport. In most cases, however, these are not regarded as sporting issues but ones of law and order or foreign policy, where the Minister for Sport makes no contribution. The debates have often been fairly lengthy, especially those on football.
Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Lead MP or Minister</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18/01/74</td>
<td>Safety of Sports Grounds Bill</td>
<td>Mark Carlisle (Con)</td>
<td>4 hr 15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/06/75</td>
<td>Safety of Sports Grounds Bill</td>
<td>Alex Lyon (Lab)</td>
<td>3 hr 0 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/02/86</td>
<td>Tobacco Products (Sports Sponsorship) Bill</td>
<td>Roger Sims (Con) (Private Member's Bill)</td>
<td>1 hr 40 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/06/89</td>
<td>Football Spectators' Bill</td>
<td>Nick Ridley (Con)</td>
<td>6 hr 0 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/07/89</td>
<td>Football Spectators' Bill</td>
<td>John Wakeham (Con)</td>
<td>3 hr 15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/10/89</td>
<td>Football Spectators' Bill</td>
<td>Colin Moynihan (Con)</td>
<td>9 hr 5 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/12/89</td>
<td>CCT of Local Government Sport &amp; Leisure Facilities (Commencement Order)</td>
<td>Colin Moynihan (Con)</td>
<td>2 hr 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/11/93</td>
<td>Sports Grounds (Statutory Instrument)</td>
<td>Tom Pendry (Lab)</td>
<td>1 hr 27 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/02/93</td>
<td>Protection of Olympic Symbol Bill</td>
<td>Nicholas Winterton (Con) (Private Member's Bill)</td>
<td>2 hr 20 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/01/04</td>
<td>Horserace Betting &amp; Olympic Lottery Bill</td>
<td>Richard Caborn (Lab)</td>
<td>3 hr 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/02/04</td>
<td>Horserace Betting &amp; Olympic Lottery Bill</td>
<td>Richard Caborn (Lab)</td>
<td>2 hr 15 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hansard: House of Commons Debates 1964-2005

Table 9 above sets out the handful of cases where there has been some legislation, or attempted legislation, on sport and the Minister for Sport has had an input. It can be seen that Ministers from non-sports departments, such as the Home Office are more likely to take part, with Mark Carlisle, Alex Lyon, Nicholas Ridley, and John Wakeham being examples of Ministers who did so from that department. In the eleven instances shown, only two MPs were never Ministers at any level, namely Roger Sims and Nicholas Winterton. There appears to be little room for back bench MPs to have any impact on legislation, thus confirming the government’s control of Parliament and the legislative process.

4.10 Conclusion

This analysis has shown that only around a quarter of all junior Ministers have been promoted to the Cabinet in the 1964-2005 period, none of whom have been Ministers for Sport. This is a feature that is not replicated with regard to other named junior offices, such as the Arts or Defence Procurement, where the success rate has been above 50% in some cases. One reason may be that the Ministers for Sport have not usually started their political careers in the more favourable departments for leading to promotion, which
were the Whips’ Office, Treasury, Defence, or Education.

The highest proportion of Ministers promoted to Cabinet came in the Conservative government of 1970-74, but Ministers for Sport did not benefit from this. The chances of Ministers for Sport being promoted were unaffected by the party of government. They were not favoured by either Labour or Conservative administrations.

When performing their duties in Parliament, Ministers for Sport have split their work on average in the proportions of 23% to sport and 77% to non-sporting activities. In answering parliamentary questions, these figures were found to be identical. However, some Ministers were much more active in sporting activities than others, particularly those in the Labour administrations of 1997-2005. On the other hand, some of them did very little in the sporting area of their jobs, concentrating instead on tasks such as environmental protection, sewerage, water supply, or education.

Members of Parliament took part in four main types of debate on sporting topics, which were adjournment, government-sponsored, opposition-sponsored, and legislative. In total, there were found to be 96 debates on sport in these categories where the Minister for Sport participated during the 41 years covering 1964 to 2005. Of these, 16 were identified as comprehensive debates of sufficient duration to allow a number of speakers to take part. According to Budge et al. (2004) the parliamentary timetable and agenda are dominated to such an extent by the executive that it is mainly government business that is successfully transacted. Sport is not seen as sufficiently important to warrant the allocation of government (or Opposition) time, when compared with health, education, defence, or other high-profile subjects.

In the adjournment debates, the Minister for Sport has always had the chance to give a short reply, but these have been held at inconvenient times when few MPs have been present. With government and Opposition debates, the Minister has had only limited input. However, Labour has been much more likely to provide time for debating sport while in both government and Opposition. Debates involving legislation on sport have
provided few opportunities for the Ministers to make a contribution. It may be that this lack of opportunity to make a mark in parliamentary debate has been an important factor in the promotion prospects of the Ministers for Sport.

However, Ministers for Sport have a life outside of Parliament, in which they interact with civil servants, local government officers, quangos, sports governing bodies, and many other organisations or individuals having an interest in sport. It is from these relationships that the Ministers may have some influence in sports policy-making. As stated in the methodology, interviews with key figures from some of these areas have been carried out to help evaluate that influence. The findings from these are set out in the next Chapter (Chapter 5).
Chapter Five: Interviews With Key Individuals and Policy-Makers in Sport and Politics: Data Findings and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter draws exclusively on data collected from 28 interviews with former Secretaries of State, Ministers for Sport, civil servants, administrators, and others from the politics and sports communities, as well as one email response. A list of these interviewees can be found as Appendix 5. Transcripts of five interviews with former Ministers for Sport are attached as Appendix 6.

In general, the politicians and ex-politicians were happy to speak on the record, except in relation to some subjects when they asked not to be quoted. By contrast, the civil servants, ex-civil servants, or former civil servants who later held other sports offices, spoke mainly under conditions of anonymity, except where they agreed to attribution; to protect their identities, they are all described here simply as “civil servants”. Of the remaining interviewees, some were prepared to be quoted while others were not. The wishes of all interviewees have therefore been respected in the narrative below. Dates and attributions are given for interview quotes that are on the record, while those that are not are indicated with the term “Interview with author”.

This discussion sets out their views on where government policy comes from, the sources of sports policy, the role of the Prime Minister, the influence of Secretaries of State who dealt with sport, and the role of the Minister for Sport in the policy-making process. It shows that the Minister for Sport had quite a limited role in the policy-making process for sport, offers some reasons as to why this was so, and illustrates it with some specific examples. Each of these factors will now be considered in turn.

5.2 Sources of Government Policy

A huge number of potential sources of government policy were identified by the interviewees when they discussed policy-making. These included the following:-
Some of these sources were regarded as being much more influential than others. For example, without actually using its academic nomenclature, the “core executive” was cited by many as the real centre of policy-making. It comprises the key actors in the upper reaches of the civil service, the Treasury, special advisers, senior military personnel, and powerful business or media leaders. It is a fluid and ever-changing elite, as actors come and go, but at its centre, the “core of the core”, are the most influential Cabinet Ministers and the Prime Minister. For politicians, membership of the Cabinet is the entry point to this exclusive club, though not all Cabinet members are part of it. Lord Hattersley said this about entering the Cabinet in 1976:

It opens up many more doors the higher you go in government, there’s no doubt about that. You become more involved in the policy-making process, both with your colleagues and with civil servants, because that’s just the nature of government. A junior Minister is likely to have much less influence because he will not usually have to take policy decisions (Interview: 1 May 2007).

Lord Rodgers, his Cabinet colleague in the 1970s, also spoke of the real step-change resulting from Cabinet membership:

A member of the Cabinet is expected to play a part in all major issues, and of course to make your policy decisions subject to the review of the Cabinet and especially the Prime Minister. That’s something you don’t get at the lower levels, since junior Ministers are not supposed to have anything much to do with policy outside of their own areas. So yes, you do have more of an input to
policy-making in its wider sense, the higher up you go (Interview: 21 March 2007).

Rodgers also described in greater detail his experiences in Cabinet, particularly during the economic crisis of 1976, when he felt it was a genuine decision-making forum and where every Minister’s contribution was valued. Lord Smith confirmed the continuing importance of Cabinet around 25 years later, despite the tendency for some people to believe that it is now more removed from the decision-taking and policy-making role that it used to be. He also thought that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport had increased in importance within government, since under him, “We became something of an economic player as a department as well as having our traditional role in promoting sport and the arts” (Interview: 18 June 2007).

All interviewees mentioned the significant contribution of the civil service, particularly the Permanent Secretaries of each department, whose importance was stressed as vital in the policy-making role of government. One former Cabinet Minister commented, “Oh you have to rely on the civil servants because it’s not possible not to” (Interview with author). A small number of senior civil servants were seen as the lynchpin of the core executive, providing continuity while others might move in and out of the policy-making loop.

Outside of the Cabinet, junior Ministers were viewed as getting above their station in government if they made proposals or recommendations. As one former Cabinet Minister put it, “Officials don’t like that at all because they think they are going beyond their proper place in the scheme of things” (Interview with author). Another commented:

Normally junior Ministers don’t get too involved in policy; they tend to do what the Secretary of State wants, or at least don’t do things to upset the Secretary of State. Junior Ministers are not supposed to be too visible because that risks upstaging their seniors (Interview with author).

Further removed from the core executive there are interest groups and loose policy networks striving to gain access to government across the whole range of government policy areas, such as health, defence, or agriculture. Each area tends to have its own powerful pressure group, such as the British Medical Association for health, or the
National Farmers’ Union for agriculture.

The party manifestos, while outlining the broad thrust of a government’s intentions, were not perceived as rich seams of policy to be mined. They were generally seen as statements of good intentions, some of which might be implemented as government policy if the circumstances were right in the actual realities of office. No one thought of them as prescriptive documents to be consulted like reference books on what the government should do.

Likewise, the Select Committees were seen as of little consequence in policy-making and their worthy reports were generally ignored. One ex-Cabinet Minister observed, “I think it’s fair to say that we really didn’t take the reports of any select committee very seriously at all. The committees were really only created to give awkward backbenchers something to do and they had no power whatsoever” (Interview with author). Real policy comes by other routes when a party has won an election and has gained access to power within the core executive.

The consensus amongst interviewees was that much government policy came about by accident, after a party wins an election and casts around for things to do. The whole privatisation programme of the 1980s was seen in this way, as was defence policy in response to the Falklands. A former Minister put it this way:

You see, much of policy is created by personalities and personal relationships between Ministers, as opposed to the merits of the case. There is very little in the way of rational policy-making, in which careful arguments are set out and the best solution chosen. It has always been so in everything I’ve been engaged in (Interview with author).

Interviewees suggested that policy was often made in response to a crisis, with the normal position being one of stability and incrementalism. For example, a terrorist attack might be followed by the swift introduction of identity cards for everybody, under the direction of a key player (e.g. the Home Secretary). When the initial crisis is over, the compulsory use of ID cards may become mainstream policy. This may be viewed a “rational” response by some, but it is bounded by what is acceptable to society at a given time and what the current technology will allow.
5.3 Sources of Sports Policy

None of the interviewees identified a single powerful pressure group for sport, where influence tends to be dissipated too widely to be really effective. They suggested instead a wide range of sources of sports policy, some of which (for example the civil service) were also generators of policy in many other areas of government business, but no single dominant influence. However, the useful distinction was made between sports policy as a complete entity in the wider world, and government sports policy as a sub-division of this.

In general, institutions close to the Prime Minister, such as the Policy Unit and the Cabinet Office, were not perceived as normally producing policy for sport. Iain Sproat actually found the Prime Minister’s Policy Unit obstructive to him and certainly no source of sports policy. Staff there acted as gatekeepers to prevent him meeting John Major, who was personally committed to his document *Raising the Game* in 1995. They felt that sport was too trivial for the Prime Minister to get involved in, although he was, in fact, more committed to sport than any other Prime Minister before or since (Interview: 31 May 2007).

In other words, the core of the core executive did not really have much to do with producing sports policy within government. As Sir Neil Macfarlane put it, “We sometimes struggled to get recognition and support from the inner-circles of government” (Interview: 9 January 2007). If government was viewed as a series of concentric circles, the Secretary of State for National Heritage or Culture, Media and Sport was seen as several rings from the middle. While it had Cabinet status, the post was considered to be on the outer fringes of the core executive and not really part of it. Likewise, organisations even further removed from the core executive, such as local government were also perceived as having little influence on government policy, although they spent a great deal of money on sports facilities.

There was widespread agreement that the most significant influence on government sports policy was the civil service, but at levels below that of Permanent Secretary, such as deputy secretary or under-secretary. One former Minister put it succinctly. In his words, “They always had an alternative up their sleeves so nobody was ever stuck
for something to put in place” (Interview with author).

The Select Committee for Culture, Media and Sport, or its previous equivalents, was not considered to be a source of sports policy. However, the committee was seen as serving a useful function for the main Opposition party as a means of getting information from government and from sports representative bodies who were summoned to give evidence. According to Hugh Robertson, the Conservatives’ shadow Sports Minister, the Committee, and also Parliamentary questions, were useful ways of getting information from civil servants without approaching them directly. It was not considered good practice for the Opposition to have a close relationship with civil servants (Interview: 16 March 2007). Lord Pendry also believed that this was the correct way for the Opposition party to behave, since it did not risk compromising the integrity and neutrality of the civil service (Interview: 1 February 2007).

Although most party election manifestos contained some proposals for sport, these were not seen as in any way binding on a future government as a real statement of sports policy drafted by the Sports Minister. As one former Cabinet Minister said of Denis Howell, “Certainly his views would have been invited but in the end it would have been what the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, wanted” (Interview with author). However, some manifesto commitments do end up as government policy. Lord Pendry claims that, “There was always controversy about selling off school playing fields, which it was Labour policy to oppose. I put that in the manifesto for 1997” (Interview: 1 February 2007). But in the end, policy is what the government has the power to carry out or to keep off the agenda when in office, not what was said might be done whilst in Opposition. Playing fields are still being sold off, a policy which both major parties claim to oppose.

The main individuals, institutions, or organisations which were felt to have some influence (though sometimes quite small) on sports policy, in government or outside of it, were identified as:-

- Prime Minister
- Cabinet Ministers
5.4 Government Sports Policy

Interviewees’ comments suggested that there has actually been very little depth to government sports policy, which has comprised only a small number of elements since the 1960s. Excluding unusual events for which there was no real policy in the sporting domain, such as the 1980 Olympic boycott (foreign policy), football hooliganism (law and order), or betting tax (fiscal), only four main strands were identified:-

- Encouraging as many people as possible to participate in sport
- Encouraging excellence at the elite level
- Encouraging more sport in schools
- Bidding for major events

Mihir Warty at Sport England (and many other interviewees) feels that this is a good summing up of government sport policy. Mr Warty observed:

I think you’ve got it just right there. I agree with your analysis. There’s not very much substance to the government’s sports policies at all. We do the “sport for all bit”, UK Sport does elite sport, the Education Department deals with sport in schools, and the major events (such as the Olympics) tend to be sponsored at the highest levels in government as prestige issues (Interview: 7 February 2008).

It was felt that these essential parts of a sports policy would have been just as familiar to Denis Howell as they would be to Richard Caborn or Gerry Sutcliffe. What has changed over the years is the weighting given to any particular one in response to
developments in society. Initiatives or schemes have been introduced to encourage one or other of the components at any given time, but these are really "padding", according to one former Sports Minister (Interview with author). For example, the "sport for all" campaign began over thirty years ago as a way of getting more people to compete in sport and move through to the top level, while now the government also sees it as having health implications. As a senior administrator put it:

It wouldn't be so bad if competition had been replaced by participation but that hasn't happened either. We seem to have had a long, slow decline in people taking part at any level, with perhaps more people watching on TV and suchlike. We have many people on the fringes of true sport going to gyms and doing exercise on machines. That's not competitive sport as some would recognise it, though it is exercise. But the overall result seems to have reduced the number of people taking part in true competitive sport (Interview with author).

While sport in schools may have been viewed as a "good thing" in the 1960s because it built character and team spirit, today it may also contribute to a health agenda, as well as producing the occasional elite athlete. Although the encouragement of excellence was always implicit in government policy, this became much more tangible with funding from the National Lottery in the 1990s. Virginia Bottomley, in whose time in office it was introduced, saw it as one of the biggest innovations for sport, noting that, "Through the Lottery, sport gained the resource that they needed. Our athletes were very successful at Sydney and the credit for that should have gone to John Major and the Lottery" (Interview: 29 June 2007). However, the Lottery was part of the "padding" that allowed established aspects of policy to be more effectively pursued, including the underwriting of bids for major events.

5.5 The Role of the Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, and Civil Servants in Influencing Government Sports Policy

Many interviewees thought that John Major was the only Prime Minister who really took sport seriously. He became personally involved in sport in a way that no other Prime Minister before or since has done. Major was quite unique amongst British Prime Ministers in that he actually liked sport, attended events (particularly cricket) and used his position to promote sport. A former Conservative Minister said of him:
His Cabinet colleagues just could not understand what he was on about with sport, or appreciate his passion. I actually think the Lottery was one of his greatest achievements as PM with all the money it put into sport. Nobody had ever done that before. His support for sport was quite astonishing for a man in his position (Interview with author).

Although he was a serious cricket fan, he also pushed hard on Ian Sproat’s policy document *Raising the Game*, giving him great support when Cabinet Ministers and some civil servants were indifferent to it. Baroness Bottomley and Iain Sproat have both confirmed that this was the case. According to Baroness Bottomley John Major was a very unusual Prime Minister, in that, “He was mad about sport, absolutely mad. He was completely obsessed by it. He deserves eternal credit for really putting sport on the map in the UK” (Interview: 29 June 2007). Iain Sproat also expressed a high regard and his appreciation for Major’s support. He said:

*Raising the Game* was probably the most important achievement of my time as Minister for Sport, and it’s something I’m very proud of. It was the first statement of sports policy since Denis Howell’s White Paper of 1975, a full twenty years before. John Major backed me on that (Interview: 31 May 2007).

Harold Wilson, though not a serious sports fan, had earlier identified the publicity value of successful teams. He invited the 1966 World Cup winning team to Downing Street and then the 1968 Olympic team. Wilson was the first Prime Minister to appoint a Sports Minister and he trusted Denis Howell’s opinion and advice on sports matters. He also supported his Sports Minister in a way that no other Prime Minister, with the exception of Major, has done. According to Lord Donoughue, “Harold Wilson was good because Wilson gave him the support from No. 10 that he often didn’t get from his Secretaries of State” (Interview: 7 March 2007). Tony Blair was judged by some interviewees to have performed well in securing the 2012 Olympics for London at the International Olympic Committee session on 6 July 2006. In the opinion of one sports administrator:

As for Blair, I loath the guy but he did a brilliant, brilliant job there. He was bugger-all use until he got there. On a one-to-one basis, Tony is wonderful. You walk out thinking he’s not that bad and he was very good at the IOC on one-to-one with the delegates. He spoke to all the swing voters one by one. Goodness knows what he promised or what he said but it certainly had the desired effect (Interview with author).
Below the level of the Prime Minister, Secretaries of State have direct responsibility for sport. Most decisions need the approval of Secretaries of State, rather than Ministers for Sport, though the Secretaries of State themselves often know little about sport. This constant need to seek approval was something the Sports Ministers found very frustrating, according to several interviewees. However, during Virginia Bottomley's time at National Heritage, she felt she had quite an inclusive managerial style. Decisions were, "Made by the ministerial team as a whole. I think we took shared decisions, with me having the ultimate say" (Interview: 29 June 2007).

The turnover of Secretaries of State has actually been very frequent, indeed much more frequent than for Ministers for Sport. From 1964 to 2008, no less than 24 different Cabinet Ministers were responsible for sport, compared with 13 Ministers for Sport at the junior level who reported to them (see Appendix 2). In only six years at National Heritage or Culture, Media and Sport, Sir Hayden Phillips worked with five different Secretaries of State. In his experience, "It was like starting again each time" (Interview: 3 July 2007) in terms of informing them about the job, its background, and what was required of them.

The Cabinet and Prime Minister, although holding enormous power in the machinery of government, have not got involved much in sport except on matters of national interest, such as UK bids for major events, or in times of crises. One former Minister commented, "None of the Secretaries of State I worked with were really interested in sport in its wider sense as an activity of government" (Interview with author). One former Conservative Minister noted, "There were people such as Norman Tebbit who were not at all keen on the Olympic Games in Britain" (Interview with author). Tebbit was concerned that the government would end up paying for the Games, which would only add to public expenditure and taxation. Sir Neil Macfarlane agreed that Cabinet Ministers responsible for sport were sometimes not enthusiasts for it. The three for whom he worked at sport, Tom King, Patrick Jenkin, and Michael Heseltine were, "Not really too interested in sport" (Interview: 9 January 2007), though they were not antagonistic to it as Tebbit was. In fact:
I think in some respects the Foreign Secretary was more interested in sport because of the situation internationally with apartheid and other matters. Sport would always come up to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting which the Prime Minister attended and it would always come up on the various agendas whenever the Foreign Secretary travelled to the United Nations. I went to the Cabinet two or three times before the World Cup in 1982 to talk about it, and about tours to South Africa, and when several South African teams came here to play rugby. All that caused many problems, and of course there was the famous D’Oliveira case some years before (Interview: 9 January 2007).

Of the many Secretaries of State responsible for sport, only David Mellor was perceived as, “Genuinely keen on sport as well as the arts” (Interview with author), according to a civil servant close to him. But Mellor lasted only a few months until he had to resign due to a scandal in his personal life, deemed incompatible with the government’s “back to basics” campaign at the time. David Pickup worked with him during his short time at National Heritage and thought highly of him:

The first Secretary of State at National Heritage, David Mellor, was very good for sport, having a personal interest in football. Since it was a new department, the civil servants had a more pioneering attitude, setting up new structures, and putting sport in a more central position. They were keen to develop sport and open to persuasion on the Lottery (Interview: 29 November 2006).

According to a civil servant, Peter Brooke as National Heritage Secretary was, “A lovely civilised man, not interested much in sport apart from cricket,” while Stephen Dorrell, “Showed no interest at all, though his father had played cricket once at county level for Worcestershire”. Chris Smith, when Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, “Was a strange guy who spent much of the time licking the arse of Tony Blair. He was not interested in sports policy at all”. Another civil servant commented that, “Tessa Jowell is not a very powerful figure and was always going to do what she was told by the Prime Minister”. Going further back, “Peter Shore and Tony Crossland were serious politicians who would listen to a serious case from Denis Howell” and take decisions based on his advice (Interviews with author).

Neil Macfarlane illustrated the difficulties of getting Cabinet Ministers interested in sport, observing that, “We never really had policy discussions around a table. Policy for sport didn’t come from Cabinet Ministers at all, at least not when I was in office. It was worked out at much lower level, usually with civil servants” (Interview: 9
January 2007). Richard Tracey, while agreeing that this was generally true, observed that Secretaries of State do need to get involved for the higher-level issues or when things matter to them.

For example, Kenneth Baker and Nicholas Ridley, as Secretaries of State for the Environment, became involved in the Birmingham and Manchester Olympic bids for 1992 and 1996 (in 1985 and 1989 respectively) because these were decisions that needed government endorsement at Cabinet level. Nicholas Ridley also took an interest in tobacco sponsorship of sport, if only to block the regulation that Tracey wanted. One civil servant said that Ridley tried to abolish the Sports Council because he did not like quangos. In his recollection, “Ridley was told it was established by Royal Charter. He baulked at the idea of going to the Queen to say this body which you established by Royal Charter is something we would like to get rid of”. Later on the Duke of Edinburgh told him he should have come to him and he would have squared it with the Queen, since he hated the Sports Council and much preferred the Central Council of Physical Recreation of which he was patron (Interview with author). Ridley’s feel for sport was not one shared by the majority of people. A ministerial colleague said of him:

He was interested in hunting, shooting, and fishing as the second son of a viscount would be. He said he had been to one football match in the whole of his life, at St. James’s Park in Newcastle. He made no bones about the fact that he regarded sport as something for other people if it wasn’t hunting, shooting and fishing. He had no particular liking for what most people would understand by sport (Interview with author).

Another civil servant was an under-secretary in the sports division of the Department of the Environment where sport was located before its current home at DCMS. In the early 1980s, he observed little government enthusiasm for sport when the state was drawing back from involvement in as many areas of public life as possible under Mrs Thatcher, supported by Cabinet Ministers such as Nicholas Ridley, who were not at all interested in sport. In his opinion, “I think it would be fair to say that at that time sport was not a major feature in the priorities of the Department nor indeed of the government. The government’s interest in it rose and fell in those days depending on the level of football hooliganism” (Interview with author).
Many of the interviewees have suggested that it was really civil servants that had the most significant impact on government sports policy. For example, a senior sports administrator from a national body suggested that, “The overall strategy for sport is a political thing that comes from DCMS and its team of civil servants” (Interview with author). An administrator from different sports body said:

The civil servants have the benefit of all the policy details, through years of service. The Minister gets a one-page briefing, setting out the pros and cons of a case, written by the civil servants. So the civil servants are bound to be very influential because they control the information that gets put before the Minister (Interview with author).

A civil servant, while agreeing that the colleagues in his team were quite influential in drafting policy details for sport, had a high regard for ministerial input. He expressed it this way:

I feel that the best Ministers steer you in the direction of travel. They will give you a very clear steer and let you work out the detail. Iain Sproat was very good that way – he always knew where he wanted to go and gave a very clear steer. He then left it to me and others to flesh out his ideas. It’s very much a teamwork thing with Ministers interacting with civil servants (Interview with author).

This same civil servant also worked with Richard Caborn and had a very positive view of him as a leader. In turn, Mr. Caborn himself was very appreciative of the people he worked with:

There’s one thing you have to do and that’s to make it very clear what the direction of travel is. It’s really teamwork and I had a fantastic team working for me. We worked towards the achievement of the change agenda, with modernisation at the heart of it. We put sport right at the centre of the government’s agenda. At the end of the day I made the decisions, though I had a very good relationship with the civil servants. It was a close and effective team we had (Interview: 27 March 2008).

Most of the former Ministers interviewed had a similar view of the policy process. While they could come up with policy ideas themselves, they relied on civil servants to make them workable. One of them described the relationship in the following terms:
In my experience, it was civil servants who mainly got what they wanted because they had control over the process of giving out money and they knew how to manipulate the levers of government most effectively. Ministers come and Ministers go but the civil servants have the benefit of continuity and a longer view of things (Interview with author).

But within the civil service, the greatest contribution was usually made by those at levels below that of Permanent Secretary, since they tended to be seen as close to, if not part of, the core executive, with higher affairs of state to deal with than mere sport. Lord Smith felt that his Permanent Secretary at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, Sir Hayden Phillips, was not strong in that area, observing, “I think it’s probably fair to say that Hayden didn’t take a huge interest in sport. He wasn’t really interested in sports policy at all and left it to more junior officials” (Interview: 18 June 2007). This was also the view of Baroness Bottomley who said, “I have no recollection of Hayden ever becoming involved in sports policy or of sport being his first love” (Interview: 29 June 2007), because of his greater appreciation of the arts.

However, Sir Hayden regards himself as a great sports-lover, especially of football and cricket, even if he was not as closely involved in sports policy-making as the more junior officials. In fact, he was later asked to become chairman of UK Sport but declined the invitation and instead became chairman of the National Theatre (Interview: 3 July 2007). Chris Smith thought that Sir Hayden’s successor, Sir Robin Young, took more of a hands-on interest in sport. He observed that:

Robin was genuinely keen on looking at how football and other sports were developing and what we ought to do in terms of future policy in relation to elite sport and so on, though he too left much of it to his under-secretary and others. Policy ideas for sport really came from lower down in the civil service because neither Hayden nor Robin were specialists in that area, having come up through the traditional route of moving between departments (Interview: 18 June 2007).

Thus, for most interviewees, the civil service (mainly the DCMS currently, and at National Heritage, Education, or Environment where sport has been located in the past) was viewed as the key actor in sports policy-making in government, rather than the Prime Minister or Cabinet Ministers in most cases. It should be borne in mind though that civil servants are rarely experts in sport when they are appointed to deal with it. Because of the way the civil service operates, senior staff are moved from one
area of policy to another every few years. A civil servant commented that, “It’s one of the benefits of the civil service that you get to do many different jobs, and I’ve moved in and out of sport several times over the years” (Interview with author). Another illustrated it this way:

I had absolutely no formal qualifications in sport; nor indeed did any of my predecessors. It’s probably true of my successors as well. I was undersecretary for the construction industry. The Permanent Secretary simply decided that, since I’d been doing it for six years it was time for me to do something else. So it was as accidental as that (Interview with author).

Therefore, although civil servants were generally perceived as the single most important engine for producing and driving sports policy, most of those who did this were relative juniors in the field. Interviewees in the devolved administrations agreed that this was also the case there, with civil servants moving around departments to further their careers. When they became thoroughly familiar with the area, they were usually moved to a new sector of work somewhere else in the Whitehall, Cardiff, Belfast, or Edinburgh machines, perhaps to forestry or transport. They were then replaced in the sports divisions by others who knew little of the subject. In fact, some of them were quite unsuitable for the positions they held, as one respondent remarked:

The office was well run by competent heads of department. But the DCMS is a dustbin department. If you foul up somewhere else, even the Home Office, you get sent to DCMS. It was full of some good people, but also the walking wounded that you wouldn’t have employed to deliver your Sunday papers. But on the whole, they didn’t come up with policies or ideas very often. They were mostly against everything and advised caution (Interview with author).

Although civil servants have tended to act in a way that primarily ensures continuity and stability, their contribution to sports policy has been vital because of their grip on the administrative machinery. However, the “high-fliers” have tended to opt for policy sectors that were regarded as more important, such as the Treasury or Defence, or they were talent-spotted early on and directed towards those areas. Sport was seen as less attractive and not conducive to promotion to the highest levels for either civil servants or Ministers.
5.6 The Role of Non-Government Bodies in Influencing Government Sports Policy

The government has no significant influence on the governing bodies of the large professional sports, such as football, rugby, cricket, golf, or tennis, which mainly finance themselves, develop their own policies, and look after their own interests. Conversely, since they are not large recipients of government money, they do not seek to influence government sports policy in the main, unless they are concerned with such issues as betting, taxation, or the free movement of players from abroad. In fact, matters of this sort could be seen as not really on the sporting agenda at all, but rather as concerns to be dealt with by the Treasury or Home Office. One former Minister for Sport commented:

I tended not to have a great deal to do with them, except when I met some of the chairmen or chief executives at sporting events. We had no formal arrangements for meetings, though I did sometimes have them into my office. This was more likely with football, in response to some crisis or other, or incident of hooliganism. I usually went to annual conferences of the Sports Council or CCPR, but not often to those of the individual organisations. There were far too many of them and, as we’ve already discussed, I had a lot to do besides sport. I did go to some annual dinners of the bigger ones and knew most of the main people in an informal sort of way (Interview with author).

Indeed, sports such as football can largely ignore government or resist it on issues where they want to do so, such as football ID cards. As David Pickup said, “The more wealthy professional sports could effectively set their own policies and more or less ignore the Sports Council and government” (Interview: 29 November 2006). But as he also pointed out, they cannot always do so. Recently the Football Association has half-heartedly signed up to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) code of practice in relation to performance-enhancing drugs in order to continue receiving funding for grass-roots football, and to have the potential for future UK Olympic participation in the game. Richard Caborn felt that most of the top professional sports needed to be reformed, but he took a particular interest in football:

I tried hard to introduce reforms for some of them. For instance, the FA was a major target for me. If you look at cricket, rugby league, boxing, swimming and others, they all needed to be reformed. But football was one of the toughest nuts to crack because they were so insular. I got the Burns’ report on them, and eventually, after two and a half years, they agreed to an independent
The numerous governing bodies of the mass-participation sports, which are largely amateur, have their own policies for cycling, athletics, ice hockey, basketball, and so on. According to David Pickup they were, “more reliant on Sports Council funding and therefore more amenable to Sports Council influence on issues like doping control” (Interview: 29 November 2006). It was felt by some that the number of governing bodies was excessive, often overlapping with each other at times. For instance, a former Sports Minister said:

There are too many governing bodies for the Minister to deal with. They need to cut down the bureaucracy in the governing bodies and stop so much overlap with them. Some sports have more than one body, such as football with the League, the FA, etc. That pattern is repeated throughout sport, much of which is still basically amateur. It really needs reforming and professionalized (Interview with author).

Their representative umbrella body, the Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR), sees itself as the upholder of all these organisations’ policies in the sporting world and as their representative in discussions with government. Dame Mary Glen Haig, a senior office-holder there for many years, described it as:

A wonderful organisation. I have always preferred it to the Sports Council. I think sport is best left to run itself. That’s really what the CCPR wants and has always wanted. It wants the least possible government interference (Interview: 10 May 2007).

However, Dame Mary went on to remark that:

You just can’t expect the government to put money into sport and then go away and leave it alone. The government has always expected to have some influence in return and that was through the Sports Council and the bodies that followed it (Interview: 10 May 2007).

The CCPR has undergone a review recently, with the aim of refocussing its campaigning and consciousness-raising activities for the 270 member organisations. It has quietly gone about lobbying government and has had some success in influencing policies. Ben Andersen-Tuffnell and Richard Tacon provided some good examples, including the exemption of sports organisations from the requirements of tighter laws
on stewards and bouncers. These were originally intended to affect places such as pubs and night-clubs, but inadvertently caught up small sports clubs. Successful lobbying by the CCPR has mitigated the impact.

With a staff of only 22, the CCPR tends to think it can punch above its weight in terms of policy influence because it is not financed directly by government grant (this is really a fiction, since the bulk of its finance comes indirectly via Sport England) and has more freedom to lobby than those which are. One civil servant took a different view of the CCPR, which he described as having, “minimal influence in sports policy so far as we are concerned. For many years they were seen as a bit of an irritant” (Interview with author). Nevertheless, he did agree that the current strong leadership at the organisation was making it more effective and influential.

Most interviewees felt the amount of public money going into sport before the National Lottery was really quite small, a sentiment actually supported by the Queen. One civil servant reported a conversation at a Buckingham Palace reception:

> We were all introduced to the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, and the Queen clearly who didn’t know a great deal about it, when introduced to me said, “How much money does my government give to the Sports Council?” So I said, “About £40 million ma’am.” To which she replied, “That sounds incredibly mean, given the number of people in the country who are passionately interested in sport. We need to provide more sporting facilities for children. I do find that a very small amount of money that my government gives” (Interview with author).

Although the government may exercise some influence on the representative bodies because it provides finance through UK Sport, Sport England, the National Lottery, and in other ways, it must always respect their independence because these organisations can resist the government when they want to. For instance, when the government wanted them to boycott the 1980 Olympics, it could not count on their support. The BOA, and many governing bodies, simply would not do what the government told them to do and went to the Games despite the government’s wishes. Almost all the interviewees in this study supported the decision to attend the 1980 Olympics, as this comment from a politician illustrates:
I went because I argued that I was going to Olympia. I didn’t go to Russia. I arrived when the Olympic flag was up and I left before it came down. It’s a bit like the Vatican; Olympia is separate wherever it is and becomes almost a mini-state for the duration of the Games. I had all the trappings of the leader of the country. I had the official Union Jack, I had the car, the interpreter, and I did very well out of it. I saw Seb Coe get his gold, as well as the others like Wells and Thompson (Interview with author).

The BOA’s response was to protect its own interests for the longer term by attending the Olympics, though it was pointed out by the BOA spokesman in his interview that nowadays the government could easily withdraw funding for elite athletes. This would be a very powerful tool in getting the governing bodies to comply with the government’s wishes, something not available to them in 1980 (Interview with author).

Generally, the BOA was seen as very good at looking after its own niche area of elite Olympic sport, with only 35 member organisations. A typical comment, in this case from a former Cabinet Minister, was, “The British Olympic Association did an excellent job for Olympic sports, which of course is only a small part of sport in general. It’s the elite end” (Interview with author). Interviewees did not feel that the BOA had much ongoing influence on government sports policy, with the possible exception of drug testing. The BOA considers the recent decision to establish an independent drug-testing agency, separate from UK Sport, as a very big result for them, something they have been lobbying for over many years (Interview with author).

The role of outside bodies, such as the Sports Council (and its later manifestations), the CCPR, and the BOA on influencing government policies was actually viewed as quite limited on the whole, being mainly concerned with developing their own policies. While they often thought they were influential on government, and liked to believe that this was the case, their views were frequently just noted rather than implemented. Nevertheless, one in particular, UK Sport, was seen as a small but outstanding body. A civil servant described it as being, “Excellent, with very clear objectives and good leadership” (Interview with author). He went on to say that:
It’s no coincidence that UK Sport and the Youth Sport Trust are both headed by Sue Campbell. Sue is probably the most influential person in British sport in the past ten years, I’d say without any hesitation. She’s an absolute force for good, gives really strong leadership, and the two organisations she chairs are very efficient, lean, and well-regarded (Interview with author).

UK Sport has a very narrow focus for the elite end of around 40 sports. By contrast, Sport England and the former Sports Council have had a much wider remit over many more sports. One former Minister for Sport regarded the Sports Council as, “A terrible organisation to work with. They were very unhelpful to me and tried to fight against government policy all the time”. He went on to say that, “The Sports Council and the CCPR probably thought that they drove sports policy in Britain, but they really didn’t” (Interview with author).

Patrick Cheney, an adviser to Howell and Hoey, had a similar view of the Sports Council. He said:

The Sports Council was always a pain in the arse, from the time of Howell and Macfarlane, through to all the others. The Tories mistakenly and wrongly for political reasons gave it executive powers. We had always said it should have advisory powers; they should advise the Minister and the Minister take the decisions. When they became independent they were always double-checking what we were doing and we were checking what they were doing, so it created an awful lot of extra work for no added benefit. As far as policy was concerned they didn’t seem to contribute much at all. It fell into the hands of Tory cronies who were barristers and such like, and people like Brasher, and we fought them all the way (Interview with author).

It was felt by some interviewees that the influence of the Sports Council on government seems to have become diluted in recent years, after its transformation into the English Sport Council then Sport England in the mid-1990s. For instance, as Mihir Warty put it:

I think we’ve moved on from being the government’s main adviser. The Sports Council in Denis Howell’s time was unique – there was only one main body in the UK. Now we have us in Sport England, UK Sport, the devolved bodies, and so on (Interview: 7 February 2008).
Since the larger bodies representing the UK or England have already been discussed, the contribution made by the regional organisations and governments will now be considered.

5.7 The Role of the Devolved Administrations and Sports Bodies in Influencing Government Sports Policy

Although the government receives advice from an increasing number of sources, there was no support at all for the idea of networks or coalitions driving policy because these do not work together in a co-ordinated way. It was felt that policy emerged in a very diffuse manner from them. As one former Minister said, “There was certainly no coherent British sports policy with all these organisations” (Interview with author). Indeed, some interviewees felt that there was too much dilution of effort because of the large number of competing and overlapping bodies, each with their own sports policies. According to Dame Mary Glen Haig:

You know the worst thing that’s happened to British sport? With all these bodies like UK Sport and Sport England, and so on, it’s the fragmentation into too many bodies trying to administer it, or help it, or interfere with it. It’s the England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales divisions that are the worst. They all have their own sports councils and Sports Ministers. It’s just ridiculous and it dilutes the effort at the national level. It’s very bad. Of course, with a name like mine and a mother whose name was Bannochie I think I can say that the Scots are probably the worst of all and the least helpful. They are far too insular and inward looking. You can cope with what the Welsh and the Irish don’t like, but not the Scots (Interview: 10 May 2007).

David Pickup, formerly of the Sports Council, takes a similarly robust view of the devolved bodies. He thought they were, “Always poking their noses in. They saw the UK Minister as English, and who represented only England, though this was not true” (Interview: 29 November 2006). This view was shared by many interviewees, as a typical comment from a civil servant illustrates:

Time was often wasted. It was spent in an interminable dance between the English, Welsh, Scottish, and Northern Irish Sports Councils and their relationship with the UK Sports Council. The national jealousies versus the UK’s overall interests took up a lot of time to manage and handle (Interview with author).
According to Lords Hattersley and Rodgers, Denis Howell definitely did not hold the view that he was just the English Sports Minister. They felt that he was a man of great integrity who saw it as his duty to represent the whole of the United Kingdom. All the former Ministers for Sport interviewed also saw themselves as Ministers for Britain in its entirety, despite having difficulties convincing the regional bodies that this was the case.

However, Patricia Ferguson, the former Scottish Sports Minister, had no problem with Richard Caborn as the UK Minister for Sport. She felt that he was inclusive, consensual, and very sensitive to the needs of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The establishment of a "sports cabinet" in 1998 to bring them all together on a six-monthly basis in London, Cardiff, Belfast, and Edinburgh helped to overcome the regional problems, at least on some occasions. It made it easier to resolve policy issues that affected the whole of the UK. For example, she recalls that:

One of the very early things we did was getting all the home nations signed up for the Glasgow Commonwealth Games bid for 2014. So it meant we could announce that we had the home nations in agreement for the Glasgow bid and it meant we could tie in their votes more or less (Interview: 24 August 2007).

A significant reason for this apparent consensus in the "sports cabinet" may be the way in which it operated. Eric Saunders, Chairman of Sport Northern Ireland, who has attended every meeting since 2000, agreed that the main meetings were usually harmonious and without controversy. This was largely achieved because:

The UK Secretary of State chairs a meeting the night before and I suspect that they've carved up everything there at that. So there isn't an awful lot of controversy at the actual meetings themselves (Interview: 1 October 2007).

This view is supported by Peter Smith at UK Sport, whose chair, Sue Campbell, attends all meetings. In his opinion, "Not much seems to come out of it in terms of decisions. I don't see many outputs from where I am, I have to admit" (Interview: 23 November 2007). According to sources in Wales, its main function was to bring Ministers and senior civil servants together to discuss current issues in sport, rather than take policy decisions (Interviews with author). This is a view shared by an English civil servant, who went on to suggest that:
I really don’t see it having much impact. If it didn’t happen you would not notice any difference. It’s in no sense a policy-making forum. Its useful purpose is to share knowledge, ideas, and information. If Ministers were really passionate about it, then it would happen more often (Interview with author).

Before the innovation of the “sports cabinet”, the situation of tensions between the “home countries” and England gave David Pickup endless problems and certainly did not lead to coherent policy networks. While there might be temporary coalitions on specific and limited issues, such as lobbying for a Birmingham Olympic bid in the 1980s (local authorities, Sports Council, MPs, BOA, etc.), or a Commonwealth Games bid as illustrated by Patricia Ferguson for 2014, there was little evidence of these in the longer term. David Pickup noted that:

In terms of making policy, there were no discernible networks as such. Ministers met with us, the CCPR, and the BOA at different times, but not together. I think policy was made pretty much on the hoof - we had ideas which we put to the Minister from time to time, and he sometimes took them up. Otherwise, they responded to events and made up policy in a crisis (Interview: 29 November 2006).

This view was echoed by a senior civil servant, who worked closely with Pickup throughout his time at the Sports Council:

In my experience, sports policy largely happened by accident according to who the people were and how they acted in particular situations. Of course there were bits and pieces coming from all over, including the Sports Council, the CCPR, Ministers, governing bodies, and others. Naturally, people whose whole life was sports administration of one sort or another had ideas and plans for sport. But there was no great scheme of things to fit them all together in a policy programme (Interview with author).

Sir Hayden Phillips had a slightly different view of sports policy-making. He felt that it was an interrelationship of Ministers and civil servants on the one side, while on the other were the quangos that were funded by government (that is Sport England and UK Sport primarily), together with the governing bodies of the sports themselves, represented by the CCPR. Into this mix were then thrown all the devolved bodies to muddy the waters even further. As one who was new to sports politics, he discovered it to be a much more complicated area than he had originally thought, although the BOA did not play a significant part in any kind of coalition or network across sport in
his opinion (Interview: 3 July 2007).

The most recently retired Minister for Sport, Richard Caborn, also saw sports policy as something that was continuously evolving, with influences coming from all around the regions and devolved administrations of the UK. He illustrated it thus in describing where sports policy comes from:

It comes from all over, actually. Ideas come from the civil servants, the governing bodies, the Sports Minister, the bodies like UK Sport and Sport England, plus those in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. There’s no single source. It’s a mixture of all these things. To be absolutely honest, it’s a question of who is the stronger at any time. You will find that not much comes from the Secretary of State, but that the Secretary of State has the responsibility for it. If they don’t do anything the civil servants will do it. It’s about people and it’s about people with convictions who can make things happen. I had a very clear view of where I wanted to go and what I wanted to do. We used to discuss things round a table and get contributions from everybody, so there’s often no single clear source of where a policy comes from. Lots of people throw their ideas in and what emerges is policy (Interview: 27 March 2008).

As this comment indicates, Mr Caborn did not claim that he was a major source of sports policy when he was Minister, being merely one cog in a much larger wheel. The contribution that he and other Ministers for Sport made to government sports policy will now be discussed below.

5.8 The Role of the Minister for Sport in Influencing Sports Policy

It was generally agreed amongst interviewees that Ministers for Sport have had only a limited part to play in the government’s policy-making process for sport, by giving general guidance and direction during their, often, brief tenure. As a civil servant put it:

Some new Ministers want to make their mark by doing something radical, though rarely in sport. However, the difficulty with Ministers in my experience is getting them to think long-term. They realise that they will probably only be there for two or three years so are anxious to do something that sets them out from the others. It’s not always appropriate for long-term policy thinking (Interview with author).
Interviewees mainly felt the civil service had the major input to everyday policy decisions, because they were able to see things over a much longer time-span. Additionally, the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers had the ultimate say on the more important decisions even if they were not usually interested in sport.

Thus, there seemed to be something of a paradox in sports policy-making. Secretaries of State had to take decisions on sports policy, while knowing relatively little about it. Conversely, the Ministers for Sport, who apparently knew the subject well, could not take many decisions or influence policy to any great extent. However, Ministers for Sport did try to take decisions when they could, sometimes without result. Patrick Cheney provided an example in relation to Kate Hoey:

She was very good on policy. She would always say, “Why don’t we do this for this reason or not do it for that reason”. She tried to take policy decisions when she could but it was not always possible at her level. Ultimately, she needed the go-ahead of the Secretary of State, who was frightened to take policy decisions much of the time. It was her policy to encourage more sport in schools, but it was not really Education’s, and Chris Smith certainly didn’t care, so not much progress was made there (Interview: 18 January 2007).

Other interviewees have argued that trying to get too involved in sports policy was probably the most significant factor in Kate Hoey losing office after the 2001 election. In one senior administrator’s view, “Kate Hoey tried to do too much when she came in and very quickly got slapped down for too much policy involvement” (Interview with author). She was sacked as Minister for Sport because she tried to take policy decisions for which she had no authority at her level in government. For instance, she became closely involved in decisions to give the Wembley consortium £120 million of Sports Council money for its rebuilding, and then promoting the Pickett’s Lock scheme as a rival venue for the World Athletics Championships in 2005. These were policy issues deemed to be much beyond her status, and she paid the ultimate price by being removed from government completely.

One former Minister commented, “I would say that at my level of government (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State) there is relatively little scope to introduce new policies or influence them significantly” (Interview with author). This is a sentiment shared by most of the interviewees in this study, including those who held
the office. The office was seen more as a vehicle for raising the profile of sport, encouraging participation, acting as the government’s public face for sport, and being an advocate for the government’s sports policies if such existed at the time. For instance, Sir Neil Macfarlane had a very pragmatic view of policy-making. He said:

Policy was never a strong point for us anyway. We tended just to go about things in a commonsense way. Each of the individual sports and governing bodies had their own policies and it was not for us to interfere too much. Of course there was policy in the sense that we would support this sport or that sport but not to tell them how to run their businesses (Interview: 9 January 2007).

He was echoing a theme that emerged throughout the interviews; the government did not want to run sport, merely to assist it where possible, and at a modest cost until large sums became available through the Lottery. In addition, an unexpressed government policy of doing nothing effectively saved money (such as by not bidding for major events). There was therefore a broad consensus that the Minister for Sport has had a fairly limited role in the policy-making process for five main reasons, the first of which is confirmed from the quantitative data on parliamentary performance presented in Chapter 4 :-

• They have had too many other duties to perform outside of sport and have therefore not able to give sufficient time to it
• They have been too junior within the government machine (i.e. they have always been outside Cabinet and usually at the Parliamentary Under-Secretary level)
• The office is not highly regarded by other Ministers, inside and outside of the Cabinet, nor by civil servants
• Successive governments have not considered sport to be high on their order of priorities and the status of the office has suffered as a result
• The particular personalities of the office-holders have been a factor in limiting their effectiveness

These five factors are not totally separate or mutually exclusive, because there is necessarily some overlap between them. (For example, it can sometimes be difficult to separate the perception of the office itself from the Minister who held it at any
given time.) Nevertheless, they provide a series of broad themes with which to view the subject and understand it more easily. Each of these will now be considered in turn.

(a). The Duties of a Minister for Sport

Earlier calculations using *Hansard*, presented in Chapter 4, have shown that Ministers spent on average only around a quarter of their time on sport. When this suggestion was put to Sir Neil Macfarlane he remarked, “Absolutely spot-on. Absolutely right” (Interview: 9 January 2007). He described in some detail the whole range of issues he dealt with, including Gypsies, planning, ancient monuments, sites of special scientific interest, national heritage, zoos, national parks, Royal Parks, nature conservation, land reclamation, and much else, which he also wrote about in his account of his time as a Minister. He observed that no other Sports Minister in the world had such a range of duties as he had at the time. As a result, “I did not spend as much time on sport as I would have liked, especially the planning of it and the liaising of it as I could have done” (Interview: 9 January 2007). Indeed, a civil servant who worked closely with him later recounted a three-day trip to the south west of England to look at reservoirs, where sport was never discussed at all (Interview with author).

After the Conservatives won the 1970 election, Eldon Griffiths waited by the telephone hoping to be appointed to a post with some bearing on international relations, a subject he felt he knew well. He describes what happened when the call came from Mr Heath, the Prime Minister:

“There followed one of the shortest phone conversations I ever had in government.”

P.M. “I would like you to serve in my government.”
E.G. “Yes, Prime Minister.”
P.M. “I want you to take on Sport.”
E.G. “Sport?”
P.M. “I attach a great deal of importance to Sport.”
E.G. “Yes, Prime Minister.”
P.M. "I will also be reforming the government in a few months' time to do a better job on cleaning up the air and waste so you can help us with that too."

E.G. "Yes, Prime Minister."

"Did I hesitate? Not for a second." (Email communication: 29 July 2007).

Sir Eldon then went on to devote the vast majority of his time to the second part of the Prime Minister's brief, by working extensively on local government and environmental issues. The parliamentary data indicates that almost 90% of his work was in this area. All the former Ministers concerned with sport (at every level, including Secretary of State) felt that this division of duties could only be a handicap. One former Sports Minister said:

Yes, it certainly was a disadvantage most of the time I was there. From the sporting point of view it would obviously have been much better to have concentrated only on sport, but that was a luxury I didn't have. It was always envisaged that the Sports Minister doing just sport would not have enough to do! I know it sounds silly, but it's true. I certainly could have filled my days with only sport, though I think other Ministers would have felt it was just like me being on holiday all the time (Interview with author).

Each Minister for Sport, from 1964 to the present, has in turn been allocated a very wide brief, depending on the department where the post has been located in government. From the start, Denis Howell had an enormous workload, which inevitably reduced the time he could focus on sport. The bulk of his job at Education had absolutely nothing to do with sport in his earliest days. After the 1970 election, sport was moved from Education to Environment, where he was also burdened with a huge portfolio of non-sports work from 1974 to 1979. Lord Hattersley, a close colleague and friend who was in government with him at the time, said "He had a great range of things to handle in local government. I don't know how he did it all" (Interview: 1 May 2007).

As already noted, Howell was succeeded in 1970 by Eldon Griffiths, who has confirmed that he devoted even less time to sport than Howell. Only a small proportion of his job was actually given over to sport, and that mainly involved attending events, performing opening ceremonies or going to meetings with civil
servants in the Department of the Environment. His main sports policy decision, as he saw it, was to give independence by Royal Charter to the Sports Council in 1972, something which cost virtually no money. This may be a rare example of "rational" policy-making in sport, since it had been planned in Opposition for a long time and chosen from a number of possible options (e.g. abolition, reform, merger with CCPR), rather than done as a response to a crisis. The vast majority of his time was spent on subjects such as roads, motorways, harbours, road safety, railways, rivers, and the Local Government Reorganisation Act of 1973 (Email communications: 16 February 2007 and 29 July 2007).

This process is repeated for all Ministers up to the creation of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in 1997. For instance, Richard Tracey dealt at length with regeneration and new towns, as well as his somewhat subsidiary interest of sport. He commented, "So you'll understand that, in a Tory government, we were really expected to do a lot of other things as well as sport" (Interview: 11 April 2007). Even with the creation of National Heritage in 1992, Ministers had very diverse interests. Iain Sproat agreed that he had a long list of duties, including libraries, museums, film, TV, broadcasting, and much else, which was a big disadvantage in terms of the time he could give to sport. He spoke regretfully of this:

Ministers at National Heritage had to multi-task, whereas I think those at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport now have a very cosy time. However, it is not apparent to me that they have done more for sport than I did with much less time to do it (Interview: 31 May 2007).

With the establishment of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport by Chris Smith in 1997, Ministers have been able to concentrate more effort on sport, though not exclusively so. Kate Hoey's policy adviser, Partick Cheney, suggested that she spent around 60% of her time on sport, with the rest on the Lottery, open spaces, TV licenses, and other things (Interview: 18 January 2007). This probably understates the proportion, since the figures in Chapter 4 show that more than three-quarters of her parliamentary activity was concerned with sport.

Lord Smith felt that Tony Banks did not want to do only sport because he, "was very clear that he wanted the heritage and historic buildings aspects of the portfolio as well
as sport because that was something that he really enjoyed” (Interview: 18 June 2007). However, he was careful not to overload him with these other duties, so that he could give more emphasis to sport than his predecessors. On the other hand, he felt that Kate Hoey would have been happy dealing only with sport, though it was still not possible, given the departmental organisation, the number of junior Ministers at his disposal, and the responsibilities of the DCMS (Interview: 18 June 2007).

Even the more recent Ministers are not able to give as much concentrated attention to sport as they might wish. For instance, a civil servant has described how an entire week of the Minister’s time was devoted to licensing and gambling, although the focus of the job lies in sport and, “It’s what they are mostly interested in” (Interview with author). When Richard Caborn was the Minister, he too did much more than just sport. He observed, “I had other things to do as well as sport. I did gambling, tourism, and other things. But I worked hard. I used to do fifteen or sixteen hours day” (Interview: 27 March 2008).

The general view of the interviewees has been that Ministers for Sport have certainly been handicapped because of the many other, not necessarily enjoyable things, they have had to do. In a former Cabinet Minister’s words, “They took aspects of the government’s responsibilities which no one else was very keen to have and they gave it to the Sports Minister” (Interview with author). None has been able to give full attention to sport. To be more involved in the policy-making process they would have had to be wholly committed to the subject. Instead, they have had to deal with many different sets of civil servants on a daily basis, the very group from which policy tends to evolve. This was illustrated by Sir Eldon Griffiths:

I got two sets of offices, and two lots of private secretaries. This reflected my two jobs – as Minister for Sport, a role that Peter Walker told me to “handle as you think fit” and as Graham Page’s number two in charge of local government (Email communication: 29 July 2007).

Sir Neil Macfarlane felt that it was sometimes difficult to separate out all the different activities and read up on the briefs provided by civil servants (Interview: 9 January 2007), a problem not encountered by a Minister dealing with education or taxation exclusively. Nevertheless, all Ministers for Sport have had to give much of their time
to activities outside sport, including those in the devolved administrations of the UK. Patricia Ferguson, for example, observed that, when she was Scottish Sports Minister, "I had the tourism and culture bits as well as sport, and I also had international development, architecture, heritage, and that kind of thing. So it was quite a wide brief in the same way that the UK Ministers have had" (Interview: 24 August 2007).

This pattern is repeated in the other devolved areas of the UK. The Welsh Minister has heritage, tourism, ancient monuments, and the Welsh language as part of his job, while in Northern Ireland the Minister dealing with sport also has to cover a wide brief. According to Eric Saunders:

I think that within his remit there's something like twelve different activities he does in the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure. The two major ones are sport and the arts. It's up to the Minister really to decide which way he wants to go (Interview: 1 October 2007).

In reality, while all the Ministers in the UK and devolved governments do have some discretion according to their own particular interests, they are fairly circumscribed as to how they exercise this. They are all given a portfolio of duties, of which sport is invariably just one part. Since they are normally at the lowest level in government, they are not in a position to pick and choose or delegate the things that they do not want. The senior Ministers, in fact, delegate administrative tasks to them, though not usually the significant policy-making functions which they keep to themselves. This will now be examined in the next section.

(b). The Seniority of a Minister for Sport

The office of Minister for Sport has always been held at a junior ministerial level of Parliamentary Under-Secretary or Minister of State. Junior Ministers are very much the dogs-bodies in any government department, as many commentators have suggested. Sir John Nott said, "I was a junior Minister at the Treasury during the Heath government and I think junior Ministers have a very rough time. They are not usually appointed by the Secretary of State but are foisted on them by the Prime Minister or the Whips" (Interview: 5 June 2007). Conversely, Lord Smith felt that junior Ministers at the Treasury, "might carry some weight" (Interview: 18 June
2007) compared with other departments, but these were rare exceptions. Ministers for Sport were always in departments far removed from the Treasury, which was regarded as close to the centre of government power.

All the Ministers for Sport seem to have been appointed in a similar way to that described by Sir John Nott and Sir Eldon Griffiths, with little or no say from the relevant Secretary of State who would have direct control over them. For instance, Lord Smith confirmed that this was the case for his two Ministers for Sport. He claimed that, “Both Tony Banks and Kate Hoey, the two Ministers who worked with me over four years in government, were appointed by the Prime Minister. Now this came completely out of the blue for me” (Interview: 18 June 2007). To his regret, he had no say in their appointment, though he generally worked well with them. In the case of Banks, “I enthusiastically welcomed the appointment. He was a character with a capital C” (Interview: 18 June 2007).

When Hoey stepped down in June 2001, Richard Caborn took her place immediately. He described how he had discussed sport many times over the years with Alastair Campbell, and that it was Campbell who, “set the ball rolling. Then I got a call from No. 10 after the 2001 election asking me if I wanted to do the sports job” (Interview: 27 March 2008). He accepted out of love for sport, because this was a sideways move in terms of seniority as a Minister of State, which was his current level.

Iain Sproat had been a junior Minister at Trade and Industry for two years from 1981 to 1983. He then lost his seat in 1983, which set back his political career, until he returned to Parliament in 1992. In May 1993 he got a call from the Prime Minister’s office, asking him to go to 10 Downing Street. He describes the experience thus:

I went, not knowing what to expect, and there was John sitting on his own at the long Cabinet table. The first thing he said to me was, “What are we going to do about England?” and I replied, “Well, I think it’s a bit much asking Alex Stewart to be captain and also be the opening batsman, so that needs to be changed.” Then he said to me, “No, no. I meant what are we going to do about the country, the economy and all that? It’s all a bit of a mess” (Interview: 31 May 2007).

While Iain Sproat was unable to offer an immediate solution to the economic
difficulties, John Major offered him the job of Minister for Sport at Parliamentary Under-Secretary level, which he was pleased to accept. Although he would have liked a Cabinet-level position, the nine years’ absence from Parliament had probably made it impossible at his age. Two years later he was promoted to Minister of State, still not making the Cabinet, although he is the only Conservative Sports Minister out of eight to have been given this rank (Interview: 31 May 2007).

Lord Rodgers felt that that being a junior Minister was undoubtedly a disadvantage for Denis Howell, who was claimed by many interviewees as probably the most influential of all the Ministers for Sport. In addition, the subject area itself was viewed as being at the fringes of government, according to Lord Rodgers:

Sport was seen as a peripheral issue and I think that because Denis became a Minister for other things that must have reduced what he could do for sport. It’s the same in any government job; the lower down you are the less you can do on your own initiative. The Secretaries of State may have delegated, but they were only delegating the things they didn’t want to do themselves. I don’t remember any of them as being especially interested in sport and I’m sure they didn’t take it particularly seriously. They would have been quite happy to leave it to Denis because it wasn’t seen as important (Interview: 21 March 2007).

Lord Donoughue takes a similar view to that of Bill Rodgers, suggesting that Howell was handicapped in being outside of the Cabinet. He was constantly striving to get things done, to get money for sport, and to raise its profile, often with little support from his Secretary of State. In fact he sometimes went over the head of his Secretary of State and appealed directly to the Prime Minister for support. Donoughue provides a valuable insight from his position as head of the Prime Minister’s Policy Unit in the 1970s:

Certainly, a problem he had as a junior Minister was that he was always dependent on the Secretary of State that he worked with. Someone like Tony Crosland, who was brilliant man, wasn’t really interested in sport. So Denis had difficulty mobilising support above him politically and that’s why Harold Wilson was good because Wilson gave him the support from No. 10 that he often didn’t get from his Secretaries of State. Gordon Walker wasn’t interested in sport and Ted Short wasn’t really, although Ted understood about local authorities. So that’s why he often needed the Prime Minister. In the seventies, when I was in there, he and I met regularly and he used me as a channel to get through to Wilson to try to get him to be interested. If Wilson was interested,
then the Secretaries of State had to be interested. If the Prime Minister gave a lead they had to follow (Interview: 7 March 2007).

Donoughue also confirms that he saw Howell as Cabinet material. When head of the Prime Minister’s Policy Unit in 1978 he advised James Callaghan to bring Howell into the Cabinet as Minister for Transport or Chief Whip. Unfortunately for Howell, the “Winter of Discontent” came along in 1978-79. Callaghan did not reshuffle his Cabinet and Howell was therefore left out. Callaghan wanted stability at that time and it suited him to leave Howell in a job he did well (Interview: 7 March 2007).

The Westminster model of a junior Minister reporting to a Cabinet Minister has not been adopted in the devolved governments of the UK, largely because there are not enough members in the regional assemblies or parliaments to permit this. Before the May 2007 election, the Scottish Cabinet was composed of around ten members, only some of whom had deputies. Patricia Ferguson did not have a deputy to help her cover her wide range of duties. As she said, “I didn’t have one and I was all on my own” (Interview: 24 August 2007). However, she was more senior in the Scottish government than a comparable UK Minister would be at Westminster. Had Labour won that election, and the bid for the 2014 Commonwealth Games been successful, it was intended that she would have become a Cabinet Minister dealing only with sport. Since the Scottish National Party narrowly won the 2007 election, the importance of sport within the government has actually declined. They have reduced the Cabinet to only six members, with sport being part of a much wider brief.

When Labour lost its majority in Wales after the June 2007 election, the party entered a coalition with Plaid Cymru, giving the Welsh Nationalists three Cabinet seats out of ten. Interviewees in Wales noted that this included the one which covered sport. The post went to Rhodri Glyn Thomas, who became Minister for Heritage. Like his Labour predecessor, Alun Pugh (Minister for Culture, Welsh Language, and Sport 2003-07), his brief is a wide one, but more at the centre of the devolved government than would be the case in Westminster. As one respondent observed, “I think it is regarded more highly here in Wales because of the way it is organised. The post is held at a more senior level than in England, because it is at the Cabinet level” (Interview with author). There are no junior Ministers as such in the Welsh Assembly
government. While there are deputies for some posts, as in Scotland, Heritage does not have one.

Eric Saunders agreed that the position has generally been similar in Northern Ireland, with an all-purpose Minister at a more senior level than Westminster. However, their position in the policy-making hierarchy is still quite limited in two ways: they are junior within the Northern Ireland system and they have the additional hurdle of Westminster in the background. He described it like this:

Let's face it, if there was a major policy decision it would be the First Minister in each of the home countries who would bring this to the attention of the Prime Minister. It wouldn't be the Sports Minister. It would have to be a fairly high level policy decision. Otherwise, policy decisions are made within the home countries (Interview: 1 October 2007).

David Pickup could see how the Westminster government worked from the vantage point of the Sports Council in Great Britain. As an outside observer he was able to give an realistic assessment of how much influence Sports Ministers really had. In his opinion:

Ministers could influence policy in many relatively small ways, for example doping control, disability sport, encouraging participation by women, blacks, etc, establishing a playing fields register as Moynihan did, approving expenditure up to a certain level (I think it was £250,000 when I was there). But because their position in government is at the bottom end they could not take high-level policy decisions. If it was a case of major expenditure, the Secretary of State would be involved, and probably the Treasury as well, so the Minister was rather boxed in (Interview: 29 November 2006).

Civil servants were seen as being very astute at working out who was important in government. Their first loyalty is generally to their Secretary of State. They presume that he or she is the only one really able to introduce new policies or take decisions. One former Sports Minister said, “I felt like I was reporting to the Permanent Secretary, who in turn reported to the Secretary of State. There’s a subtle distinction there, in that I was seen as not really having direct access to the Secretary of State” (Interview with author). Another former Minister for Sport had this to say about civil servants:
The civil servants were actually more obstructive on policy initiatives than the Secretaries of State were. They always wanted things to go through them for referral upwards to get a decision. They assumed that a junior Minister couldn’t take decisions, since these were for the Secretary of State to do. They were invariably bright, able, lively people to work with but always bound up with civil service norms and traditional ways of working (Interview with author).

Even under the later structures of National Heritage and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the position of junior Ministers has not changed. Iain Sproat, and almost all the other interviewees, felt that the job would never be in the Cabinet because that could not be justified. As a result, “My job was really too junior to change things, even with the backing of the Prime Minister on some occasions” (Interview: 31 May 2007). Chris Smith’s two Ministers for Sport had a similar experience. He noted that:

As junior Ministers their policy-making role is very limited. They need the full support of the Secretary of State in order to get somewhere because the Whitehall machine will not move for them. The same would be true in any department of government, not just sport. Although there are some departments where being a junior Minister can still carry a bit of clout, it was not really true of DCMS. I would definitely say that having little input to policy-making is something that happens to junior Ministers generally. It’s not a criticism of them, just the reality of how the system works (Interview: 18 June 2007).

Following Banks and Hoey, Richard Caborn was a Minister of State and a Privy Councillor. This was something rare, since only Howell had held this distinction before as Minister for Sport (Sproat was latterly a Minister of State but not a Privy Councillor). Although Caborn brought this rank with him from Trade and Industry, it gave him a little more clout, according to one civil servant:

Richard Caborn was a very experienced Minister and worked with Gordon Brown in the Labour Party. He was very pally with John Prescott. He really could tap into the most senior levels of government because of his background. The fact that he wasn’t at the most senior level in Cabinet sometimes didn’t matter because of his influence in other ways (Interview with author).

It seems as if Caborn was able to penetrate the deep roots of the Labour movement in a similar way to Denis Howell, though this was somewhat unusual for a junior
Minister. Cabom himself put it this way: "A Minister is in a very powerful position. I think at times I didn't realise just how powerful the job was. I found that if you really want to make things happen you can do so" (Interview: 27 March 2008). There was a great deal of admiration from a number of interviewees about the quiet and tenacious way Cabom worked as a Minister for Sport, with many rating him as good as, or better than, Howell.

However, Cabom was something of an exception because, as John Nott confirmed, even a junior Minister in the Treasury struggles to get his voice heard (Interview: 5 June 2007). The junior Ministers who have held the sports portfolio have barely had a voice at all in terms of operating successfully within the Whitehall machine. It is not just their lack of seniority that has been a disadvantage; the way in which the office is perceived by other key actors in government and sport has also had an impact on their effectiveness.

(c). Perceptions of the Office of Minister for Sport

The ministerial office is often viewed as not being a serious one, when set against the core services provided by government. Indeed, some observers see it as entirely frivolous, according to many of the interviewees in this study. A senior civil servant, for example, described it as, "A sort of niche market job, not thought to be a central political role, and therefore not thought to be hugely important" (Interview with author). On the other hand, Lord Smith was a great supporter of the post, which he believed could be very enjoyable and worthwhile for the holders. For instance Tony Banks said to him, "It's as if I'd died and gone to heaven without having to die first" (Interview: 18 June 2007). Nevertheless, Smith was able to see how others have viewed it critically within the core executive:

It is probably true to say that the junior Sports Minister post is regarded too readily by the rest of Whitehall as being a bit out on a limb. They see it as not really being part of the centrality of government (Interview: 18 June 2007).

Sir Neil Macfarlane had a similar view. He felt that sport was not really seen as a main activity of government, something which necessarily reduced his impact as the
Minister for Sport. This was a particular problem in negotiations with other departments because sport cut across many departmental interests in Environment, Education, the Home Office and even the Foreign Office at times (such as when repatriating jailed football hooligans from abroad). He comments, "Then of course I had the problem with the cricket teams and rugby teams going to South Africa" (Interview: 9 January 2007). In addition, the perception of sport was that it was a very tiny part of the government machine, with few resources. According to Macfarlane, "The budget was always very small" (Interview: 9 January 2007).

This latter point about size of budget is crucial in British government, because the large spending departments automatically have a more significant profile. They tend to be more highly regarded and are more sought after by high-flying civil servants. Policy for its own sake is not something that attracts the highest calibre of civil servants, as distinct from policy which is related to spending large amounts of government money. For example a common theme for Sports Ministers was the difficulty in working with the Education Department. This seldom involved spending money, but could often centre on policy for the organisation of school sport. Education itself was the recipient of vast amounts of public money and they deeply resented any other department having the slightest influence on them, even though it was policy at the highest level (i.e. Prime Minister) to seek "joined-up government" in New Labour parlance. As a low spending part of a different department, National Heritage had little impact on the Education Department. Iain Sproat is deeply critical of the latter:

They were a quite dreadful department with no feel for sport at all. They had no interest in sport in schools and they did not care either. They did not pay any heed to the wider government agenda of health, sport, fighting obesity, and so on. We at National Heritage saw school sport as the first vital step in getting young people interested, then through them to local sports clubs. Those ideas were built into my report *Raising the Game* in 1995. We used to have inter-departmental meetings with them and I kept bringing up these issues (Interview: 31 May 2007).

But Education would not have sport included in the national curriculum, nor alter their policies at the request of a junior Minister from another department. There was in no sense an inter-departmental coalition for developing school sports policies, nor a
rational choice evaluation of what was the best option for school sport across the
range of government programmes. However, education policy-makers may have
taken what they believed to be rational decisions for education as an activity in its
own right, to exclude marginal activities, such as sport, and concentrate on what they
saw as core “academic” subjects. They were thus able to exercise power in a negative
way by keeping sport off the education agenda as much as possible.

This was a problem in other parts of the UK as well. Eric Saunders was a member of
education community projects in Northern Ireland which tried to encourage dual use
of school facilities, a concept which he agreed dated back at least to the time of Denis
Howell in the 1960s. These projects met with little success, due to the deeply­
entrenched civil service views towards their “own” departments. In his view:

One of the problems of all government in Britain actually is that people talk
about there should be inter-departmental working. In practice they all protect
their own patches. Now we obviously in sport must have close connections
with the Education Department because in fact we are actually helping to
promote their objectives which they don’t pay for. We are also doing that for
health (Interview: 1 October 2007).

From a UK Sports Council perspective, David Pickup confirms the analysis of the
Education Department, offered by Sproat, Saunders, and many others. The sports
portfolio was located there for two years until the 1992 election. He says that:

When sport was in the Education Department, this was the hardest time for us.
The civil servants had a very strange mindset. They really had no vision for
sport at all. Sport was an imposition, since it was generally played by those
who were not intellectual, while they themselves were often Oxbridge
graduates who saw themselves as highly educated and above sport. Sport was
tolerated, but low on their list of priorities. Where there could have been a
policy focus, school sport, was sadly neglected – they seemed to have no
policy at all for school sport (Interview: 29 November 2006).

By the time the Department for Culture, Media and Sport was established in 1997,
some progress was made in trying to have a more “joined-up” sports policy. Chris
Smith encouraged co-operation with Education to try to get more sport in schools and
to stop the sale of playing fields. He says that, “Kate Hoey did some useful work on
that” (Interview: 18 June 2007) by drawing on her background as a teacher before
entering politics. However, one former Conservative Minister blamed the sale of playing fields mostly on Labour authorities, which tended to dominate in local government at that time (Interview with author).

Inter-departmental working really does seem to have improved in recent times, but not across the board. Co-operation between DCMS and Education is now much better. A civil servant who worked with both Conservative and Labour governments confirmed this:

Iain Sproat battled very hard with Cheryl Gillan [a junior Education Minister] to get sport higher up the agenda in schools but she just wasn’t receptive. We had a degree of support from No. 10 on that but we just didn’t win it. I think it really was just a change of government that made the difference and it took three years of this government to really get it moving and put sport higher up the agenda in schools (Interview with author).

This interviewee thought that battles fought between junior Ministers in rival departments were always going to be inconclusive because the individuals were not seen as important enough to lead to changes in policy. When the leadership at the top changed, and the likes of Estelle Morris and Charles Clarke became the Secretaries of State at Education, they were much more receptive to sport in schools. The respective junior Ministers in the Education Department and at sport were then knocking at an open door and the perception of them as being relatively unimportant did not matter.

However, with regard to other departments, such as Health, there has been little or no change in their attitude to interdepartmental co-operation. The same civil servant commented that:

It’s a different situation with Health. It has been very, very difficult to get the Department of Health to take responsibility for getting the nation more active. We are obviously responsible for getting more people into sport but they are not responsible for getting more people to walk or cycle to work or use the stairs rather than lifts as they should be. That’s really Department of Health territory because it has nothing to do with sport, yet they won’t take leadership or ownership for it (Interview with author).

The Minister for Sport has not been able to make an impact on health policy, although Richard Caborn has tried. He saw this as one of his key aims during his time as
Minister, particularly getting people to take personal responsibility for their own health and fitness (Interview: 27 March 2008). According to interviewees, there has been a tendency to see health as a highly-technical policy area, really only understood by privileged and competent insiders. Sport, by contrast, is perceived as something that anyone can have a relevant view on, whether an expert in the area or not. Sports Ministers have therefore found it difficult to have their views taken seriously in the health policy area.

There were some positive comments from the devolved jurisdictions about close cooperation. Since the departments are relatively small compared with those at Westminster, the civil servants tend to work more easily with those at similar levels in other departments. They are recruited from much smaller pools and are therefore more self-contained, thus facilitating easier networking and communication. For example, there is a close connection between public health and sport in Wales, where the civil servants work in the same building. Nevertheless, the Minister’s post is not seen as one of the more important ones, compared with the economic and regeneration portfolios, according to a civil servant in Cardiff (Interview with author).

Interviewees in this study have generally commented that civil servants, Cabinet Ministers and other Ministers have tended to denigrate the contribution of the Minister for Sport. Some have also cast doubt as to whether the post will survive in the longer term. It has thus made it more difficult for Ministers for Sport to be taken seriously and has therefore reduced their effectiveness in government. The next section will look at how the office has actually been treated by governments, rather than just perceived by those working in and around the government machine.

(d). Governments’ Treatment of the Office of Minister for Sport

While there is a great deal of continuity in the location of the long-established offices, the post of Minister for Sport has been moved across departments on a number of occasions. It started out with Denis Howell at Education and Science in 1964, was transferred with him to Housing and Local Government in 1969, then to Environment under Eldon Griffiths in 1970. There was a long period of stability until 1990, when it was moved back to Education with Robert Atkins as Minister, but only two years later
it was relocated in the new National Heritage Department (see Appendix 2). David Pickup found this constant change to three different departments during his time at the Sports Council very disruptive:

There really was a different ethos in each department and it made a difference to the way in which we worked. The DoE was more focussed on regeneration of inner-cities, especially under Heseltine. When sport was in Education that was the hardest time for us. National Heritage was altogether much better (Interview: 29 November 2006).

Sport remained at National Heritage when Labour won the election in 1997, though this was rebranded after a few months as the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. With a new government, and Secretary of State, the character of the revamped department necessarily changed again, with more of an arts and creative industries focus. As Lord Smith said:

It would be fair to say I was not involved in sport quite as much as the arts and broadcasting and the media, but there was still a really strong involvement on my part (Interview: 18 June 2007).

Thus, the office of Minister for Sport has been treated by successive governments as something that can be moved around as a matter of expediency to suit administrative arrangements and has not always been highly regarded by them, although solid foundations were initially laid by Denis Howell in 1964. Roy Hattersley was a great admirer of what Howell did to establish the post in government and to have it treated as a serious office:

I think he changed the atmosphere. When Harold Wilson appointed him in 1964 there was a good deal of criticism and cynicism, I have to say me included, about whether sport should be in the government at all. Denis Howell demonstrated that it was a proper thing for the government to do. I think he was one of the few politicians that has actually changed the political climate in his own area. Denis convinced people that sport was a proper area for government behaviour and involvement (Interview: 1 May 2007).

According to many commentators, Howell was really the only holder of the post with the stature to maintain its position of visibility in the government because of his long association with senior Labour figures in the 1950s and 1960s in the Campaign for
Democratic Socialism. Some believed that Richard Caborn played a similar role in the Labour Party more recently, but in a more understated way. In Howell’s time, sport was not fully acknowledged as an area of important government policy. Nor was the role thought of as a potential Cabinet post, despite his own endeavours to raise its profile. Lord Rodgers observed that in the Wilson and Callaghan administrations:

Sport was seen as a peripheral issue in my day. There was never any suggestion that it would have gone to the Cabinet in its own right (Interview: 21 March 2007).

Some interviewees felt that the treatment of the office of Minister for Sport fluctuated according to who the Secretary of State or Prime Minister was at the time, or if a crisis arose. Such crises usually related to football in the 1970s and 1980s. Eldon Griffiths describes how he became aware of the Ibrox disaster in January 1971, which nobody in the government machine bothered to inform him of:

As I was helping my 17 year old son skin a rabbit he had shot, I learned from a BBC broadcast that an overcrowded stand had collapsed in the final minute of a Rangers versus Celtic football match in Glasgow. Sixty-six spectators had been crushed to death and hundreds injured in a headlong stampede for the exits (Email communication: 29 July 2007).

Griffiths had had little contact with Edward Heath until then and not much thereafter. However, Heath took time out from preparing to attend a Commonwealth heads of government meeting in Singapore to deal with the matter, gave Griffiths a rare invitation to the Cabinet, and sought his views there on what to do. Before the meeting, sources in Number 10 let Griffiths know quietly that a public enquiry was preferred by Heath and the Secretary of State for Scotland (Gordon Campbell). However, Griffiths took an independent line:

My advice was that a public enquiry would take too long but that we should ask the Football Association to check standards. It was agreed that local authorities, the fire service, and the police were responsible for the safety of buildings in their districts. It was not for national government to over-ride or second guess them. Lord Wheatley, several months later, made some practical recommendations which were eventually included in a Safety of Sports Grounds Bill (Email communication: 29 July 2007).

Apart from this incident, the office of Minister for Sport was not given a significant
profile during Mr Heath’s time, and it certainly was not by the next leader of the Conservative Party when she became Prime Minister. Hector Monro played little part in the 1980 Olympic boycott attempt, when he should have been closely involved. Although Mrs Thatcher respected Hector Monro as loyal Minister, she did not consider that the office of Minister for Sport was in any way suitable to deal with an issue of such importance, to the extent that she totally sidelined Monro and did not allow him to speak in Parliament on the issue. She saw the matter as one of foreign policy, for which sport could be used as a weapon. Sir Neil Macfarlane confirms that Monro nearly resigned over it:

He was almost forced to go over the Olympics because he was extremely brassed off over that. The problem was that Margaret just did not consult. It was Carter who got everyone round the table and said, “What are we going to do” and the boycott was the result. Well that was that anyway and they agreed to do it but I think it was a great pity. It hurt him badly and he was on the verge of resignation (Interview: 9 January 2007).

In the event Monro went along with the policy only to be sacked and replaced by Macfarlane the following year (Interview: 9 January 2007). Sir Eldon Griffiths thought that one of the greatest mistakes the Conservatives made was, “to pressure the BOA to cancel the appearance at the Moscow Olympics” (Email communication: 16 February 2007), instead of senior figures and backbenchers opposing the Prime Minister and the Cabinet’s decision. He took this view despite his own strong anti-Soviet views because he could see that sport was being singled out as a weapon, while the government continued to trade and interact as normal with the Soviet Union in almost every other respect.

According to Neil Macfarlane, Mrs Thatcher called him to Number 10 to deal with incidents such as the Heysel Stadium disaster in 1985, but otherwise ignored him and the office he occupied. She was actually a friend of Macfarlane, who played golf with her husband Denis, something that continued even after Macfarlane resigned later in 1985. He recalled that, “We stayed very good friends and I played a lot of golf with Denis Thatcher subsequently” (Interview: 9 January 2007). It was not because she had no confidence in Macfarlane that she had little to do with him, but because she had a clearly defined sense of the hierarchy of government. The post of Minister for Sport was not regarded as being of real significance to her.
She treated Macfarlane’s successor, Richard Tracey, in much the same way. Tracey describes her attitude thus:

One thing that Mrs Thatcher was very keen on, and I don’t know who put the idea to her, was all-ticketed matches, membership schemes, ID cards, and all that kind of thing. I was never very keen on them though. The FA and the Football League saw them as very difficult to administer. So I think over time with the FA and the Football League feeding in their information, and the Police too, that idea was dropped. I think it wasn’t finally dropped until my successor, Colin Moynihan, who took over as Minister after me, did so (Interview: 11 April 2007).

As Tracey noted, the ID scheme was not abandoned because Mrs Thatcher valued the Sports Minister’s advice. The real reason was that the Home Office and the Home Secretary were much more significant politically. Civil servants could see how this process was repeated over a number of years. In the words of one who was closely involved at the time:

Mrs Thatcher’s interest in sport fluctuated, not because she had any real interest in it, but because she was passionate about stamping out football hooliganism. Moynihan, Ridley, and I were on occasions summoned to Number 10 to explain to her exactly what we were doing and what we weren’t doing, and why. That was a totally erratic interest depending on the level of problems that were happening every Saturday at football matches (Interview with author).

As we have already seen, Mrs Thatcher’s successor as Prime Minister was genuinely interested in sport and had a higher regard for the office of Minister for Sport. Major gave better access to Iain Sproat than any post-holder had enjoyed since Denis Howell, though Sproat described battling against gatekeepers to gain it at times. It was Major who promoted Iain Sproat to Minister of State, the only Conservative Sports Minister to hold that rank. A senior civil servant who worked closely with him viewed the ups and downs of how the office was treated and was impressed by Major’s attitude, commenting:

The problem was that it got sidelined in terms of being a central political issue unless it happens that the Prime Minister of the day or another senior Minister of the day was particularly interested in it. During the years that I worked in the DCMS and National Heritage of course that was the case with John Major and the National Lottery. It was a sort of golden period of opportunity from
that point of view which I think, on the whole, was reasonably well-taken (Interview with author).

The office of Minister for Sport may well have had its high point during the Major administration, in terms of its importance to government. In the Blair/Brown premierships, three out of the four post-holders have operated at the Under-Secretary level, while Caborn was already at Minister of State level when he was transferred. None of them has had easy access to the Prime Minister and there seems to have been no particular crises of hooliganism that required that they be summoned to Downing Street. While the importance of sport may be high on the agenda, given the 2012 Olympics and the 2018 World Cup bid, the Minister for Sport is still not seen as an important player in these matters. As Chris Smith put it:

It is probably true to say that the junior Sports Minister post is regarded too readily by the rest of Whitehall as being a bit out on a limb. They see it as not really being part of the centrality of government (Interview: 18 June 2007).

Indeed, part of the office’s remit was removed by Gordon Brown when he appointed Gerry Sutcliffe as the new Minister for Sport in June 2007, as an Under-Secretary. Responsibility for the 2012 Olympics was taken away and given to Tessa Jowell in a new post, further downgrading the importance of the office. Although a dedicated Olympics Minister could be justified on the grounds of the importance of the task, demoting the Minister of Sport’s rank cannot have been as a result of the performance of Gerry Sutcliffe as Minister. It can only be seen as a conscious decision to diminish its importance in government. Richard Caborn also took the view that this development was unhelpful and unwelcome:

I am disappointed with that. I think it was a mistake, and it gives all the wrong signals. After ten years as a Minister I can see what the seniority of a Minister of State means. I think it was a bad mistake to put it back to Under-Secretary level and it gives all the wrong vibes (Interview: 27 March 2008).

Nevertheless, it may be that the effectiveness of the post-holders themselves have been influential in how the office has been perceived over the years, as distinct from the various governments’ attitude to the office. The individuals who have held the post will therefore be considered next.
The Holders of the Office of Minister for Sport

There have been 13 post-holders so far, from October 1964 up to Gerry Sutcliffe who was the last to be appointed in June 2007. In the nature of things, some have been more effective than others, depending on their personality traits and abilities. David Pickup put it this way:

It depended on the personality of Ministers what they were prepared to do and how receptive to ideas they were. In terms of major policy decisions, they were likely to be out of the loop. For instance, they could not decide to make a bid for a major event – that was a much more complex process involving large expenditure, governing body agreement, negotiations with local authorities, and a whole lot more. A junior Minister just can’t decide to do that (Interview: 29 November 2006).

The post-holders have been almost all male (Kate Hoey being the only exception); older than most other junior Ministers (Colin Moynihan being the only exception); relatively inexperienced in other offices (Robert Atkins being the only exception); not seen as high fliers (no exceptions); and sometimes staying in the office for far longer than average (Howell and Caborn particularly). According to Chris Smith:

It’s not seen as a clever career move for an aspiring MP because none of them have ever really gone any further. So from that point of view it’s not sensible. I think that for certain types on MPs, who would perhaps not go to the highest levels of government, or who have a particular interest in sport, or who are not young and ambitious, it’s a really nice job (Interview: 18 June 2007).

Lord Smith feels that the job was actually quite a coveted one because it could be enjoyable going to sporting events at public expense and having no real policy commitments to worry about, so long as the post-holders had few expectations of advancement in government. Iain Sproat acknowledged that this was the case, after having been out of Parliament 1983-92. He said, “By the time I got back it was too late for the Cabinet. When I was at sport 1993-97 I didn’t really expect to move on to the Cabinet at that time because my opportunity had really gone” (Interview: 31 May 2007).

Dennis Howell’s colleagues and friends, Lords Hattersley, Rodgers, and Donoughue all thought that he had remained at sport too long, and thus lost his opportunity for
advancement in government. For example, Bill Rodgers said this of him:

If I had ever been a Minister for Sport I would have got out of it before too long. I might have enjoyed it. It's what I call a "boy scout game". Mine was at one stage when I was a Minister of State at the Board of Trade and I spent a lot of time at civil aviation which I enjoyed. I went around lighthouses and other things and I enjoyed it very much. I think, in my view, that's why Denis didn't get away from what he enjoyed doing to move to a much harder, tougher job when he really should have done. He liked sport too much for his own good in terms of career (Interview: 21 March 2007).

Almost everyone who mentioned Denis Howell in this study, including Conservatives, had the highest regard for him as the best ever Minister for Sport. Dame Mary Glen Haig, who knew him well, commented, "There was only ever one Minister who was worth his salt and that was Denis Howell. He was absolutely first class" (Interview: 10 May 2007). Although Howell was a junior Minister, Lord Hattersley felt that, "Denis Howell was a special case. I think he was regarded as a very special junior Minister. He probably had more influence as a junior Minister than any other I have known" (Interview: 1 May 2007). As such, he got things done that others would have been unable to, according to Hattersley and others, by sheer force of personality.

For example, the 1975 White Paper on Sport and Recreation was unusual, in that there has never been one before or since on the subject. In normal circumstances, a White Paper is intended to lead to legislation. Nevertheless, as Lord Donoughue said of it, "Sport is not usually an area that generates legislation" (Interview: 7 March 2007). Instead of legislation, for which there was little parliamentary time in hard-pressed Labour governments, Howell pushed the Paper through as an end in itself. Many of its proposals, such as on youth sport, disabled sport, community facilities, assistance for gifted sportsmen and women, and so on, have been incorporated into the mainstream of government sport policy over the years by other routes. By raising the profile of these issues, and pushing for implementation, he was able to achieve things without direct legislation that other junior Ministers could not do.

Civil servants also had a high regard for Colin Moynihan. One who worked closely with him at the Department of the Environment said that, in his view, "Although Colin, was very young and very junior, his enthusiasm persuaded even a hard-nosed,
monetarist, Thatcherite Secretary of State, Ridley, to put a bit more money into sport* (Interview with author). Moynihan co-operated with Sebastian Coe on drugs policy, set up a playing fields register, and championed disabled sport. He finally became bogged down on the issue of football ID cards, which he pushed for although he did not agree with them, but Mrs Thatcher did. Although it was government policy, Moynihan had no say on it whatsoever. He either had to help to introduce the scheme or resign from government, so he chose the former course and the policy was finally abandoned by the Home Office.

Apart from Howell and Moynihan, and possibly Sproat whose report Raising the Game was relatively influential, the others have not imposed their personalities on a job that requires charisma more than anything in its profile-raising role. In the words of one policy adviser, “Robert Key was just a nothing really; a shadow of John Major and another one just grateful for a job”, while Richard Caborn was, “Lucky to get the job thanks to Prescott. When you get to be deputy Prime Minister you get to push a few jobs to your mates and that’s what he did” (Interview with author). This comment does not accord with Mr. Caborn’s own account of how he was appointed, since he felt that Alastair Campbell was more influential (Interview: 27 March 2008). Kate Hoey aroused antagonism in some because she seemed to be driving a personal agenda to raise her own profile rather than that of sport. Robert Atkins was viewed as able but lazy by those who knew him and were prepared to comment (Interviews with author).

There was only one dissenting view in relation to the claim that Howell was the best ever Sports Minister. A civil servant had this to say about him:

I know people say Howell was the best but what is Howell best remembered for? It was really the weather more than anything, though he did the 1975 White Paper on sport. I think people look back on Denis uncritically without really knowing what it was he did. I certainly don’t think he achieved as much as Caborn (Interview with author).

This interviewee has worked closely with Richard Caborn in an age when there has been a great deal of money going into sport, compared with Howell’s day. As he also said, “Any of the previous Ministers, such as Howell, Sproat, Atkins, or Key would
have died to have a fraction of the money that there is now” (Interview with author). Nevertheless, with great respect to the other Sports Ministers who have kindly contributed to this study (and those who did not) they have not had the same level of drive and commitment as Denis Howell had for sport. In addition, they may have had personal characteristics that limited their effectiveness as Ministers. For instance, Patrick Cheney says this of Eldon Griffiths:

Eldon Griffiths was fighting against Stalin and he saw sport as being in the front line of all these things. He didn’t want or like socialists because he thought they were red-hot communists. He saw everything in terms of communism and it became a political obsession. He was nutty, but a nice guy anyway. Griffiths was a Cold War warrior. If you asked him something over a cup of tea he would give you a lecture on Soviet missiles (Interview: 18 January 2007).

When Tom Pendry was not appointed as Minister for Sport in 1997, after having shadowed it for five years, he was very disappointed. Nor was he given an alternative job in government. Tony Banks was appointed to the sports portfolio instead, and Pendry had this to say, “Tony Banks got the job I wanted and he was not very good at it or very effective. He was only there for two years and didn’t do very much. I don’t really know why he got it” (Interview: 1 February 2007). This is a very common sentiment in relation to Banks: many regard him as the worst Minister for Sport ever. David Pickup said that, “He was a very unfortunate choice as the first Sports Minister in the new Labour government” (Interview: 29 November 2006).

Some interviewees had a similar view of other Ministers for Sport. For instance, the following comments exemplify how several of them were perceived:

I remember Hector Monro shaking his head and mumbling in a vague, upper class way sort of way. He had the good of sport at heart and did his best for it, but he was no more than a competent Minister (Interview with author).

Neil Macfarlane I knew slightly. He was similar to Monro in many ways, wanting to do the best for sport, but never a high-flier (Interview with author).

Richard Tracey was a very straightforward kind of bloke. He was only there for a short time and got on with things in a quiet way He was a nice guy. (Interview with author).
Atkins was a decent enough Minister and quite amiable. However, he was lazy and had no particularly original ideas for sport (Interview with author).

Key was Minister for just one year, and I can remember no obvious achievement in that time. Key was quite a right wing Thatcherite who probably believed in non-intervention. He seemed to take it to the extreme by have no ideas either (Interview with author).

This section has looked at how Ministers for Sport have performed in office or have been perceived in general terms. It is now followed by an examination of their contribution to the policy-making process in particular areas by using examples of policy-making in sport.

5.9 The Policy Role of the Minister for Sport in Key Policy Areas

In paragraph 5.4 four main themes were identified as comprising the main elements of government sports policy. These are: sport for all, sport for the elite, sport in schools, and bringing major events to the country. They provide a useful way of interpreting how Ministers for Sport have contributed to the policy-making process for sport in specific areas, building on their general role as set out in paragraph 5.8. This approach necessarily overlaps with, and reconsiders, some of the issues already touched on. Each of the four themes will now be considered in turn.

(a) Sport For All

The data collected for this study show that one of the greatest early contributions made to “sport for all” was the establishment of the Sports Council in 1965 by Denis Howell before the term itself was actually widely used. As the first Minister for Sport in the UK, Howell was able to exploit his unique position to set his own agenda. His Secretaries of State at Education and Science (see Appendix 2) were Michael Stewart (for only three months) and Anthony Crosland (for nearly three years). According to Lords Hattersley, Rodgers, and Donoughue, these were men with whom he had worked for many years in the Labour movement. They knew him well, trusted him, and allowed him freedom to develop his role. But interviewees have suggested that this was because they did not think of sport as being very important, that it was at the fringes of government, away from the core executive where no harm could be done by
giving him relatively free rein. He gradually helped to change this perception, as Lord Hattersley observed:

Denis convinced people that sport was a proper area for government behaviour and involvement. But it was a new area for government and the civil servants were learning along with him. So policies were developed as they went along by both Denis and the civil servants. It was a mutual thing. He had to be closely involved because government had not done that sort of thing before (Interview: 1 May 2007).

Howell also had a heavy workload of non-sport activity at Education and Environment in his two periods in office. Analysis of the parliamentary data shows that he spent only 23% and 18% of his effort on sport in 1964-70 and 1974-79 respectively. Nevertheless, interviewees for this study gave examples of the range of policy decisions that he took in promoting “sport for all”, such as establishing the Regional Sports Councils, the Football Grounds Improvement Trust, the Sports Aid Foundation, and producing the 1975 White Paper. These were decisions that cost little or no government money, or were of minimal interest to Cabinet Ministers in the core executive.

Like the other Ministers for Sport, Eldon Griffiths was a junior Minister well outside the core executive. As such, he gave little concern to his Secretaries of State for the Environment (Peter Walker, 1970-72 and Geoffrey Rippon, 1972-74) by promoting “sport for all” because he spent very little time on sport. In his four years as a Minister the data indicate that only 11% of his parliamentary time was given to sport. He removed himself as chairman of the Sports Council and made it independent, so that politicians would have less influence over it. He believed that:

Politicians had no business trying to manage sport. The role of government should be confined to opening up public owned land and water for sports activities, encouraging local authorities to provide new facilities, and persuading Parliament to appropriate funds (Email communication: 29 July 2007).

Griffiths saw his main contribution as encouraging mass participation, evangelising the benefits of sport, and helping governing bodies and local authorities where possible. This largely confined his sports role to performing opening ceremonies for
many of the new local government facilities that were coming on stream at the time and attending numerous events. He particularly enjoyed this part of his job, observing that, “One of the privileges of the Minister for Sport was to be invited to virtually every major sporting event in the country, where the hospitality was prodigious” (Email communication: 29 July 2007).

When Neil Macfarlane was Minister for Sport, his three Secretaries of State allowed him to promote “sport for all” because they saw that as the limit of the sporting aspects of his job. They did not envisage him becoming involved in policy-making as a junior Minister in a minor role. They were more concerned with the other parts of his portfolio, such as town and country planning, power stations, by-passes, and a range of environmental matters, which took up some 77% of his parliamentary time according to the data. He felt that his main sports policy achievements in relation to “sport for all” were confined to bringing together the governing bodies, working more closely with them, enhancing the profile of the Sports Council and Regional Sports Councils, and encouraging competitive sports.

Macfarlane’s successor, Richard Tracey, had a similar experience in the post. He spent only about 10% of his time on sport, as the parliamentary data indicate, and his Secretaries of State Kenneth Baker and Nicholas Ridley were happy to let him pursue a modest “sport for all” agenda. Tracey confined his sports activities to areas from which Secretaries of State normally kept away. For instance, “One area of policy I did get involved in as Minister was with the Sports Council. I had a lot to do with the Sports Council” (Interview: 11 April 2007).

A civil servant who worked with some of these Ministers, felt that the “sport for all” area was where they could make some small impression on policy for sport. In his realistic assessment:

The Sports Minister job was regarded as suitable for a chap who was enthusiastic about sport but who didn’t preoccupy any of the Secretaries of State at all, except in a crisis. The political heads of the Department in my time were just not interested in sport (Interview with author).

He agreed that it was very difficult for a junior Minister to have any effect beyond the
level of profile-raising for sport, while keeping out of policy-making elsewhere in the job. As he said, "You don’t want to be too visible and get up the nose of your boss, while you are a relatively small cog in the machinery of government" (Interview with author).

Iain Sproat had a good deal of support in government from the Prime Minister, John Major, and benign non-interference from his three Secretaries of State, including Virginia Bottomley 1995-97. She said, "I always had a great deal of confidence in his contributions, so I generally left him to get on with it. I made the decision not to meddle" (Interview: 29 June 2007). As with most of the other Ministers, the data show that Iain Sproat’s time devoted to sport was fairly small, at 21% of parliamentary activity. He agreed that he would have preferred to spend more time on sporting issues, and asserted that his policy document *Raising the Game* was about much more than just "sport for all". As a document, it certainly showed a number of pathways to excellence through clubs, school, and higher education. However, none of this was considered as being of much consequence by his Secretaries of State, who regarded it as a harmless enough diversion that caused them little bother.

Since coming to power in 1997, there have been four Labour Ministers for Sport. The interview data suggest that their influence on sports policy has been patchy, and largely confined to the "sport for all" end of the spectrum. This is somewhat paradoxical, since the data from the parliamentary analysis suggest they have spent a good deal more time on sport than their predecessors. For example, the figure for Tony Banks was 64% overall and for Kate Hoey it was 78%. Richard Caborn began with 57% in his first year, 2001-02, a figure that declined to 45% (2002-03), 35% (2003-04), and 26% (2004-05).

Banks was seen by many interviewees, as was Hoey, to be pursuing a personal agenda and really not having much influence on sports policy. As noted earlier, he endorsed the Brighton Declaration on women in sport in 1998 and strongly supported the ban on fox hunting, both likely to endear him to the Labour spirit of the time. He also pursued campaigns, such as the bid for the 2006 World Cup, which would do him no harm with a wider public.
Patrick Cheney, an adviser to Hoey (and also Howell many years before), claimed that Hoey tried to take policy decisions but was prevented from doing so by Chris Smith. He felt that, because Smith was, “frightened to take policy decisions much of the time, not much progress was made” (Interview: 18 January 2007). However, as an ex-athlete and an outgoing character, she was able to enthuse people by visiting schools and clubs to spread the message of “sport for all.” She also took up popular causes, such as the demand for the reintroduction of terraces in football stadia.

Neither she nor Banks had access to the inner-circles of Blair’s policy-making elite in the core executive.

A civil servant who worked with Sproat, Banks, Hoey, and others, thought that they were quite marginalised from the centres of policy-making apart from “sport for all” type activities. In his words:

> The key role for Ministers there was to encourage the quangos to make things happen. And that was really quite a frustrating process because you couldn’t easily order them to do things. I’d say two things about what was achieved during this time was to really try to make the governing bodies of sport, including things like the English and UK Sports Councils more efficient and effective (Interview with author).

Another civil servant had a different view of Richard Caborn, seeing him as the only Minister who could achieve things beyond a narrow “sport for all” perspective because of his close connections with the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott and other leading Labour figures. He said in his interview:

> Richard Caborn was excellent, and probably the best. He set the agenda for where we are now. The fact that he was there for over six years gave him a chance to do that. I think his immediate Labour predecessors made him stand out as well. He was very clear in what he wanted and stuck at it. He used his contacts very well (Interview with author).

Caborn himself felt that his effectiveness went beyond a narrow “sport for all” remit, and he concerned himself with all aspects of sports policy because it could contribute to so many parts of the government’s agenda. These included high achievement in sport for its own sake, health, social inclusion, regeneration, and education. He believed that these aims could be pursued by a variety of means:
I wanted to see reforms to the structure of sport because there are so many benefits from sport in so many different ways. It comes through from the grass-roots, the schools, into the clubs, and then the elite end. There’s a continuum there that you have to foster and encourage all the way through (Interview: 27 March 2008).

Although he was clearly not a part of it, he had some access to the core executive that others Ministers for Sport did not enjoy, and his long service allowed him to build up a series of influential contacts in the sporting community both at home and abroad. These advantages will be discussed later.

(b). Elite Sport

Data collected for this study through the interviews show relatively little involvement of the earlier Sports Ministers in developing elite sport, although they enthusiastically welcomed British victories in world-class events. Most of the interviewees saw the primary role of Ministers for Sport in terms of “sport for all”. An analysis of the parliamentary data, however, reveals that they did sometimes speak on elite sport in the Commons and answered many questions on international sporting issues, such as the World Cup, the Olympic Games, or sports tours to South Africa. Howell was seen by some as instrumental in drafting the Gleneagles Agreement in 1977 to discourage competition with South Africa. Conversely, one respondent believed it was really a foreign policy issue and was the work of David Owen, the Foreign Secretary.

Lord Hattersley (formerly MP for Birmingham Sparkbrook) thought that Denis Howell could be somewhat parochial, despite his later attempts to get the Olympics for Birmingham. Even this was a bid for his own city, rather than more a realistic option such as London. In Lord Hattersley’s words:

Something he strongly believed in was the local aspect of sport on the ground, promoting it locally and encouraging mass participation. It was not at the first division level of football as it was, or the Premiership as it is now. It was with lads playing football in the local parks. And I think the fact that he had a local government background and responsibility helped him to promote the local idea of sport which he believed in very strongly. He wanted sport to go out to people, which is what a Minister ought to want. Having a local government connection I think helped him with that because he understood what was needed at the local level. (Interview: 1 May 2007)
Developing elite sport or providing resources for it did not concern Eldon Griffiths either. He had a non-interventionist approach, based on an assumption that those aiming for the highest level could well look after themselves. Since government assistance for sport was likely to be quite small in his day, it was best directed at, “mass-participation in sport by people of all ages” (Email communication: 29 July 2007), rather than at a tiny minority aiming for the highest level or already there.

When asked about his achievements, Neil Macfarlane mentioned mainly domestic issues, such as sale of school playing fields, tobacco sponsorship, closer co-operation with the governing bodies, and enhancing the role of the Regional Sports Councils. While acknowledging the range of successful international golfers, athletes, and rugby players in his day, he took no credit for their success, although he jokingly pointed out that, “When I was in office we won the Ashes twice!” (Interview: 9 January 2007). Like Griffiths, he believed that elite competitors would continue to pursue their quest to reach the top and would reap the rewards due to them without much government support.

According to civil servants, Colin Moynihan was aware of the shortcomings of support for aspiring elite athletes. As a former Olympian himself, he was able to see at first hand the financial and career sacrifices made by fellow competitors (Interviews with author). His predecessor, Richard Tracey, was very keen on a lottery to help address this problem and had regular discussions with the chairman of the Sports Council without making any progress at the time. He expanded on this:

> I was always impressed with the idea. So after my time as Sports Minister I got involved in the campaigns in the House to get the National Lottery going. We never really got far with Mrs Thatcher because she always saw it as an area of gambling. But we did make progress when John Major became Prime Minister (Interview: 11 April 2007).

David Pickup was also conscious that the needs of elite athletes were not being well catered for under the Sports Council in his time there. He was a tireless advocate of the Lottery, along with Moynihan, and pushed hard for a restructuring of the Sports Council with Robert Atkins, Moynihan’s successor. He felt that both these reforms were inextricably linked:
We saw the need for UK Sport to represent the needs of elite sportsmen and women, especially with access to the Lottery funding we were lobbying for to finance them. We tried to take the Minister along this route, something I think we achieved with the Atkins' Report (Interview: 29 November 2007).

This growing awareness of the need to support elite athletes was starting to take root in government and the civil service by the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. The Atkins' Report was amended and implemented after Iain Sproat became Minister in 1993 and his *Raising the Game* report was another component in the changes to sports policy around that time, taking the focus away from a predominantly “sport for all” ethos. Sproat explained his views:

We saw the whole thing as a continuum from schools and clubs at the bottom, through to elite sport and the British Academy at the top. Running beside this, there was great potential for sport in the universities and colleges, as there is in the USA, providing another route to top class sport for young people leaving school. All of this was to be developed by a variety of agencies, the private sector, Sports Council, UK Sport, partnerships, coaches, and others. It wasn’t for the government to run sport, but to make sure there was an appropriate framework for it to run itself with government backing (Interview: 31 May 2007).

Many of these changes described by Sproat came about through the establishment of the Department of National Heritage (DNH) in 1992, with the strong leadership of its first Secretary of State, David Mellor. A civil servant described him as, “a fantastic, charismatic leader and an excellent choice for DNH. It really was an inspired choice by John Major and a pity he had to go after only a few months” (Interview with author). This was also David Pickup’s view, especially of the role of the Prime Minister which was touched on earlier:

John Major was excellent in his support of sport, for the Lottery, national institute for sport and *Raising the Game* That was a major policy statement on sport which came out after my time in 1995, but I think Major was behind it rather than Sproat (Interview: 29 November 2007).

Virginia Bottomley became Secretary of State at DNH in 1995, just as many important changes were taking place for the support of elite athletes. She confirmed John Major’s contribution to this process:
Our athletes were very successful at Sydney and the credit for that should have gone to John Major and the Lottery. All the work that we did in terms of establishing the foundations of the training programmes for our Olympic athletes was vital. So I think that sport was given a tremendous focus at that time. Not just providing Lottery funds but also, protecting the Lottery money for sport was very significant. There were always others who felt there shouldn’t be masses of Lottery money made available to sport. The view from John Major downwards was that there should be (Interview: 29 June 2007).

Funding for elite athletes was therefore very firmly on the agenda for Conservative and then Labour governments after just a few years of prominence. Chris Smith, as successor to Virginia Bottomley, felt that during his time at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, working with Tony Banks and Kate Hoey, “Securing the funding for elite sport was probably the most important achievement while I was there” (Interview: 18 June 2007). A civil servant closely involved had a similar view, observing that, “We tried to make sure that the use of Lottery money was well-focussed on the elite sport end” (Interview with author).

One civil servant who worked with Richard Caborn said, “There’s much more accountability now than a few years ago and you just can’t throw money at elite athletes. UK Sport is very efficient at getting that from the governing bodies” (Interview with author). This is an area where Richard Caborn also thought he had made an impact, observing that, “I wanted delivery on a proper contractual basis and I went out and did that” (Interview: 27 March 2008). Nevertheless, the mechanisms for the support of elite athletes (Lottery funding, UK Sport, National Institute of Sport) were well-established before Mr Caborn’s time, as a result of policy decisions taken at a much higher level in government than that of Minister for Sport. As a result, Ministers for Sport could no longer concentrate only on the “sport for all” aspects of the job. They also had responsibility for the elite side of it, though they had done very little to bring the changes about.

(c). Sport in Schools

All the Ministers for Sport certainly wanted more sport in schools, according to what they said in Parliament and in the interviews for this study. The data from Hansard confirm that they answered parliamentary questions on sport in schools on a regular
basis, specifically on issues such as PE, school swimming, outward bound trips, sharing of facilities with the community, sports days, competition, sale of playing fields, and so forth. The sale of playing fields became an increasingly common topic in latter years as concern grew that sport was declining in schools, although much more sport and games activity was taking place in purpose-built indoor sports halls than outdoors.

A number of interviewees have described how they struggled to raise the position of sport in schools. Those working in the departments of the Environment, Education, DNH, or DCMS, came up against a largely unsympathetic Education department on which they were unable to make an impact. Sport was dropping down the agenda, teachers were not doing after-school sport, and "competition" came to be seen as dirty word. When the government's sport unit was briefly located in the Education Department in 1990-92 (as noted earlier) it was not a welcoming place for Sports Ministers or the Sports Council. Indeed, in David Pickup's view, "they saw us as some kind of alien implant" (Interview: 29 November 2006).

Education Secretaries of State were generally not much interested in sport, and some were actually antagonistic. There was a whole succession from Thatcher onwards (1970-74), including Keith Joseph (1981-86), Kenneth Baker (1986-89), John MacGregor (1989-90), Kenneth Clarke (1990-92), John Patten (1992-94), and Gillian Shephard (1994-97) for whom sport did not feature as an important part of school life. Ministers for Sport had great difficulty making any impact on them, according to interviewees. For example, Denis Howell had a passion for making the best use of school facilities by the wider public outside school hours and he pursued the topic endlessly. One civil servant recounted an episode he witnessed involving Denis Howell and Shirley Williams, who was Education Secretary from 1976 to 1979. This demonstrates the limited influence of a junior Minister compared with that of a Secretary of State and Prime Minister.

When I was doing local government finance in the late 1970s I was having negotiations with the head of public expenditure in the Department of Education and Denis called me to ask when we were going to get agreement on his proposal on sharing facilities. I had to say, "I'm afraid Minister, that it's not going to happen". And he said, "Why do you say that?" I said "I've been
having meetings with the Education Department and I know that when you make your proposals you will be overruled by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State. Shirley Williams is going to fight it.” He responded, “Shirley’s my friend! She won’t!” And I said, “I’m sorry Minister. I have to tell you the reality. You are not going to win.” And he said, “You’re a fucking idiot!” I said, “With respect Minister, why do you say that?” He said, “You’ve been taken in by those halfwits in the Department of Education. Don’t forget, I was there, I know them. They don’t know what they’re talking about!” But in the event Shirley Williams overruled him and he didn’t get his way (Interview with author).

Both Neil Macfarlane and Richard Tracey also talked about the frustrations of interdepartmental working, particularly with Education and Health. They felt that, at their level of Under-Secretary, it was very difficult to have an impact on policy in their own departments. It was even harder to have any effect on another department, since each department jealously guards its own area (Interviews: 9 January 2007 and 11 April 2007). In a civil servant’s opinion, “They were very territorial, but then all departments are” (Interview with author).

One Minister for Sport had little regard for Education as a department, and especially for the Secretaries of State in charge of it at different times. He saw them as unhelpful and obstructive when it came to initiatives for enhancing the position of sport in schools:

Gillian Shepherd was the Secretary of State there for part of the time and she was a very unhelpful person in relation to sport in schools. She was just not interested, especially as a core subject for inspection. Before her we had John Patten at Education and he was no different. We tried to build bridges but they did not want to (Interview with author).

When Iain Sproat was drafting Raising the Game, he had consultations with Education, since sport in schools was to be a key part of the overall strategy, but found a lack of understanding of the value of sport in education:

For instance, they wanted to put things in Raising the Game that had nothing to do with sport in my view, such as pastoral care. I had no idea what they meant by that. I thought that was something we should stay well clear of. Sport and religion do not mix very well as we see in Northern Ireland or Glasgow (Interview: 31 May 2007).

Mr Sproat had a traditional view of sport, which emphasised the virtues of
competition, fair-play, teamwork, and respect for authority. These values were shared by John Major, who helped make sure that school sport was a significant part of *Raising the Game*. He also had the support of his Secretary of State, Virginia Bottomley, who observed that, “It’s never easy to get different departments to agree anything whatever” (Interview: 29 June 2007). She felt that Major had a huge influence on sports policy generally, and that he was crucial in changing attitudes to sport in schools.

Labour came to power in 1997 with an agenda to foster “joined-up government”, which should have favoured a more effective sport/education dialogue. Although Tony Blair was interested in sport as part of his education priorities, this was not necessarily shared by his first Education Secretary, David Blunkett (1997-2001), or Sports Minister, Tony Banks. Blunkett was an unfortunate choice, according to some interviewees, because he had no feel for sport at all. As for Banks, one respondent (a civil servant) said, “Most people thought it would have been sensible to appoint Hoey in the first place” (Interview with author) because of her knowledge of education and sport as a former PE teacher.

Nevertheless, Chris Smith as head of DCMS did his best to cement the changes that were underway and used Kate Hoey to do this when Banks left in 1999. He believed in developing relationships with Education to encourage more sport in schools, and thought that Kate Hoey had some effect. Hoey’s policy adviser, Partick Cheney, also takes this view, though he felt that not much had really changed at Education:

> School sport was a big thing for her and she was always trying to encourage more sports in schools. It was not easy working across departments and Education didn’t really see it as a serious issue. Their big thing was raising school standards, and sport just took up valuable time that could be devoted to improving schools’ position in the league tables (Interview: 18 January 2007).

Interviewees commented that the Secretaries of State responsible for education were more receptive to having a greater emphasis on sport in schools after 2001. A civil servant observed that, “It really took three or four years of this government to get it moving and put sport higher up the agenda in schools. David Blunkett was not really interested and nor was Tony Banks” (Interview with author). Blunkett was followed
by Estelle Morris (2001-02) and Charles Clarke (2002-04) who tried to ensure that sport had a higher status in schools. Morris fought for Exchequer funding for school sport and endorsed the National School Sport Strategy for 2003, something that Richard Caborn greatly appreciated. He noted that:

It wasn’t difficult working with Education while I was there. Estelle Morris was superb — she gave me £40 million a year for sport and was very supportive. But you have to prove your case. I went to every conference of schools sporting bodies. I worked closely with the schools and education bodies. We put in place the National School Sport Strategy in 2003 and set up a network of school sport partnerships. I saw quite a major change with the schools heads. I went round a lot of schools in the country and talked to people there and what convinced the heads was that where sport was used properly you got better discipline, less exclusion, less truancy, and better academic attainment (Interview: 27 March 2008).

A civil servant said of Morris and Clarke, “They were really keen on sport and helped make a difference” (Interview with author). He also thought that Richard Caborn, the Minister for Sport during much of the time since 2001, was quietly effective, while still needing the assistance of Cabinet Ministers to effect real change. For example, the commitment of two hours of good quality sport a week in schools, now largely achieved, has been followed by an aspiration for five hours. That is something that will need serious political commitment at the highest levels, not least to provide the resources.

(d). Attracting Major Events to the UK

The Ministers for Sport interviewed for this study, as well as most other interviewees, have generally been supportive of bids for major events. From the parliamentary data, numerous examples can be found of the Ministers answering questions on potential bids and invariably giving support to them. For instance, in the 1997-98 session of Parliament, Tony Banks answered three oral questions and seven written questions on the 2006 World Cup bid, two written questions on a future Olympic bid, and one question on the principle of major bids.

There is evidence from the interview data that some Sports Ministers, with the exception of Eldon Griffiths, played a part in bids for events, as well as offering
general endorsement. Griffiths has no recollection of being involved in bids, though he described his attendance at the 1970 Commonwealth Games and 1972 Olympic Games. Sir Neil Macfarlane was keen to link bids for events to the tourism benefits, as was Tom Pendry. Lord Pendry had responsibility for both sport and tourism when Labour were in Opposition 1992-97. In his opinion, “The two go together quite well, since people come to this country as tourists to see sporting events, to fish, play golf, and all sorts of other things as well” (Interview: 1 February 2007). Sir Neil Macfarlane described sitting on Cabinet committees with Lord Young in the chair where, “I used to make the point that you cannot isolate tourism from big sporting events like the World Cup or Olympics” (Interview: 9 January 2007). When he knew of any potential bids, he alerted the regional tourist boards and Sports Councils in the areas likely to be hosts, so that they could have an input to the process.

Macfarlane said he was, “Delighted about the Olympic Games coming here in 2012” (Interview: 9 January 2007). After visiting the 1984 Olympics as Minister for Sport, he was convinced that Britain should bid for a future Games. Although some Cabinet Ministers were supportive, the majority were not. As observed earlier, they tried to keep it off the policy agenda for various reasons. He cites this as the main reason why he resigned in 1985, because, “I didn’t like the rejection out of hand of the Olympic Games and the Little Englander attitude” (Interview: 9 January 2007). This is a good illustration of the limits of a junior Minister’s influence; he was outside the core executive and unable to make an impact on policy.

Nevertheless, a bid was being mounted in 1985 on behalf of Birmingham for 1992 in which Neil Macfarlane confirms he had limited involvement. There were also later bids (1988-89) for Birmingham or Manchester to become the candidate city for 1996. Some interviewees believe that the government was quite happy for these bids to take place because they knew they could not succeed. Roy Hattersley, himself a Birmingham MP, felt that, “The bids were always doomed, I think” (Interview: 1 May 2007). He took this view, partly because he thought the government was not supportive and partly because Denis Howell was leading the Birmingham bids, some years after leaving office. Although he had great authority in the UK sporting establishment, Howell did not always endear himself to international bodies. The IOC delegates expected lavish hospitality and gifts from bidding cities, whereas:
Denis was never prepared to do any of that. He was far too straightforward to even contemplate doing anything of that sort, and it therefore put Birmingham at a big disadvantage. His way of working and networking didn’t suit the IOC and he was never part of that international, semi-aristocratic, old boys’ network which wins you friends and bids. He was an ordinary, honest, decent sort of bloke, though he was leader of the Birmingham bid. He was very closely connected to Birmingham local government, having come up by that route and knew lots of people there. That was where he was most at home, not mixing with the IOC. In the end, of course, we didn’t win the bid (Interview: 1 May 2007).

Roy Hattersley gave his support to the bid out of loyalty to Denis Howell and Birmingham, rather than a belief that Birmingham would win it. He cannot remember Neil Macfarlane, Richard Tracey, or Colin Moynihan, the three Sports Ministers in office at the time of the two bids, having any involvement. Neither can he recall Patrick Jenkin, Kenneth Baker, or Nicholas Ridley, the Secretaries of State for the Environment, having any role. In fact, “I don’t remember anybody from the national political side at all” (Interview: 1 May 2007). However, Richard Tracey reports that, “I did get involved, partly because I’m from Warwickshire and partly because Denis Howell asked me” (Interview: 11 April 2007). He confirmed that he attended some events, including the IOC congress where the bid was lost in 1985. This was early in his time in office, so it is unlikely he could have had any influence.

When Manchester won the right to bid for the 2000 Olympics, this was seen as a golden opportunity to regenerate the city. A civil servant closely involved felt that, “In the unlikely event that we would win, the City of Manchester would still benefit from a great deal of government regeneration which would not otherwise have gone in.” (Interview with author) The bid team was thinking ahead to the alternative of hosting the 2002 Commonwealth Games, so that much of the infrastructure was already in place or in the pipeline for a later bid that would be successful. This civil servant does not recollect the Ministers for Sport (Robert Atkins and Robert Key) being much involved in the bid. He observed that John Gummer as Secretary of State was, “passionately interested in regeneration” (Interview with author) but not in sport, something that could also be said of his predecessors Michael Howard and Michael Heseltine. At this time sport in government was located in the Education Department, where Kenneth Clarke was the Secretary of State. He was not perceived to have had any input to the bid either. When the decision was made, and sport was in National
Heritage, Iain Sproat was very new to office. Although he confirms he was involved in the bid, he had little opportunity to make any impression.

As Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, certainly did not get involved in supporting any UK bids by attending IOC congresses. John Major’s attitude was entirely different and supportive, as David Pickup recalls:

I remember Chris Patten [then Environment Secretary] attending an IOC meeting in Tokyo in 1989 to push Manchester’s 1996 Olympic bid. It was mainly attended by heads of state, so he felt relatively junior. He came back with the message to John Major [then Foreign Secretary] that he must go to the final decision-making session, which he duly did. Unfortunately for Manchester they still lost. We had less credibility with the African nations at that time because they thought Britain was soft on South Africa and lost most of their votes. Major himself was excellent (Interview: 29 November 2006).

Virginia Bottomley felt that the climate of opinion to support bids was changing under John Major. The government was more inclined to endorse them because Lottery funding meant less would need to be paid from public funds. She traced a direct line from the governments of John Major to the successful London 2012 bid:

We’ve now won the Olympics for London in 2012 but we’ve won them because there was a means to finance it, albeit that the cost appears to be escalating. I think that pre-National Lottery no one had a real sense of knowing how we could deliver on our ambitions. I’m sure it’s an area where there will always be disappointments. Frequently you can learn from failure and next time you no longer make the same mistakes. At Euro 96 everybody regarded it as a great event and brilliant advert for the country. So I think the failed bids for the Olympics, and a successful Euro 96, taught us a few lessons about how we could get it right the next time, which we did (Interview: 29 June 2007).

When Labour entered government in 1997, they were keen to give their backing to both a bid for the football World Cup and the Olympics. Chris Smith knew that his first Minister for Sport, Tony Banks, wanted to bid for the World Cup, though not necessarily the Olympics and he felt it worthwhile to support him. He was, “sorry to see him leave office to front up the bid” (Interview: 18 June 2007). Not everyone had such regard for Banks. As a former Cabinet Minister said, “We had no chance of getting the World Cup with Banks. He could really rub people up the wrong way and had very little clout in government. I don’t think he could open up any doors the way
Seb Coe could” (Interview with author). Lord Coe had an outstanding international reputation in sport and carried a great deal of respect and influence in heading the 2012 bid. He also had the advantage of being a former Conservative MP, and brought with him some understanding of how politics worked.

Some interviewees thought that Kate Hoey was out of her depth on too many issues relating to major events happening at the same time. During her short term in office, “She was associated with several failed projects, including Pickett’s Lock, the World Athletics Championships, Wembley, and the World Cup bid” (Interview with author). This interviewee was a civil servant, who suggested that this was an indication of her lack of influence in government and the main reason why she was removed. He felt that her true milieu was the “sport for all” and sport in schools areas, where she could be inspirational. To make headway on the international front requires seniority in government, and the confidence of Cabinet Ministers, neither of which she possessed.

Richard Caborn held office at the more senior Minister of State level, though still outside the Cabinet and the core executive. As already suggested, several interviewees thought that he was the most influential Sports Minister since Denis Howell because of his lifetime commitment to the Labour Party and experience of government. He was also working in a much more favourable environment, in which the senior levels of government actively supported bids for major events. Since leaving office, he says he has been, “Deeply involved in England’s bid to host the 2018 World Cup” (Interview: 27 March 2008). Two successful bids for the 2012 Olympics and 2014 Commonwealth Games were made during Caborn’s time in office, for which he has been given some credit. Because of his, “ability to open doors at international level”, according to a civil servant, (Interview with author) and his wide range of connections in international bodies, it has been suggested that he actually did make a difference. This interviewee also said, “Caborn has done quite well for sport overall, especially in his role to secure the Olympics for London” (Interview with author).

At the IOC Congress of July 2005, London achieved victory by a very slender margin. According to a few interviewees, if Caborn persuaded just one or two to vote for London, this would have made the vital difference, though it is not possible to prove this conclusively. He modestly played down his own influence by saying, “I didn’t
win the Games for London. It was a team effort and I played my part through the contacts I had in the sporting world and in politics” (Interview: 27 March 2008). Whether or not he tipped the balance in London’s favour, it is certainly true that he was Sports Minister at a time when the most successful bid was won, whereas other Ministers for Sport have not been so fortunate. He also had the backing of Tony Blair, who played a very significant role in persuading IOC delegates to support London during the final bidding process, as noted earlier.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at where government sports policy comes from and what bodies and individuals have the most significant influence on it. It has been argued that the greatest single source of influence is civil servants working in the government departments that have had responsibility for sport at different times (see Appendix 2). The overall impression of civil servants is that they were very motivated and driven at the senior level, while not knowing much about sport. Further down the hierarchy, they tended to be less able, knew a little more about sport, but were unlikely to come up with anything really new. Their policy focus was incremental, rather than innovative.

In the view of most of the interviewees, government sports policy is really quite limited in scope and is often made by accident. It is comprised of only the four key elements discussed in 5.9 above. These are fleshed out for day-to-day implementation and dressed up as policies. Although a high proportion of this is generated by civil servants, in more recent years the government has made much greater use of outside advisers and consultants who can also have an input to the policy process. One senior administrator from a national body had this to say about the random and accidental nature of policy-making:

I think *A Sporting Future For All* was actually co-written with the No. 10 Strategy Unit. I heard that some of the stuff that went in there about social exclusion came from the consultant who happened to be around at the time. Then it becomes sort of holy writ and gets accepted and repeated again and again and people forget where it comes from originally (Interview with author).
A Sporting Future For All was produced while Kate Hoey was Minister for Sport in March 2001. It was the New Labour government’s first major policy statement on sport, after four years in office. Following the election three months later she was replaced by Richard Caborn, who took over ownership of this plan for sport as established policy.

Labour had accepted that there would be minimal change to the government’s policy for sport when they won the 1997 election, including the essential structure of National Heritage as it was transformed into Culture, Media and Sport. By his own admission, Lord Smith changed very little, apart from the name (Interview: 18 June 2007). Both Tom Pendry and Iain Sproat have said that they agreed about a great deal and got on very well as champions for sport, despite their political differences (Interviews: 1 February 2007 and 31 May 2007). In Iain Sproat’s opinion, “We worked very closely together and had an excellent personal relationship” (Interview: 31 May 2007).

Tom Pendry was shadow sports spokesman 1992-97 in Opposition, where he tried to develop Labour’s sports policies, as well as writing the relevant part of the 1997 election manifesto, although was not appointed as Minister for Sport in 1997 as noted earlier. When all the post-war Labour and Conservative Party manifestos were examined in Chapter 1 (1.5) the lack of a left or right ideological position was noted. Similarly, as discussed in Chapter 1 (1.4) there seemed to be a broad consensus between the parties on sports policy which continued, even although this consensus broke down in other areas of social and economic policy.

The 12 individuals who held the post of Minister for Sport from 1964 to 2007 varied greatly in their abilities and commitment to the job, though none was able to use it to make a breakthrough politically and achieve Cabinet office. While Denis Howell was viewed by many of the interviewees as being in a league of his own, most of the others are seen as insubstantial at driving a policy agenda. Colin Moynihan was commonly regarded as coming second to Howell in terms of effectiveness. Most of the others were seen as decent, honourable individuals who had the best interests of sport at heart, without necessarily having the drive and commitment to take up a policy agenda and see it through, nor the seniority to make it possible.
Along the way there have been other shadow spokesmen on sport, none of whom has attained the office in government apart from Denis Howell in 1974. For example, Eldon Griffiths was appointed in 1970 instead of Charles Morrison who had shadowed sport 1966-70. The shadow Minister for Sport job is currently held by Hugh Roberston for the Conservatives, who are going through a policy review in all areas. However, in terms of sports policy, there is still a large amount of consensus. In Robertson’s dealings with Richard Caborn he observed, “We do try to agree as much as possible” (Interview: 16 March 2007). As far as the policy review is concerned, Mr Robertson commented, “We didn’t think there was a great point in reinventing the wheel” (Interview: 16 March 2007), so it is expected that government sports policy will remain much as it is now if the Conservatives win the next election. The main difference seems to be centred on how to most efficiently deliver the 2012 Olympic project at the best value to the taxpayer. There are no great philosophical differences in sports policy as there sometimes have been in party approaches to other areas of government activity.

While this Chapter has tried to establish where government sports policies come from and who has influence on them, the next Chapter will use various theoretical frameworks to help interpret this process. Although these frameworks were not developed specifically for sport, it is hoped that they can help to further our understanding of the policy process for sport and assist in answering the main research question.
Chapter Six: Analysis of Data

6.1 Introduction

This Chapter will examine how some of the theories and frameworks of the policy process can help to make sense of the data presented in the previous Chapters. Four of those outlined in Chapter 3 seem to offer the best prospects for analysis: the multiple streams theory (3.5); the punctuated equilibrium theory (3.6); the advocacy coalition framework (3.7); and the core executive framework (3.8). These appear to be more useful than the others in trying to explain policy-making in sport and in helping to answer the research question. To discuss the theories and frameworks, this analysis will use the four themes set out in Chapter 5 and discussed at length in 5.9. It will also refer where relevant to the literature review in Chapter 1, and to data presented in Chapter 4 relating to the parliamentary performance of the Ministers for Sport.

6.2 Sport for All

According to Coghlan (1990), the “sport for all” movement has its origins in continental Europe in the mid-1960s. Its basic assumptions are that people of all ages and abilities should be able to take part in sport and develop their talents to whatever level they are able to or choose to. It was primarily intended as a way of encouraging more people to stay in sport, or return to sport, who would otherwise have abandoned it after leaving school. However, in Britain there was never a complete split from this route as a path to excellence at the elite level, because it was thought that greater numbers of people in sport would help to provide a critical mass from which top-class competitors would emerge.

In 1972, under the chairmanship of Roger Bannister, the Sports Council launched a campaign to spread awareness of “sport for all” in the UK and change a common perception of sport as an elite pursuit to one of inclusiveness and mass participation. This strategy included the encouragement of local authorities to build more and better sports venues, to which many of them responded in one of the greatest periods of facility construction ever. Holt and Mason (2000) detail the provision of new sports facilities, by the new and larger local authorities, endorsed and often supported by the
Sports Council in its first decade of 1965-75.

Reviews of the policy in the 1970s later identified many target groups that were not being reached, including women, ethnic minorities, the disabled, and those from socially-deprived backgrounds. Through the Sports Council, central government therefore directed more resources towards these groups as part of a regeneration strategy in the inner-cities. This was also in response to inner-city rioting, since it was believed this could help to provide diversionary activities for disaffected youth. Houlihan (1991) suggests that because of this, “‘sport for all’ slowly became ‘sport for the disadvantaged’ and ‘sport for inner city youth’” He also observes that, “It is doubtful if ‘Sport for All’ ever became more than a slogan” (p. 99).

If it was just a slogan, it has proved to be an extremely resilient one. In 2001, the government’s plan for sport was entitled *A Sporting Future for All*, which suggests a direct lineage from a campaign that began some 30 years before. The report itself acknowledged this by endorsing a comprehensive strategy for sport at all levels in education, in the community, and at the elite level. Moving on from this, the term “sport for all” is now more loosely used to refer to the ideals still espoused by Sport England, as confirmed by Mihir Warty (Interview: 7 February 2008). Its broad remit is to promote mass-participation sport, while sport for the elite is sponsored by UK Sport and the British Olympic Association. Therefore, in the context of this study, “sport for all” will be taken in its broadest sense to mean mass-participation sport, not just a Sports Council campaign which lasted for many years.

According to most interviewees for this study, as discussed in Chapter 5, it was in “sport for all” type of activities that Ministers for Sport were able to establish an appropriate niche for themselves. Data in Chapter 4 also show that much of their parliamentary work on sport was concentrated in this area, with adjournment and other debates tending to be focused on this type of activity. They were best suited to encourage participation, raise sport’s profile, act as ambassadors for sport, or work with the Sports Council to spread the benefits of an active sporting way of life. Since there was very little parliamentary legislation on sport much of their time there was spent on other parts of their ministerial portfolios, although some Sports Ministers focused more on sport that others. However, they were rarely effective at introducing new policies for sport because their location in government was a long way from a
central position where policies are normally made, and which recent observers and scholars have come to call the “core executive.”

The concept of the “core executive” was discussed Chapter 3 (3.8). It is, in the words of Budge et al (2004) “useful in directing attention to the wide network of power and influence at the highest levels of government” (p. 134). Smith (1999, 2003) argues that policy-making power is spread amongst key institutions and actors at the heart of government, rather than any single one holding a monopoly of it. Each of them controls significant resources, and is dependent on many of the others to make things happen through a process of bargaining and trading of resources. There is a complex web of interrelationships that make it futile to try to identify a single source of power, even that of the Prime Minister. Likewise, it is rarely possible to pinpoint the true origins of any government policy; in Kingdon’s (1995) view, polices emerge from the mysterious melting pot containing the “policy primeval soup” (p. 116). Policy entrepreneurs seek opportunities to pluck policies from this “primeval soup” and attach them to problems at appropriate times, when a “window of opportunity” (p. 65) opens.

Respondents in this study have argued that sports policy-making decisions tend to be made away from the centre of government, usually in government departments, by Secretaries of State and senior civil servants. The core executive has not normally been interested in everyday sport, and if the Minister for Sport can have any influence at all on sports policy, it is more likely to be in this (“sport for all”) sector of activity. But even here, Sports Ministers tend to be sidelined in policy-making because of their junior status. Core executive theory thus helps to explain this process, since the Minister for Sport has always been located in one of the outer concentric circles identified by Burch and Holliday (1996), some distance from the real centre of power.

Dorey (2005) observes that there may be some role for ambitious and able junior Ministers in the core executive, but this is rare. As already noted in Chapter 5, Lord Smith (Interview: 18 June 2007) felt that some junior Treasury Ministers could be influential because the Treasury is all-powerful in government, but he did not believe that junior Ministers would have much influence in other departments. Occasionally, those earmarked for rapid promotion can have an influence in the policy-making process, though it is significant that Ministers for Sport have never fallen into this
category. It was shown in Chapter 4 (pp. 117-19) that Ministers for Sport have usually begun their ministerial careers in departments where promotion is unlikely. Table 3 (p. 118) ranks the departments that are more likely to lead to Cabinet office, and it can be seen that Ministers for Sport barely feature in the principal ones. Within the Cabinet, it is really the prerogative of Secretaries of State to initiate policy, in conjunction with their Permanent Secretaries in the civil service and key policy advisers who are usually political appointments to the core executive.

It is thus at the level of “sport for all” that the Ministers for Sport may have had any impact at all, in the view of most of the interviewees. Unable to access the core executive, a problem that the Ministers for Sport have confirmed themselves, their main role had been an “ambassadorial” one, as Theakston (1987) defines it. Macfarlane (Interview: 9 January 2007), Tracey (Interview: 11 April 2007), and Sproat (Interview: 31 May 2007) all agreed that the bulk of their sports-related work was concentrated on encouraging participation, raising the profile of sport, attending events, or meeting with leading sports figures and administrators, rather than in policy-making. Eldon Griffiths (Email communications: 16 February 2007 and 29 July 2007) confined himself almost entirely to this role in the small amount of the working time he spent on sport, while Richard Caborn (Interview; 27 March 2008) effectively agreed that this was his primary contribution. Even in the devolved administrations of the UK, the pattern was similar, as Patricia Ferguson confirmed (Interview; 24 August 2007). An examination of the parliamentary data for the UK Minister, presented in Chapter 4, shows that most Ministers spent only about 23% of their time on sport on average, and much of this involved the routine, “sport for all” type of activity.

Iain Sproat was a good distance from the core executive and, by his own account (Interview: 31 May 2007), when he wanted to discuss sport with the Prime Minister, the “core of the core” as Smith (1999: p.71) describes it, Major’s gatekeepers in the Policy Unit tried to exclude him from gaining entrance. They preferred him to restrict his activities to the profile-raising and encouragement of participation activities associated with “sport for all”, in keeping with their narrow view of sport. His successors, Tony Banks and Kate Hoey, likewise had little access to the real centre of power, although there is some evidence from interviews that Richard Caborn may have had slightly more influence. The latest holder of the post, Gerry Sutcliffe, is
again situated at the most junior ministerial level in government and has therefore reverted to the position held by most occupants of the post over the past 40 years or so.

Other interviewees have confirmed that, as junior Ministers, and operating outside the Cabinet, the Ministers for Sport could not expect to play much part in the policy-making process. As Burch and Holliday (1996) suggest, the rank of Cabinet Minister can confer enormous policy-making power to the holder, even though the Cabinet itself rarely makes policy while acting as a body. Policy comes from government departments, as Smith (2003) and Burch and Holliday (1996) have shown, because it is departments that have the expertise and experience of the permanent officials, so necessary to Secretaries of State who move regularly from one department to another.

The status of their position is highly significant for Cabinet Ministers, as many interviewees have illustrated, even if the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (and their predecessors, such as the Secretary of State for the Environment) is generally excluded from the core executive. It endows senior Ministers with resources for trading and bargaining with other central actors in the policy process, which Ministers for Sport do not have. Theakston (1987), Rhodes (1995), Burch and Holliday (1996), Smith (1999, 2003), and Holliday (2000) see the vast majority of junior Ministers as barely touching on the policy-making process, a view confirmed in interviews for this study. Unlike Cabinet Ministers or the Prime Minister, they have few resources to trade, such as patronage, authority, or control of policy networks in government. Consequently, the core executive model would suggest that their ability to influence policy-making is negligible.

A good example of the limits of the Minister for Sport’s ability to influence sports policy decisions was given by Mihir Warty of Sport England. The organisation has recently been going through a re-examination of its role in terms of sponsoring competitive, mass-participation sport, or in pursuing a health agenda. Derek Mapp resigned as chairman in November 2007 because of his avowed preference for the latter. The then Secretary of State at DCMS, James Purnell, was strongly in favour of a repositioning back to a traditional sponsoring of competitive sport. Mihir Warty agreed that it was the Secretary of State’s influence, both in public and private, that forced Mapp to leave (Interview: 7 February 2008). The Minister for Sport, Gerry
Sutcliffe, had little or nothing to do with the change of policy, nor with Sport England's decision to fill the vacant post of Director of Sport. The post was left unfilled for years because Sport England was moving away from competitive sport. The new appointee will be expected to work closely with the governing bodies in encouraging competition, a change in direction very much encouraged by the new Secretary of State, Andy Burnham. (Lisa O'Keefe, a former Regional Director, was appointed at the end of 2008.) However, the Minister for Sport has been effectively sidelined throughout this process.

Thus, the key factor in policy-making for Ministers, according to most interviewees, seems to be that a high level of seniority in government is needed. Ministers also need to be able to devote their full time to their subject areas, to be in respected posts that are taken seriously by other Ministers and civil servants, and to have an assertive personality to get things done. Sports Ministers have not generally possessed these attributes and have therefore been limited in what they have been able to do for sport. As was demonstrated in Chapter 5, they have been spread thinly across a range of duties, in junior posts which have not always been treated seriously by senior figures in the core executive.

Core executive theory therefore offers a good explanation of what they could not do, in that they were relatively far removed from the centres of influence where policy-making and policy change take place, with few resources to trade or bargain with. Evidence from the data presented here shows that the Ministers for Sport did try to influence policy, as will be discussed below, but with limited effect due to the weakness of their positions.

6.3 Elite sport

Although they alluded to sport in their manifestos during the 1950s and 1960s, (as reported in Chapter 1) the Labour and Conservative parties did not develop policies for it, as they would do for subjects such as defence or education. With the publication of the Wolfenden Report (1960), and the establishment of the Sports Council in 1965, both major parties accepted sport as a valid concern of government and moved towards introducing policies for its promotion. Lord Hattersley (Interview: 1 May 2007) and Lord Donoughue (Interview: 7 March 2007) explained how Denis
Howell contributed significantly to this process, as discussed in Chapter 5 (paragraph 5.8).

However, most government effort went towards mass-participation sport and recreation through encouragement of "sport for all". An examination of the parliamentary data confirmed that, although Sports Ministers sometimes spoke on international sport and answered questions on it, they made relatively little impression on elite sport, apart from expressing views on performance at Olympic or other world-class events. As Holt and Mason (2000) point out, government involvement at the top end of sport was largely confined to giving out knighthoods and other honours, or inviting successful sports men and women to Downing Street for publicity value.

Successive governments had no real policy for elite sport, leaving it mainly to the BOA for amateur sport and the individual bodies of professional sports, such as the FA. Although it was not really part of their original remit, the Sports Council filled the gap almost by default, giving grants to competitors for Olympic preparation, assistance with travel costs, access to coaching, and other supportive activities almost from its inception onwards. By the early 1990s, the Sports Council had a whole range of schemes to support elite sport including coaching, medical assistance, drug-testing, bursaries for competitors, and development of facilities (Howell: 1990; Sports Council: 1969, 1996; Pickup: Interview: 29 November 2006).

Within government and the Sports Council itself, there was a perceived need for a dedicated body to better meet the requirements of elite sport. Pickup (Interview: 29 November 2006) described the debate within the Sports Council and government over a number of years, leading to the Atkins' Report in 1994 for the restructuring of the Sports Council, finally undertaken by a later Minister for Sport, Iain Sproat in 1996 (Interview: 31 May 2007). There was also the promise of a National Institute of Sport to complement this. The subsequent introduction of the Lottery in the early 1990s acted as another catalyst for change, effectively directing resources towards elite sport. As Green (2007) points out, government involvement in supporting and financing elite sports development is relatively recent.

The establishment of the National Lottery was the first major step at this time in providing sufficient finance to support elite athletes. A sustained campaign over many
years to introduce a Lottery could be seen as an example of success for an advocacy coalition, defined by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) as, “actors from a wide variety of institutions who share policy core beliefs and coordinate their behaviour in a variety of ways” (p. 130). Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith distinguish between “deep core beliefs” (p. 121) and “policy core beliefs” (p. 122). The former consist of ontological assumptions and values that actors have in viewing the world, based on a lifetime of acquiring knowledge and forming opinions. The latter are beliefs relating to a particular situation which are shared with others in any coalition that comes together to pursue specific policy aims. They suggest that, “the principal glue holding a coalition together is agreement over policy core beliefs” (p. 123).

Coalitions can take years to be constructed as awareness of a problem develops, or may occur quickly due to some “watershed event” (p.136). A watershed event in sport could be a coalition formed to introduce football ID cards, or conversely to oppose them. Coalitions taking both of these positions were, in fact, formed in the 1980s, in the view of civil servants and Ministers interviewed, with the opposition coalition being ultimately successful. The coalition from the worlds of sports, arts, heritage, and so on to introduce a Lottery was quietly assembled over a decade, according to David Pickup (Interview: 29 November 2006). This is the kind of timeframe that Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) see as optimal for policy core beliefs to take root in successful advocacy coalitions and in society beyond them, because coalitions seek to influence public opinion in the wider world.

The Lottery was a policy initiated by the Sports Council and taken up by Richard Tracey in 1985-87 when he was Minister for Sport. Both David Pickup (1996 and Interview: 29 November 2006) and Richard Tracey (Interview: 11 April 2007) talked of the bridges they tried to build in government departments and other organisations to make it a reality. When it finally happened, the creation of the National Lottery in 1994 at last guaranteed that serious amounts of money would go towards elite sports development for the first time, as one civil servant pointed out (Interview with author). It was not introduced until a Conservative government led by John Major was receptive to it in the 1990s. The advocacy coalition finally achieved its aim because it was also embraced by charities and cultural organisations, with John Major acting as an effective “policy broker” to reach a compromise between competing views. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) believe that the role of the “policy broker” (p.122)
can be vital in helping to reach an accord between rival coalitions in a policy sub-system. Interviewees for this study have repeatedly mentioned Major's influence in sports policy, and he was certainly seen as someone who would seek consensus on this and most other issues. Although Major had a significant influence, Ministers for Sport were really only able to play a minor role in the coalition, which Richard Tracey continued to do even after he ceased being a Minister (Interview: 11 April 2007).

The National Lottery was quickly followed in 1996 by UK Sport, established as the main funding body for elite sport, which had access to Lottery money. It was created to deal with the needs of elite competitors at the national level, while Sports England (and the bodies for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) concentrated primarily on mass participation sport. The burst of innovation within the space of a few years, comprising the Department of National Heritage in 1992, the Lottery in 1994, and the UK Sport/Sport England split in 1996 was quite unprecedented in British sport. These emerged as substantial events after a long process of incremental policy-making, with the incremental approach returning thereafter. At the new, higher level, there is now a well-run organisation looking after elite sport (UK Sport), a great deal more money at the elite end, and a government department at the heart of it.

On the whole, Sport Ministers were generally content to let policy drift along for many years, with few changes. According to the punctuated equilibrium model developed by Baumgartner and Jones (1993) this is true of most policy, most of the time, with policy change coming in sudden bursts before a return to a new incrementalism. They see "issue definition" and "agenda setting" (p. 16) as the two main driving forces in policy change in a political system. Change can come quite rapidly as, "Political ideas become popular quickly and diffuse throughout large areas of the political system until they have replaced many old ones" (pp. 16-17). In this instance, the agenda for change was effectively set by a successful advocacy coalition that resulted in providing a great deal more money for sport. The election of a Conservative government in 1992 that actively promoted sport, and the reform of the institutions that governed it were critical factors. Until the early 1990s, policy change for sport was incremental, while British success at international level, especially the Olympics, was regarded as modest. There was a perceived need for change, and the establishment of the Department of National Heritage in 1992 hastened progress under David Mellor as Secretary of State. It put sport much higher up the policy
agenda, with a Secretary of State in Cabinet who saw sport as an important part of his remit.

It is quite unusual for sports policy changes to emerge from the highest levels, since sport is not normally associated with the core executive. In the core executive model outlined by Rhodes and Dunleavy (1995), most policy comes from government departments where policy expertise lies, as already discussed. This is dominated by the most powerful departments, such as the Treasury, the Foreign Office, and the Home Office. The Departments of National Heritage or Culture, Media and Sport were seen by all interviewees in this study as being nowhere near the centre of power and low down the pecking order in Cabinet. In fact, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport is currently ranked seventeenth in importance in Cabinet out of twenty-two members (UK Parliament web page, 2008). John Major bypassed the normal policy-making processes for sport by investing his own authority in something in which he believed, although some of his colleagues were mystified by this, according to Virginia Bottomley (Interview: 29 June 2007).

John Major adopted the role of what Baumgartner and Jones (1993) call a “policy entrepreneur” (p. 85). Such individuals, “take advantage of favorable public attention and quickly move to ensure a quick assignment to government officials to an encouraging institutional venue” (p. 84). But Major did more than just assign his ideas to an existing government department. He actually created the new Department of National Heritage to implement the policies, with David Mellor as Secretary of State at first overseeing the key changes to sports policy. They were thus able to exploit the “window of opportunity” (p. 144) that opened after winning the 1992 election. This gave the government new authority to carry through the changes within the space of a few years.

Interviewees have suggested that the Ministers for Sport were relatively minor players in this regard, being carried along by events but unable to have much impact. Robert Atkins, for example, was operating at a low level as a junior Minister in the Education Department, where sport was located 1990-92. In the view of interviewees for this study, the Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Clarke, was not sympathetic to sport. His public image was one of cigar-smoking and beer-drinking in smoky jazz clubs, quite at odds with the ideals of sport. Atkins was followed by Robert Key
(1992-93), who was largely invisible and completely ineffective, according to interviewees. By the time a more effective Minister came along in the person of Iain Sproat (1993-97), who may have been able to make a difference, the most significant changes had already been made or were well underway from 1992 onwards, promoted by more senior political figures. It was only when sport moved further up the political agenda under Mellor, with huge support from Major, that sudden change was possible, and having occurred, this change endured.

The Baumgartner and Jones (1993) theory thus offers a plausible explanation of sports policy change over a short to medium period, with stability being largely maintained over the longer term since those events took place. Any change since then has again been incremental, as their theory would predict. There have been no further major changes in sports policy, and the move from National Heritage to Culture, Media and Sport was in reality only a renaming exercise in the opinion of its first Secretary of State, Chris Smith (Interview: 18 June 2007). He agreed that his contribution was to provide continuity and stability after a period of significant upheaval, rather than seek further reforms, though he felt he was instrumental in securing more funding for elite sport. His three successors (Tessa Jowell, James Purnell, and Andy Burnham) have all been consolidators, according to interviewees, rather than innovators.

6.4 Sport in Schools

Sport has a long history in British schools, particularly in the independent sector. The nineteenth century model of the English public school, encapsulated by Thomas Hughes (1856/1973) in the Rugby School of Tom Brown's Schooldays, shows a fierce attachment to sport as a means of promoting "muscular Christianity". According to Kirk (2003), sport was widespread in the public schools, "since at least the 1850s" (p. 144). Holt (1989) observes that sports and games were probably played in public schools well before this, since the Eton Wall Game was banned from 1827 to 1836, while there were inter-school rowing and cross-country races at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

As Kirk (2003) notes, there was a gradual expansion of sports and games into the state schools in the 1860-80 period. Legislation to make education compulsory, such as the 1870 Education Act for elementary schools was followed by other Acts to extend
education to the secondary level and progressively raise the school-leaving age throughout the twentieth century. Sport was not always accepted as a legitimate subject for schools. According to Kirk (2003), its position in state schools (though not generally in public schools) was always, "a contested concept" (p. 145) and the position of PE and games teachers devalued in the post-war period, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, until a reappraisal in the late 1980s. Data from the parliamentary analysis show that Ministers for Sport were well aware of sport being marginalised in schools. All of them dealt with a number of questions on matters such as sport on the school curriculum, loss of playing fields, and decline of competitive sport in schools. However, from this data, there is no evidence of them offering any consistent policy solution to reverse the decline.

The changing status of sport from the 1980s is examined by Houlihan and Green (2006). They also look at how regard for sport, games, and PE in state schools fluctuated in the years leading up to this when they were not as highly valued as other "core" subjects, such as mathematics or history. The inclusion of PE as a core subject on the National Curriculum in 1991 helped encourage its revival, under a more sympathetic Conservative government headed by John Major. The Labour government of 1997 cemented this process, with another Prime Minister who valued both sport and education. Various other influential people, who were effective policy entrepreneurs, also had a significant role.

Major (2007) himself is characteristically downbeat about his achievements. He thought that, as Prime Minister:

I did less than I should have done. I should have acted more comprehensively to restore sport to schools when I had the power to do so, and I know it now with all the clarity that comes to those who review their mistakes with honesty (p. 392).

Despite his modesty, he did help to make PE a subject worthy of the core curriculum and push it much further up the agenda in schools again after years of decline. It was felt by a number of interviewees that the situation was becoming better at this time because it was being taken more seriously at a higher level in the core executive where John Major invested his personal authority in it. Interviewees for this study have confirmed the valuable contribution made by John Major, Sue Campbell, and
others in promoting school sport. But according to a number of Ministers and civil
servants, real change only came about when Labour won power in 1997, despite the
seeds being sown before this under Major.

Sport in schools is an area that lends itself to interpretation by Kingdon's (1995)
multiple streams theory. He identifies, firstly, a problem stream, when an issue
emerges on to the policy agenda. This may happen because an issue gradually enters
public consciousness as a cause for concern, such as a perceived lack of success in
top-class sport or perhaps the alleged declining health and fitness of young people. It
can also occur in response to a crisis, as he suggests:

To make an item from a less visible arena move up on a governmental agenda,
something must happen, and that something often is a real crisis – the sort of
thing government decision makers cannot ignore (p. 95).

In the case of school sport, it was not so much a crisis, but more a gradual awakening
to the consequences of the situation. The subject had almost dropped off the school
curriculum, and this was perceived by some as a cause for anxiety. Interviewees for
this study have commented that there was real concern at senior levels in national
sports organisations and elsewhere at what was happening because of the reduced
numbers of young people taking up sport in school and carrying it through to high
standards. It also began to emerge in other policy areas, such as education and health,
that there could be real benefits from encouraging school sport. Thus, the problem of
lack of sport in schools was recognised for all sorts of reasons in and out of
government (e.g. health, fitness, obesity, competition, next generation of sporting
talent, etc.).

The second stream in Kingdon's (1995) theory is the policy one. He suggests that
there is always likely to be a policy somewhere in the "primeval soup" (p. 116) to
attach to problems. It is likely that "policy entrepreneurs" (p. 165) will have spent a
great deal of their time for years developing policies, trying repeatedly to attach these
to problems, and looking for opportunities to promote them. When a suitable moment
arrives, they will be able to offer up a potential solution, which is what happened after
the election of a Labour government in 1997. Tony Blair saw education as the main
priority of his government, and the policy of more sport in schools was encouraged to
overcome some of the problems identified as having been caused by the decline in
Kingdon’s (1995) final stream is that of politics. He suggests that this, “flows along according to its own dynamics and its own rules” (p. 162). However, he sees it as the most important stream because it determines which items reach the policy agenda and what solutions can be employed and attached to problems. This may alter rapidly because of elections, a change in national mood, or for other reasons. With the election of Labour in 1997, the politics stream was a favourable one in determining how the other streams flowed. The politics of New Labour, which espoused “joined-up government”, was particularly sympathetic to co-operation across departments, such as Health, Education, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, allowing the three streams to come together. For Kingdon (1995), the merging of the streams is the most salient event in the whole process. It may be a rare occurrence for all three streams to appear together at a similar time. Therefore a successful policy entrepreneur must recognise this potential confluence and seize the moment to achieve a joining of the streams in a “policy window” (p. 165).

Houlihan and Green (2006) also see the multiple streams theory as a good explanation of policy change in sport and education, while identifying the merits of the advocacy coalition framework in certain respects. As well as recognising the roles played by Charles Clarke, Estelle Morris, and Tony Blair as policy entrepreneurs, they identify Sue Campbell as a highly effective, independent policy entrepreneur from outside government, a view shared by a number of interviewees in this study. Others, such as Lord Smith (Interview: 18 June 2007) and Patrick Cheney (Interview: 18 January 2007), have suggested that Kate Hoey may have had a minor role in the process of promoting school sport. But she could not be described as a policy entrepreneur in any meaningful sense, compared with two committed Education Secretaries (Estelle Morris and Charles Clarke).

Other interviewees, for example Baroness Bottomley (Interview: 29 June 2007) and some of the civil servants who were interviewed, also identified the contribution of Iain Sproat’s policy document, Raising the Game, which placed school sport in a central position. However, they recognised his limited influence in effecting real change as a junior Minister operating in a different department, in comparison with the enormous potential power of the Prime Minister, John Major. Major was seen by
many interviewees as being central to an important raft of sports policy changes in the early to mid-1990s, that came about from his role as the kind of policy entrepreneur identified in Baumgartner and Jones' (1993) punctuated equilibrium theory which has already been discussed above (paragraph 6.3).

Some interviewees identified barriers to change under Labour when they were first elected in 1997. Its first Education Secretary, David Blunkett, did not regard school sport as a high priority. Indeed, Blunkett's (2006) 850 pages of memoirs fail to mention school sport once, with 266 pages given over to his time as Education Secretary. Similarly, the Minister for Sport, Tony Banks, did little to promote school sport. When Blunkett and Banks were removed, the changes already underway before Labour came to office were cemented, with Hoey's support. Richard Caborn (Interview: 27 March 2008) spoke of his huge commitment to sport in education and of how he spent a great deal of time visiting schools encouraging it. He believed that school sport had a number of important benefits in addition to health, fitness, and competition. These included improved school performance in league tables because of the all-round discipline and work ethic that sport can instill at formative periods in the lives of young people.

However, the key factors seem to be a level of seniority in government, together with being situated in the department where they want to effect policy change. As noted earlier, Smith (1999) suggests that it is from government departments that policies emerge. Smith et al (1995) recognise the sense of identity that each government department has, and assert that, "departments are the key policy makers for the majority of policies within British central government" (p. 41). Sports Ministers had neither of these attributes of seniority or departmental location. They have not normally been located in the Education Department, with the recent and ineffective exception of Atkins (1990-92), and have been quite junior in government. They have therefore been limited in what they were able to do to promote school sport.

Civil servants in this study confirmed that it was their first duty to pursue the policies of their own departments and the aims of their own Secretaries of State. It was regarded as normal to effectively frustrate or delay initiatives from other departments, even at the most senior level, since these were not part of their own fundamental departmental objectives. Junior Ministers from other departments had even less
chance of success. The evidence from the data presented here shows that although the Ministers for Sport did try to influence policy for school sport they were unable to achieve much due to the weakness of their positions. However, Richard Caborn claimed that he lobbyied extensively to encourage school sport and maintain its importance on the school curriculum (Interview: 27 March 2008) and in this respect may have had more success than his predecessors due to his length of time in office, his network of contacts, and his relative seniority in government. Nevertheless, real change at inter-departmental level is only possible through co-operation between the Secretaries of State who head the departments, rather than at the junior Minister level.

6.5 Attracting Major Events to the UK

The UK has long been a major destination for world-class sports events. The Culture Media and Sport Select Committee (1999) examined Britain's record in hosting major events and found an impressive record. Since World War Two, the UK has hosted the Olympic Games in 1948 and has had a successful bid for 2012 accepted. In football, there have been the 1966 World Cup and European Championships of 1996, as well as several European club cup finals. The Cricket World Cup and the Rugby World Cup were both held in 1999. The Commonwealth Games have been in the UK four times (Cardiff, 1958; Edinburgh, 1970 and 1986; Manchester, 2002), with Glasgow due to host a fifth in 2014. In 1991, Sheffield hosted the World Student Games, the largest multi-sports event in the world outside of the Olympics. The country has also hosted a large number of less important events, such as the World Cross-Country Championships, World Judo Championships, World Amateur Boxing Championships and many others. In addition there are numerous world-class events which have their home in Britain, such as Wimbledon, the Open Golf Championship, or the Fastnet Race in sailing.

From an examination of the parliamentary data, Ministers for Sport have consistently supported bids for major events, both before and after they have been initiated. They have spoken in the Commons in favour of bids for the Olympics, the football World Cup, Commonwealth Games, and many others, especially from the 1990s onwards. However, none have taken the lead in launching such bids, many of which have been unsuccessful. As previously discussed, these include the Birmingham and Manchester bids for the 1992, 1996, and 2000 Olympics, an English bid for the 2006 football
World Cup, (promoted but certainly not launched by Tony Banks), and a Scottish/Irish bid for football’s 2008 European Championships. The athletics World Championships of 2005 had to be moved to Sweden because of the impossibility of providing a stadium in London to stage them.

On the other hand, the government has not always been keen on hosting major events, even if the Sports Ministers have. Indeed, there has been opposition from some members of the Cabinet to Olympic bids because of the cost, traffic congestion, and even the threat of terrorism, as some former Ministers and civil servants pointed out in their interviews, and discussed earlier (paragraph 5.5). Their comments provide good examples of how government power can be used in the negative sense that Lukes (2005) postulates. Lukes suggests that keeping policies off the agenda is in itself a policy decision not to proceed with a specific course of action. For example, some Cabinet Ministers, such as Norman Tebbit, tried to keep bids for Olympic Games off the agenda, according to a civil servant (Interview with author) and ensured that a non-decision actually became a policy. During the Thatcher period, it was felt that sport was given a relatively low priority, if not removed from the agenda, certainly very low down in importance as an activity of government. As a result, successful advocacy coalitions had little opportunity to develop.

Attitudes have changed since the heyday of the Thatcher administrations and the benefits of sport are more widely recognised. Central government, many of the larger local authorities, and the devolved administrations, are increasingly keen to host events, for a variety of reasons, including national prestige, economic benefits, home advantage, legacy of facilities, and generally raising the profile of sport in the region or country for long-term benefits. Some organisations have created specialised units to attract major events, including UK Sport and the Scottish government. UK Sport has commissioned a number of reports from Sheffield Hallam University over the past ten years, one of which (2004) recommended that, "There is compelling evidence for UK Sport’s World Class Events Programme to continue supporting major events in the UK" (p. 5). As Richard Caborn, Patricia Ferguson, civil servants, and others have indicated (Interviews with author: 12 March 2008; 24 August 2007), bids for the 1991 World Student Games in Sheffield, the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, and the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, were won as a result of years of carefully building up local and national alliances. These alliances spread across local
authorities, sports bodies, journalists, politicians and many others in the kind of broad, decade-old, advocacy coalitions defined by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999). Sabatier (1988) initially identified the time-scale of at least a decade as being necessary for successful coalitions to consolidate, though some coalitions can develop quickly as a result of a crisis.

Following from these, the main bidding success in recent years has undoubtedly been winning the right to host the 2012 London Olympics, which the advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999) offers one way of explaining. There was a powerful coalition in government, local government, the communications media, and sports bodies, holding “policy core beliefs”, built up over a decade or more, that the Olympics should be held in London. There was a much deeper level of commitment to London, compared with that shown towards either Birmingham or Manchester, according to many of those who were interviewed. In relation to the advocacy coalition framework, it can be argued that there existed a “deep core belief” that London was the only possible UK city that could win a bid for the Olympics. The bid was led by the charismatic ex-sportsman Sebastian Coe as a policy broker, in the advocacy coalition’s terminology. In July 2005, at the final award meeting, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, also acted as a powerful policy broker in his consensual dealings with IOC delegates, and may well have made a critical difference, according to interviewees for this study. Richard Caborn also had an influence in a more understated role, as he and other interviewees suggested and discussed earlier, though not as a significant policy broker of the same stature as Coe or Blair.

The advocacy coalition for London was able to take advantage of what Sabatier (1988) and Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) call “policy-oriented learning”. In other words, they could learn from mistakes made in the earlier Olympic bids from Birmingham and Manchester. They were also able to adjust their behaviour in the light of new information generated by a highly professional bidding campaign for London, that was far more effective than the ones which previously failed. For example, the early leader of the bid, Barbara Cassani, was removed when she seemed to have insufficient stature in world sports circles, something that Coe had in abundance. Lord Hattersley (Interview: 1 May 2007) also spoke of the somewhat ascetic and frugal campaigns for Birmingham (particularly in the final stages of the bid for 1992), which he felt had little chance of success, as discussed earlier.
A similar concept to policy-oriented learning, observed by Kingdon (1995), is the role of ideas in public policy. He sees them as “integral parts of decision making in and around government” (p. 125) in terms of persuasion, marshalling evidence, and making a case for a policy. The use and discussion of ideas is part of the advocacy process that made the London bid ultimately successful because its advocates were able to recycle, reuse, or reject ideas from previous bids for Birmingham and Manchester, as well as the flawed bid for the 2006 football World Cup.

The advocacy coalition theory is best at helping to explain single events like these, rather than the everyday world of low-level sports policy-making which Ministers for Sport normally inhabit. Ministers for Sport have only had a very minor role to play in coalitions of this kind, or others such as that directed towards the banning of tobacco advertising in sport. Both Neil Macfarlane (Interview (9 January 2007) and Richard Tracey (Interview: 11 April 2007) recalled the minimal influence they had in trying to change government policy at their junior level in government. Policy change was finally possible when the issue of smoking was taken up by a powerful and long-established health coalition and at a higher level in government, championed there by Secretaries of State for Health.

However, as with the enhanced status of school sport, the multiple streams theory can also help to explain the success of the Olympic bid. Kingdon (1995), sees policy change occurring when the problem, policy, and politics, relating to an issue all combine at the same time to make this possible. The problem of backing a particular city was solved because the only realistic applicant, London, was willing and able to bid. Previous bids for Birmingham and Manchester had little realistic chance of success in the closed, elite, community of the IOC, which was always likely to favour the charms of a global world city such as London. Previous efforts to promote London failed because of the lack of a city-wide government, something that was overcome from 1999 when the city was granted its own true London mayor, and a supportive assembly for the first time.

The policy of bidding had widespread support in the country as well as at the DCMS, and had made it on to the national agenda over a long time period. The benefits of
holding major events were recognised from the examples of Barcelona and Sydney, together with the successful Commonwealth Games in Manchester in 2002. There was really no need to dip into the “primeval soup” to select a policy, since the alternatives were in reality to bid or not to bid for a third London Olympics.

When the advocacy coalition for London was formulating a bid, they were fortunate in that the UK politics were right. Labour was willing to back a bid and to underwrite the finance, which previous governments would not do. Only when these factors came together at the right time, with the powerful presence of Coe and Blair acting as policy brokers could the bid succeed. Timing was critical, because a “policy window” had opened in terms of Kingdon’s (1995) framework, in which the three steams could be joined. There are only around 100 IOC delegates, and the final decision rested on a knife-edge, at which point the Minister for Sport may have had some small part to play, according to Richard Caborn (Interview: 27 March 2007) and other interviewees, as previously discussed. Such a window might not open again for many years, if ever, because the bidding cycle for an Olympics and the political situation in the UK rarely coincide. It may be possible for the problem and related policy streams to coincide in the future, but for these do so when it is Europe’s turn to host the Games again, and when there is a sympathetic UK government in power, is relatively unlikely. With many more potential bidders for the Olympics now in each cycle, the chances of a successful bid may become less and less.

Generally, the Minister for Sport has not been seen as a person who can make a difference to events such as these. Denis Howell used his authority as a kind of elder statesman in sport (although after some years out of office) to support Birmingham’s bids for the 1992 and 1996 Olympics, but it was nowhere near sufficient to be critical. Tony Banks’s leadership of the campaign for the 2006 World Cup was viewed as disastrous. He just did not carry enough clout politically and had no recorded sporting achievement, unlike Lord Coe. However, as has been noted before, it was felt by some interviewees that Richard Caborn was extremely well connected in the international sports world and could open many doors. He was also a significant figure in the anti-apartheid movement in the 1970s and 1980s, and had become a friend of Nelson Mandela. If this relationship only swung one or two African delegates London’s way, this could have made the difference between success and failure. But these were unusual circumstances. The normal location for a Minister for
Sport has been outside of the core executive, and thus some way distant from forums where critical decisions are made.

6.6 Conclusion

The four theories used in this analysis have all been helpful in trying to understand where the Ministers for Sport are situated in government and how effective they have been as a result. The advocacy coalition framework, the multiple streams theory and the punctuated equilibrium theory have helped to show how influence on the policy process is more likely to come with seniority in government, whereas the role of junior Ministers in policy change is unlikely to be a major one.

The advocacy coalition framework is good at explaining how single issues such as banning tobacco sponsorship or establishing the National Lottery emerge on to the policy agenda and how they are dealt with. It is less useful when it comes to understanding how a large number of disparate bodies or individuals can make their views known in any systematic way in broad policy areas, such as sport. Likewise, the multiple streams and punctuated equilibrium theories are more useful in examining policy changes involving single events or narrow subject areas, rather than the influence of individuals on those changes, unless the individual is a highly-significant political actor, such as a head of government.

The core executive framework developed by Rhodes and Dunleavy (1995) Smith (1999), and others, discussed above, was found to offer the best explanation of what Ministers for Sport could not do, in that they were relatively far removed from the centres of influence where policy-making and policy change take place. It is therefore the most useful theory for placing the Ministers for Sport in context within government and in the policy process for sport. While they may have tried to influence policy for school sport, elite sport, bidding for major events, and at the “sport for all” level, they were unable to achieve much because of their place in government. They could hope to contribute most, albeit in small ways, at the “sport for all” level where initiatives cost little and where senior political or civil service figures would not be concerned at what they were doing. Because of the way the office and the individuals were regarded it was felt that anything they did would have only a marginal impact on government and would be unlikely to be harmful.
Conclusion

It is now possible to draw together the main themes of the research. Firstly, the limitations of the data are considered. This discussion is followed by a summary of the findings, which are addressed in the context of the relevant literature and the theoretical approaches examined earlier, some of which are better than others at making sense of the data. Some recommendations are then made for future research, with suggestions as to how the data can be built upon. Finally, an attempt is made to answer the research question that was originally posed.

In Chapter 1 it was argued that a constructivist/interpretivist standpoint would be taken for this study. Because the majority of the data came from interviews with individuals, rather than numerical data as with a positivist approach, exact reproducibility could never be achieved. It is unlikely that another researcher would gain access to precisely the same group of individuals and obtain the same responses from them. Thus, the terms that Denzin and Lincoln (2000) identified of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (p. 21) were seen as more realistic criteria by which to judge the data.

It is felt that the data from the interviews are credible because the respondents were all educated, intelligent, literate, and articulate people. They were very familiar with their subject areas, having dedicated their lives to their specialisms, in politics, sports administration, the civil service, and so on, and were happy to share their knowledge with the researcher. While many of the answers given to questions were specific to an individual, such as a previous Minister for Sport, it was clear that these would also apply to other Ministers for Sport. For example, when asking about Minister for Sport/Secretary of State relations, it was always assumed that power lay with the latter. Thus, the data possessed transferability, inasmuch as they made it possible to generalise about Ministers for Sport who were not interviewed.

The interviewees were all extremely helpful in providing information. They generally had no discernible reason to distort their replies, although politicians, particularly the ex-Sports Ministers, tended to have a slightly more elevated view of their own importance to policy-making than other observers who spoke about them. For
example, civil servants felt that as junior Ministers they had little input to the policy process, while the Ministers themselves preferred to believe that they contributed to the policy-making process in some way. Nevertheless, Ministers and civil servants often corroborated each other in accounts of particular meetings (e.g. with the Queen at a sports reception or Mrs Thatcher on football hooliganism), or on wider issues (e.g. establishing the Lottery or cross-departmental working). As a result, they generally came across as dependable witnesses whose testimonies could be trusted.

It was often possible to ask different interviewees broadly similar questions and receive similar types of answers, for example in relation to the source of government policies. There was a consensus that, while there were a number of potential sources, they were predominantly shaped and implemented by the civil servants, rather than Ministers. Therefore, the data had confirmability from a number of verbal sources as well, and were also cross-checked in written accounts where possible.

The range of respondents also permitted confidence in the findings. Amongst the interviewees were some very senior politicians and civil servants, all of them with access to, or contacts in, the top echelons of government, the “core executive”. These were joined by a number of interviewees who were not at the pinnacle of their professions (although some were very clearly on the way there). This meant that the interviews covered a wide span of seniority. A particular limitation was that, reflecting the vast majority of senior jobs in these areas, most of the respondents were male. Unfortunately, the only female former UK Minister for Sport, Kate Hoey, was not interviewed, although Patricia Ferguson from the Scottish government was.

The political split of the MPs or former MPs (several of them now in the House of Lords) was very even. Seven were Conservatives and seven were Labour. No Liberals or MPs from other parties were approached at the UK level, since only Labour and Conservative MPs have ever held the office. In Northern Ireland, Michael McGimpsey (Ulster Unionist Party) was asked for an interview but did not reply, nor did Rhordi Glyn Thomas (Plaid Cymru) in Wales.

A wide range of organisations were also represented in the survey, including all the main umbrella bodies covering sport in Britain, such as the BOA, CCPR, Sport
England, and UK Sport. Each of these organisations was visited in the research, as was DCMS and the House of Commons. This area of the research was strengthened by talking to other respondents in the civil service who had experience of DCMS, National Heritage, Education, and Environment. These are the government departments where sport has been located at one time or another. As was discussed in the Research Methods (2.8), governing bodies of individual sports were not approached since they are all represented by the CCPR. Furthermore, former Sports Ministers and other interviewees believed that the governing bodies had little influence on government sports policy.

Interviewees from Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland were included in the study to help broaden the approach, although the regional dimension was not a main focus of the study. These interviews helped to provide some confirmability that the pattern in the devolved administrations was actually very similar to that in UK central government.

Only five former Ministers for Sport were interviewed or responded by email. This is clearly a limitation, although the figure does represent over 50% of the nine who are still alive. It was because of the initial lack of co-operation from former Ministers for Sport that the study was broadened to include many others from the worlds of politics and sport. This proved to be an advantage in many ways, not least by giving insights into aspects of policy-making and government that the Ministers for Sport could not have provided, even if they had all been interviewed. Another limitation is that there was only one ethnic minority respondent in the study (excluding the Welsh and Scots). However, this reflected the low representation of ethnic minority groups in the professions involved, and certainly at the upper levels.

It was decided to stop interviewing after all the possibilities of meeting former Ministers for Sport had been exhausted. By this time, a great deal of data had been generated from other respondents and it showed quite clear patterns. It is unlikely that by substantially increasing the number of interviews, different conclusions would have been reached. There was a general consensus amongst respondents about the limits of Sports Ministers’ power. No one suggested that any of them had ready access to the core executive where policies are really made. It is hard to believe that
any other potential respondent would have argued otherwise.

The data generated from the study of Ministers in Parliament were designed to complement the interview material. Most of this data could be reproduced by another researcher using the same rules. This approach proved a good way of measuring the output of Ministers for Sport in Parliament, resulting in findings with which the Ministers themselves agreed when asked. The approach also gave a flavour of the subject areas covered by Ministers in sports debates or in answering questions in the House, and acted as an excellent guide to producing interview schedules for discussion with the Ministers. However, this data had its limitations in that it could not stand alone as a representation of the Ministers’ views; it was necessary to supplement this evidence with interviews to probe more deeply and interpret what particular events meant at particular times. For example, Richard Tracey answered a number of questions in Parliament that appeared to offer support for a ban on tobacco sponsorship in sport. In his interview, he confided that this was actually quite unlikely at the time because of Mrs Thatcher’s opposition to such a ban.

In Chapter 4 it was shown that the Ministers for Sport dedicated around only a quarter of their parliamentary activity to sport. When they did answer questions on sport in Parliament, it was also found that just a quarter of parliamentary questions were on this subject. Three-quarters were on the other diverse matters that they covered over the years, such as the environment, transport, or planning. Their main contribution to the debating process was participating in adjournment debates, rather than legislation, while full-scale debates on sport were really quite rare. The Ministers for Sport normally began their ministerial careers in offices that did not usually lead to promotion, thus severely reducing their chances of attaining senior positions in government with influence on the policy-making process.

The data show that Ministers for Sport have contributed to the policy-making process, but usually in small ways that do not cost money. For example, Denis Howell was seen by some respondents as an initiator of the Gleneagles Declaration in 1977, which set out a policy for dealing with South Africa. In 1998, Tony Banks endorsed the Brighton Declaration, a policy statement about women in sport. During his time in office (1981-85), Neil Macfarlane, followed by Richard Tracey, tried to establish a
policy on tobacco sponsorship. This met with repeated opposition from Mrs Thatcher, who used her power to successfully keep it off the policy agenda. It was only when the issue of smoking and health moved up the political agenda beyond sport in the 1990s that action was taken, a development that may be explicable by reference to the advocacy coalition framework, the multiple streams theory of the policy process, or both. However, in the interviews with former Ministers for Sport, it is significant that they all found it difficult to cite substantive policies to which they contributed.

When Theakston (1987) studied a number of junior Ministers, including those for the Arts, Sport, and the Disabled, he identified their main role as being “ambassadorial”. The office-holders worked on behalf of their respective subject areas to promote their standing and image, while the policy-making aspects were left to civil servants and Secretaries of State. The evidence gathered for this study reveals that the Minister for Sport fits that profile well. This was certainly their main role until the early 1990s, when the needs of elite sport moved further up the policy agenda. The splitting of the Sports Council into two bodies, the establishment of the Lottery for funding sport as one of the “good causes”, and the transfer of sport to the Department of National Heritage were events upon which Ministers for Sport had little impact. These were serious policy issues that were dealt with by more senior Ministers of Cabinet rank.

Similarly, it was really a change of personnel at Secretary of State level in the Education Department in 2001 that raised the importance of school sport, even though most Ministers for Sport had tried to achieve this for many years. The Ministers for Sport worked at the lowest levels in government, where they found it impossible to make headway with their opposite numbers in the Education Department. It was only when the issues were dealt with at Cabinet Minister level that real progress was made. Finally, the evidence from the interviews shows that Sports Ministers had little influence on bids for major events. It is inconceivable that any of them could have independently launched a bid for a major event, and when it came to the bidding processes, they had minimal control over the outcome.

It was shown in the previous chapter how the punctuated equilibrium theory (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993) can help explain policy change for elite sport and bids for major events, while the multiple streams theory (Kingdon, 1995) can be applied to
policy on school sport, although, neither of these are useful theories for explaining the contribution of junior Ministers in such situations. However, the core executive framework (Rhodes and Dunleavy, 1995 and Smith, 1999) has proved to be the most useful tool of analysis for showing how the role of the Minister for Sport is situated at some distance from the most influential parts of government where real policy-making takes place. Burnham et al (2004), in discussing the concept of “Occam’s Razor” suggest that, “The simplest theory that fits the facts of a problem is the one that should be selected” (p. 4). The core executive framework performs this task very well.

While this study has looked at the role of Ministers for Sport, there is very little evidence in the literature regarding other junior Ministers. Theakston (1985, 1987, 1999) is the only scholar who has examined the subject in any depth, by tracing their historical background of the offices, their position in government, and the office holders. There is clearly a need to examine in detail a number of junior ministerial offices to see how these compare with that of the Minister for Sport. It may be, for example, that a Treasury junior Minister can be quite influential, as some respondents in the interviews have suggested. Therefore, a cross-departmental study of a few selected junior Ministers would be very valuable, using the interview techniques and analysis of parliamentary performance undertaken here.

The Minister for Sport is not a unique British office and therefore it would also be useful to engage in a cross-national study of Sports Ministers to compare how they are treated in terms of seniority, position in government, potential influence in policy-making, and so on, in other parts of the world. Since this may be too ambitious, an initial starting point would be an examination and comparison of Ministers in the devolved governments of the UK. The latter have now been established for nearly a decade, over three electoral cycles. The offices have also been held outside the traditional Labour/Conservative dominance of Westminster (Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru, Ulster Unionist), which may offer some interesting perspectives for comparison and analysis.

This research was carried out to fill gaps in our knowledge as to what Ministers for Sport existed for, what they did, and how they contributed to the policy-making
process for sport. These gaps were set out fully in the Introduction to the thesis, as was the main research question and subsidiary questions. This research has indeed helped to fill some of those gaps in our knowledge by the collection and analysis of original data. It has done so by identifying and focussing on the four main elements of sports policy which were set out in the analysis (Chapter 6), a conceptualization which is in itself an original contribution to the study of UK sports policy. The impact of the Ministers for Sport in the policy process for sport has generally been limited because their position in government has been outside the core executive where policy decisions are normally made. The Ministers for Sport could make the greatest impact on “sport for all” type of issues, where access to the core executive was not usually necessary. This helps to explain the limits of their influence and their need to concentrate on issues where they might make a difference in terms of raising the profile of sport and encouraging mass participation. However, they have not made a significant contribution to government sports policy across the range of issues that were identified in the analysis of the data.

Because sport has traditionally not been a large spender of public money, it has been very hard for the Minister for Sport to make a greater impact. More recently, larger sums have been involved, but the Minister for Sport has been sidelined. For example, in relation to the Lottery and the 2012 Olympics, they have been sub-contracted respectively to other institutions such as UK Sport, and to a dedicated Olympics Minister with Cabinet status (Tessa Jowell). Furthermore, policy decisions on important issues are ultimately taken by Secretaries of State, or even by the Cabinet and Prime Minister on really important ones such as the possibility of boycotting the 1980 Olympics or bidding for the 2012 Olympics. Thus, the Minister for Sport is squeezed in both directions in terms of policy: he or she can only really influence policy in small ways, rather than initiate it; and when it comes to large issues, the decisions are taken by more senior politicians who are sometimes ill-informed about sport.

At the beginning of this thesis it was suggested that Lord Hailsham and Denis Howell, the first two Ministers for Sport, seemed to play a relatively small part in sports policy-making. In Hailsham’s case it was because he was too senior in government and was also not much interested in sport. In relation to Howell, he was too junior and
too busy with a multitude of other issues to make a significant contribution. The thesis has gone on to examine the role of all the Ministers for Sport who followed them and has concluded that the main research question: "What is the role of the Minister for Sport in the policy-making process for UK sport?" has been substantially answered. It is clear that the contribution of the Minister for Sport to sports policy-making has been relatively small, and that their main role has been to act as "ambassadors" for sport.
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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: UK Minister for Sport 1964-2009

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
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<th>Length of Tenure</th>
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<td>20 Oct 64 - 18 Jun 70</td>
<td>5 years &amp; 8 months</td>
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<td>Neil Macfarlane</td>
<td>Under-Secretary of State</td>
<td>15 Sep 81 - 2 Sep 85</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Tracey</td>
<td>Under-Secretary of State</td>
<td>2 Sep 85 - 13 Jun 87</td>
<td>1 year &amp; 10 months</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colin Moynihan</td>
<td>Under-Secretary of State</td>
<td>13 Jun 87 - 26 Jul 90</td>
<td>3 years &amp; 1 month</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Atkins</td>
<td>Under-Secretary of State</td>
<td>26 Jul 90 - 14 Apr 92</td>
<td>1 year &amp; 9 months</td>
<td>Environment, 26 Jul 90 - 28 Nov 90; Education &amp; Science, 28 Nov 90 - 14 Apr 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Key</td>
<td>Under-Secretary of State</td>
<td>14 Apr 92 - 27 May 93</td>
<td>1 year &amp; 1 month</td>
<td>National Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iain Sproat</td>
<td>Under-Secretary of State</td>
<td>27 May 93 - 1 May 97</td>
<td>3 years &amp; 11 months</td>
<td>National Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Banks</td>
<td>Under-Secretary of State</td>
<td>1 May 97 - 29 Jul 99</td>
<td>2 years &amp; 3 months</td>
<td>National Heritage, 1 May 97 - 11 Jul 97; Culture Media &amp; Sport, 11 Jul 97 - 29 Jul 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate Hoey</td>
<td>Under-Secretary of State</td>
<td>29 Jul 99 - 11 Jun 01</td>
<td>1 year &amp; 10 months</td>
<td>Culture Media &amp; Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Caborn</td>
<td>Minister of State</td>
<td>11 Jun 01 - 29 Jun 07</td>
<td>6 years &amp; 1 month</td>
<td>Culture Media &amp; Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerry Sutcliffe</td>
<td>Under-Secretary of State</td>
<td>29 Jun 07 - present</td>
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<td>Culture Media &amp; Sport</td>
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Appendix 2: Departmental Responsibility for Sport 1964-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secretary of State</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Minister for Sport</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael Stewart</td>
<td>18 Oct 64-22 Jan 65</td>
<td>Education &amp; Science</td>
<td>Denis Howell</td>
<td>20 Oct 64-13 Oct 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Crosland</td>
<td>22 Jan 65-29 Aug 67</td>
<td>Education &amp; Science</td>
<td>Denis Howell</td>
<td>20 Oct 64-13 Oct 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Gordon-Walker</td>
<td>29 Aug 67-6 April 68</td>
<td>Education &amp; Science</td>
<td>Denis Howell</td>
<td>20 Oct 64-13 Oct 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Short</td>
<td>6 Jun 70</td>
<td>Education &amp; Science</td>
<td>Denis Howell</td>
<td>20 Oct 64-13 Oct 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Mellish</td>
<td>31 May 70-18 June 70</td>
<td>Housing &amp; Local Government</td>
<td>Denis Howell</td>
<td>13 Oct 69-18 Jun 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Walker</td>
<td>18 June 70-15 Oct 70</td>
<td>Housing &amp; Local Government</td>
<td>Eldon Griffiths</td>
<td>18 Jun 70-15 Oct 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Walker</td>
<td>15 Oct 70-5 Nov 72</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Eldon Griffiths</td>
<td>15 Oct 70-4 Mar 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoffrey Rippon</td>
<td>5 Nov 72-4 March 74</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Eldon Griffiths</td>
<td>15 Oct 70-4 Mar 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Crosland</td>
<td>5 Mar 74-8 April 76</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Denis Howell</td>
<td>7 Mar 74-4 May 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Shore</td>
<td>8 Apr 76-5 May 79</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Denis Howell</td>
<td>7 Mar 74-4 May 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Heseltine</td>
<td>5 May 79-6 Jan 83</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Hector Monro</td>
<td>4 May 79-15 Sep 81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Heseltine</td>
<td>5 May 79-6 Jan 83</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Neil Macfarlane</td>
<td>15 Sep 81-2 Sep 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom King</td>
<td>6 Jun 83-11 Jun 83</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Neil Macfarlane</td>
<td>15 Sep 81-2 Sep 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Jenkin</td>
<td>11 Jun 83-2 Sep 85</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Neil Macfarlane</td>
<td>15 Sep 81-2 Sep 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth Baker</td>
<td>2 Sep 85-21 May 86</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Richard Tracey</td>
<td>2 Sep 85-13 Jun 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas Ridley</td>
<td>21 May 86-24 June 89</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Richard Tracey</td>
<td>2 Sep 85-13 Jun 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas Ridley</td>
<td>21 May 86-24 June 89</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Colin Moynihan</td>
<td>13 Jun 87-26 July 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Patton</td>
<td>24 Jun 89-28 Nov 90</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Colin Moynihan</td>
<td>13 Jun 87-26 July 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Patton</td>
<td>24 Jun 89-28 Nov 90</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Robert Atkins</td>
<td>26 Jul 90-28 Nov 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth Clarke</td>
<td>2 Nov 90-14 Apr 92</td>
<td>National Heritage</td>
<td>Robert Atkins</td>
<td>28 Nov 90-14 Apr 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Mellor</td>
<td>11 Apr 92-24 Sep 92</td>
<td>National Heritage</td>
<td>Robert Key</td>
<td>14 Apr 92-27 May 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Brooke</td>
<td>24 Sep 92-20 July 94</td>
<td>National Heritage</td>
<td>Robert Key</td>
<td>14 Apr 92-27 May 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Brooke</td>
<td>24 Sep 92-20 July 94</td>
<td>National Heritage</td>
<td>Iain Sproat</td>
<td>27 May 93-1 May 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Dorrell</td>
<td>20 Jul 94-5 Jul 95</td>
<td>National Heritage</td>
<td>Iain Sproat</td>
<td>27 May 93-1 May 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Bottomley</td>
<td>5 July 95-1 May 97</td>
<td>National Heritage</td>
<td>Iain Sproat</td>
<td>27 May 93-1 May 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Smith</td>
<td>1 May 97-11 Jul 97</td>
<td>National Heritage</td>
<td>Tony Banks</td>
<td>1 May 97-29 Jul 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Smith</td>
<td>11 Jul 97-11 Jun 01</td>
<td>Culture, Media &amp; Sport</td>
<td>Tony Banks</td>
<td>1 May 97-29 Jul 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Smith</td>
<td>11 Jul 97-11 Jun 01</td>
<td>Culture, Media &amp; Sport</td>
<td>Kate Hoey</td>
<td>29 July 99-11 Jun 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa Jowell</td>
<td>11 Jun 01-29 June 07</td>
<td>Culture, Media &amp; Sport</td>
<td>Richard Caborn</td>
<td>11 Jun 01-29 Jun 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Purnell</td>
<td>29 Jun 07-18 Jan 08</td>
<td>Culture, Media &amp; Sport</td>
<td>Gerry Sutcliffe</td>
<td>29 Jun 07-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy Burnham</td>
<td>18 Jan 08-present</td>
<td>Culture, Media &amp; Sport</td>
<td>Gerry Sutcliffe</td>
<td>29 Jun 07-present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 3: Quantity of Text in Hansard 1964-2005 by Minister for Sport

**Dennis Howell 1964-70**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Oral Questions &amp; Debates</th>
<th>Written Questions</th>
<th>Combined, Oral, Written &amp; Debates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-70</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1378</td>
<td></td>
<td>4027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
<td>75%</td>
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</table>

**Eldon Griffiths 1970-74**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Oral Questions &amp; Debates</th>
<th>Written Questions</th>
<th>Combined, Oral, Written &amp; Debates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-72</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1387</td>
<td></td>
<td>12543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td>90%</td>
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**Dennis Howell 1974-79**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Oral Questions &amp; Debates</th>
<th>Written Questions</th>
<th>Combined, Oral, Written &amp; Debates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>3022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1647</td>
<td></td>
<td>7426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<td>82%</td>
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### Hector Monro 1979-81

<table>
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<th>Written Questions</th>
<th>Combined, Oral, Written &amp; Debates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1579</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>1675</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3254</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
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### Neil MacFarlane 1981-85

<table>
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<th>Written Questions</th>
<th>Combined, Oral, Written &amp; Debates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-83</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-84</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-85</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>1498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2101</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6605</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>70%</td>
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### Richard Tracey 1985-87

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<th>Written Questions</th>
<th>Combined, Oral, Written &amp; Debates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985-86</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-87</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1274</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>91%</td>
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### Colin Moynihan 1987-90

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Oral Questions &amp; Debates</th>
<th>Written Questions</th>
<th>Combined, Oral, Written &amp; Debates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987-88</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>2374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>1547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-90</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2453</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>4078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Oral Questions &amp; Debates</td>
<td>Written Questions</td>
<td>Combined, Oral, Written &amp; Debates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>485 64% 270 36% 240 27% 636 73% 725 44% 906 56%</td>
<td>1991-92 367 97% 10 3% 202 72% 80 28% 569 86% 90 14%</td>
<td>Total 852 280 442 38% 1294 57% 996 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>75% 25% 62% 62% 75% 25% 62% 62% 75% 25% 62% 62%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Oral Questions &amp; Debates</th>
<th>Written Questions</th>
<th>Combined, Oral, Written &amp; Debates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992-93</td>
<td>916 29% 2293 71% 60 4% 1296 96% 976 21% 3589 79%</td>
<td>Total 916 2293 60 4% 1296 96% 976 21% 3589 79%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>29% 71% 4% 96% 21% 79%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Oral Questions &amp; Debates</th>
<th>Written Questions</th>
<th>Combined, Oral, Written &amp; Debates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>780 28% 1724 72% 148 5% 2755 95% 928 17% 4479 83%</td>
<td>Total 2874 6448 2131 17% 10551 83% 5005 23% 16999 77%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>31% 69% 17% 83% 23% 77%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Oral Questions &amp; Debates</th>
<th>Written Questions</th>
<th>Combined, Oral, Written &amp; Debates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>856 63% 513 37% 1479 53% 1337 47% 2335 56% 1850 44%</td>
<td>Total 1304 547 2587 33% 1593 38% 3891 64% 2140 36%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>70% 30% 62% 38% 64% 36%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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</table>
### Kate Hoey 1999-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Oral Questions &amp; Debates</th>
<th>Written Questions</th>
<th>Combined, Oral, Written &amp; Debates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sports Issues Col. Cm %</td>
<td>Non-Sports Issues Col. Cm %</td>
<td>Sports Issues Col. Cm %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-00</td>
<td>1081 97% 39 3%</td>
<td>2229 75% 759 25%</td>
<td>3310 81% 798 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>354 65% 193 35%</td>
<td>299 69% 134 31%</td>
<td>653 67% 327 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1435 232</td>
<td>2528 893</td>
<td>3963 1125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>86% 14%</td>
<td>74% 26%</td>
<td>78% 22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Richard Caborn 2001-05

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Oral Questions &amp; Debates</th>
<th>Written Questions</th>
<th>Combined, Oral, Written &amp; Debates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sports Issues Col. Cm %</td>
<td>Non-Sports Issues Col. Cm %</td>
<td>Sports Issues Col. Cm %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>1390 54% 1175 59%</td>
<td>2797 59% 1940 41%</td>
<td>4187 57% 3115 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>793 42% 1111 58%</td>
<td>1759 47% 2006 53%</td>
<td>2552 45% 3117 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>1081 56% 861 44%</td>
<td>1247 26% 3503 74%</td>
<td>2328 35% 4364 65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>442 56% 341 44%</td>
<td>730 20% 2977 80%</td>
<td>1172 26% 3318 74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3706 3488</td>
<td>6533 10426</td>
<td>10239 13914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>52% 48%</td>
<td>39% 61%</td>
<td>42% 58%</td>
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</table>

### Total for all Ministers for Sport 1964-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sports Issues Col. Cm %</th>
<th>Non-Sports Issues Col. Cm %</th>
<th>Sports Issues Col. Cm %</th>
<th>Non-Sports Issues Col. Cm %</th>
<th>Sports Issues Col. Cm %</th>
<th>Non-Sports Issues Col. Cm %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>27% 73%</td>
<td>27% 73%</td>
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Appendix 4: Parliamentary Questions 1964-2005 by Minister for Sport

### Dennis Howell 1964-70

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<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1968-69</td>
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### Eldon Griffiths 1970-74

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<td>42</td>
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<td>1971-72</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>42</td>
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<td>1972-73</td>
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### Dennis Howell 1974-79

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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
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Average 75% 25% 54% 46% 55% 45%
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### Kate Hoey 1999-2001

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<td>28%</td>
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<table>
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<tbody>
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Appendix 5: List of People Interviewed on Role of Minister for Sport and Dates of Interview

1. **Mr Ben Andersen-Tuffnell** (9 January 2008): Policy Officer at the Central Council of Physical Recreation (2005-08)

2. **Baroness Bottomley of Nettlestone** (29 June 2007): former Conservative MP (as Mrs Virginia Bottomley, 1984-2001); Secretary of State for National Heritage (5 July 1995-1 to May 1997)


4. **Mr Patrick Cheney** (18 January 2007): current policy adviser to Kate Hoey (Minister for Sport 29 July 1999 to 11 June 2001) and former policy adviser to Denis Howell (Minister for Sport 20 October 1964 to 18 June 1970 & 7 Mach 1974 to 4 May 1979)

5. **Lord Donoughue of Ashton** (7 March 2007): former Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food (1997-99) and former Head of Harold Wilson’s and James Callagan’s No. 10 Downing Street Policy Unit (as Dr Bernard Donoughue, 1974-79)


14. **Mr David Macdonald** (5 February 2007): former Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Environment as Head of Sport and former senior civil servant in other government departments (1970-95)

16. **Sir John Nott** (5 June 2007); former Conservative MP (1966-83), Secretary of State for Defence (1981-83)


19. **Mr David Pickup** (29 November 2006): former Director General of the Sports Council (1988-93) and former senior civil servant (1955-85)


21. **Lord Rodgers of Quarry Bank** (21 March 2007): former Labour MP (as Mr William Rodgers, 1959-83) and Secretary of State for Transport (1976-79)

22. **Professor Eric Saunders** (1 October 2007): Chairman of Sport Northern Ireland (2000-present); member of Northern Ireland Sports Council (1996-present); member of UK Sport (2000-present)

23. **Lord Smith of Finsbury** (18 June 2007): former Labour MP (as Dr Chris Smith, 1983-2005); Secretary of State for National Heritage (1 May to 11 July 1997) and Culture, Media & Sport (11 July 1997 to 11 June 2001)

24. **Mr Peter Smith** (23 November 2007): Policy Manager at UK Sport (2002-present) and former senior civil servant in the Home Office and other departments (1977-97)


27. **Mr Richard Tracey** (11 April 2007): former Conservative MP (1983-97), Minister for Sport (2 September 1985 to 13 June 1987)


29. **Mr Neil West** (31 January 2008): Chief Operating Officer of the British Olympic Association (2007-present); former businessman in oil industry; former international rower and canoeist (Commonwealth Games gold medallist in rowing 2002)
Appendix 6: Interview Transcripts

Introduction

Presented below, in alphabetical order, are the transcripts of five interviews with former Ministers for Sport to give a flavour of the kind of questions that were asked and the data that were collected. Four were former Ministers at the UK level and one was in Scotland. Most of the other interviewees spoke on condition of anonymity and it was felt that to attach the transcripts for them would have breached that confidence. Since the Ministers for Sport were the primary focus of the research, it was thought appropriate to select just them for inclusion here.

The questions asked of individuals not included here, such as civil servants and other Ministers, were on broadly similar themes to those for Sports Ministers. They related to the origins of sports policy, the role of the Ministers for Sport, junior Minister-Cabinet Minister relationships, the contributions made by representative organisations and governing bodies, and so forth.

The only former Minister for Sport who co-operated, and whose response is not included here, is Sir Eldon Griffiths. He sent a draft chapter from his forthcoming memoirs, which he emphasised was not finished or polished to his satisfaction. Sir Eldon therefore requested that it not be reproduced in the public domain until he had published his book, although he agreed to a few selective quotes. This has been respected.

All the former Ministers for Sport, and most of the other interviewees, at various points in their interviews observed that they were now speaking “off the record”. They provided confidential information and expressed views that they did not want attributed to them in any way because these may be controversial, embarrassing, or relate to someone who was still alive. In such cases, these passages have been omitted from the transcripts reproduced here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Page</th>
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<td>Mr Richard Caborn</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Patricia Ferguson</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Neil Macfarlane</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Iain Sproat</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Richard Tracey</td>
<td>299</td>
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</table>
1. Mr Richard Caborn (27 March 2008)

A.McM. - Could you please tell me about the circumstances that led to your appointment, after two years at Environment (1997-99) and two years at Trade & Industry (1999-2001)? Was it a surprise to you when you got the job?

R.C. - Well, there's a story there. For many years I was friendly with Alastair Campbell, long before we came into government and we had worked together on many things. He was also a great Burnley supporter. When Burnley played at Bramall Lane I used to go and pick up his sons in my car and drop them back at the station. Just coming in to 2001, I was talking to him about what needed to be done for sport. I told him we needed fundamental changes, and so on, and so forth, really giving him a piece of my mind. Then within about three months things happened.

[Interruption – Patrick Duffy, Chief Executive of Sports Coach UK comes into the House of Commons lounge with two other people, one of whom is Tony Cunningham (MP for Workington). R.C. introduces P.D. to A.McM. Then P.D. gives him his card, chats for a few minutes, and invites him to call him up. He says he did his PhD on Irish sports policy. R.C. tells P.D. that he is fine, having just come back from Paris to see England play crap against France, where they lost 1-0 at football.]

R.C. - Tony Cunningham is my supplier of New Balance running shoes. He's a fell runner and has just done a 36 mile run at the weekend. His constituency has got a New Balance factory in it, so he can get some good deals.

R.C. - Now where was I before Paddy came in. Oh yes, it was Alastair Campbell who set the ball rolling for me to get the sports job. The guy I worked for first was John Prescott at DTLR as it then was when I was an Environment Minister. Then I got a call from No. 10 after the 2001 election asking me if I wanted to do the sports job and of course I did. It was Campbell who pushed for me. [A.McM. - I have his diaries, but haven't read them yet.] It's in there – he does mention it. So that's how I came to be appointed. It wasn't really a surprise because I did have an inkling from my conversations with Campbell.

A.McM. - I read through all of your speeches and replies to parliamentary questions in Hansard and made some calculations. Although you spent more time on sport than most of your predecessors, (42%/58% sport/non-sport; while the average was 27%/73% for all Sports Ministers) you still could not concentrate only on sport. Was it difficult having so many other things to do, as well as sport?

R.C. - I think I did actually give it as much attention as I could. You've always got to remember, that with a Minister, you are an agent for change. And as long as you know what you are doing, where you want to get to, give leadership to the civil servants and sports bodies, you can make it work. A Minister is in a very powerful position. I think at times I didn't really realise just how powerful the job was. I found that if you really want to make things happen you can do so.

R.C. - There's one thing you have to do and that's to make it very clear that want to do and what the direction of travel is. You need to explain to people why you are doing things and then you'll get them on board. It's really team work and I had a fantastic team working for me and I treated them as co-equals. I had a very open door policy on that. At the end of the day I made the decisions, though I had a very good relationship with the civil servants. We worked towards the achievement of the change agenda. Could I have done more? I don't think so. Could I have done things differently? Yes, I think so.
R.C. - Of course I had other things to do as well as sport. I did gambling, tourism, and other things. But I worked hard. I used to do 15 or 16 hours day. I had very good staff and civil servants, like Paul Heron who had worked with Moynihan, the lot, and who worked long hours with me. It was a close and effective team we had. I used to go out running in the countryside up in Sheffield at weekends and think through ideas. I'd come back with ideas that I discussed with them back in London. I think we all enjoyed working in that atmosphere where we knocked ideas around. We moved the agenda significantly, with modernisation at the heart of it. We put sport right at the centre of the government’s agenda.

R.C. - As I said in my speech celebrating being the longest serving Minister for Sport at one stint, I wanted to see reforms to the structure of sport because there are so many benefits from sport in so many different ways. It comes through from the grass-roots, the schools, into the clubs, and then the elite end. There’s a continuum there that you have to foster and encourage all the way through.

A.McM. - How involved were you in influencing sports policy, for example the 2012 Olympic bid? One or two people have said to me that you made a key difference in securing the bid.

R.C. - Going back, I’ve been involved in a number of bids, including the World Student Games in 1991, the Commonwealth Games in Manchester 2002, and so on. What drove me on was the potential for major games to contribute towards regeneration in Sheffield and Manchester. I saw it as a powerful tool for that. In 1997, when the Manchester programme was being put together, I was involved in the regional development agency in my very first government portfolio. I knew that in London, the same would be true also and I wanted regeneration to come to run-down parts of London’s East End.

R.C. - As Minister for Sport. I went round the world and I spoke to a lot of people. I went to Munich, Moscow, Sydney, Barcelona, and so on. I asked simple questions about what we had to do to get the Olympics in London. In Sydney, I met people for two days, and they very, very generous with their time. They gave me lots of good advice as to what we should do to win the bid. I was on the road for about a year. I went to see many people, including Nelson Mandela who gave it his blessing. I know many people in the IOC, including Sam RamSammy the vice-president from South Africa who supported the bid strongly. But I didn’t win the Games for London. It was a team effort and I played my part through the contacts I had in the sporting world and in politics. I saw some of these people last night in Paris at the football [France v England], including Francois Latour the French Minister who was the guy that lost out when London won. I was on the World Anti-Doping Committee with some of them as well. It was a fascinating exercise.

R.C. - I am now deeply involved in England’s bid to host the 2018 World Cup. That’s decided in March 2011. [A.McM. - Isn’t there the problem of rotation of continents?] No, that’s gone now, so that’s not a barrier. I have a lot of work on doing that now. And I also have a lot of work getting the FA to understand that they haven’t got the skills to win the bid. They buggered us up for 2006 with a terrible, arrogant presentation. They said all the wrong things and pressed all the wrong buttons. It’s come to the point where we can set up a company, I think, to make the bid. I’ll be on it, so will Gerry Sutcliffe, and we’ll have a chief executive as we did for 2012.

A.McM. - Having looked at what governments have done for sport over the years, there seems to be four main elements to sports policy - sport for all; elite sport; sport in schools; and attracting major events. Do you think that’s about right?

R.C. - When I first came into this job, after two years at Environment and two years at Trade
Industry I spoke to Tony Blair. He said to me that he thought sport had been under-utilised in delivering the government’s policies. We’re talking about social inclusion, education, and health. These are very important aspects of policy. He said that basically he wanted a root and branch reform. I set off then, for the next six years, to do this. I knew that you had to get sport right. There are many benefits from sport, but it has to be fit for purpose. To be absolutely honest, it wasn’t fit for purpose at that time. There was no overall direction from a government perspective, there was no integrated policy, and there were no consistent delivery mechanisms.

R.C. - I started by looking at my own area where there were things where I could have some control. That was Sport England mainly, with grass-roots sport. With UK Sport, and investment into schools, I could influence to a lesser extent. I began by trying to restructure Sport England and UK Sport, then turned to the governing bodies. We had spent three-quarters of a billion pounds in the last five years to increase participation in sport by only one per cent and that was unacceptable. I wanted delivery on a proper contractual basis and that was my broad remit which I took up and I went out and did that. I also firmly believed in coaching and I took that up through Sports Coach UK. Paddy Duffy, the guy we’ve just spoken to, now heads it up.

R.C. - I tried to devolve power to the regions, to the Regional Sports Councils, because I’m a regionalist and devolutionist by nature. I do believe that if you empower people to do things you’re more likely to get results in a coherent way. I wanted the small sports clubs to engage with the larger economic stage in their regions who could benefit from sport, such as the regional development agencies, the universities, local authorities, the private sector, and so on. I left the regional strategy to all those bodies out of enlightened self-interest because I thought it was best if I did not tell them what to do.

R.C. - When I started, I used to argue that the sports budget was quite small, but that the number of people who could benefit from sport was huge. The competitiveness and productivity of our nation could be improved if people were more active. There was also the aspect of crime reduction and the cost of keeping young people in secure accommodation – it’s over a thousand pounds a week to do that. And a lot of those were at the bottom of the economic ladder. Many kids will respond to sport if they don’t want to go into academia and suchlike. If you can keep them in society via sport you can save the country a lot of money. That was broadly my remit – to get the fundamentals right. To achieve a sustainable, long-term sports strategy was how I approached it.

R.C. - And of course, bidding for major events has been a passion of mine, as you can see with my record going back to the World Student Games and latterly the Olympics which we talked about earlier. So I suppose the four parts you’ve suggested kind of wrap it all up quite well.

A.McM. - In your speech celebrating 5 years & 9 months as Minister for Sport, the longest ever, you identified improving school sport as a key achievement. Was it made easier when Estelle Morris (2001-02) then Charles Clarke (2002-04) became Secretaries of State after David Blunkett?

R.C. - Schools were my first port of call in getting the strategy right. If you’re going to change the sporting culture, you do it first by getting through to the next generation. I pushed that very hard, and I’m very pleased with the outcome. When I started in 2001, less than 25% of kids in school, from 5 to 16, were doing two hours of quality sports and PE a week. When I left, six years later, over 85% were doing it. Now that means over three million hours more sport every week. I saw that as such an important building block to getting people into sport. We then have to build on that to keep them in sport and give them the facilities beyond the
RC. - It wasn’t difficult working with Education while I was there. Estelle Morris was superb – she gave me £40 million a year for sport and was very supportive. But you have to prove your case. I went to every conference of schools sporting bodies. I worked closely with the schools and education bodies. We put in place the National School Sport Strategy in 2003 and set up a network of school sport partnerships. I saw quite a major change with the schools heads. I went round a lot of schools in the country and talked to people there and what convinced the heads was that where sport was used properly you got better discipline, less exclusion, less truancy, and better academic attainment.

RC. - There were in business to educate kids, but by using sport they could actually further their fundamental education aims. It was the power of the argument and the delivery of results that convinced them. When they looked at the statistics showing less disruption in the schools and better attainment they were convinced and I was very pleased too. Once you’ve won the argument the whole thing moved forward. Of all the specialist colleges, for art or mathematics, and so on, sports colleges have been by far the most successful and most cost-effective.

A.McM. - You worked with Tessa Jowell as Secretary of State. Did she become much involved in sports policy (e.g. negotiating at Cabinet Minister level for school sport), or leave it to you?

RC. - Tessa and I worked together very well. She knew bugger-all about sport actually. She’s a lovely woman and I got on fantastically well with her. Any problems, I could go to her for help. I’d call her and she would call me on a regular basis. She took the lead on the Olympics and left me to do the rest of it. She was quite a non-interventionist as far as I was concerned.

A.McM. - How did you perceive and work with the national governing bodies of sport?

RC. - I tried hard to introduce reforms for some of them. For instance, the FA was a major target for me. If you look at cricket, rugby league, boxing, swimming and others, they all needed to be reformed. But football was one of the toughest nuts to crack because they were so insular. I got the Burns’ report on them, and eventually, after two and a half years, they agreed to an independent chairman. They had a shortlist for it, and I was on it, but for all sorts of political reasons I couldn’t do it. Nevertheless, I am very proud that I did something to reform the FA, the biggest and wealthiest of the governing bodies, but one of the most badly run until recently.

A.McM. - Civil servants had a high regard for you, but some people have told me they are the biggest source of sports policy. Do you think that is true? If not, where does sports policy mainly come from?

RC. - It comes from all over, actually. Ideas come from the civil servants, the governing bodies, the Sports Minister, the bodies like UK Sport and Sport England, plus those in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. There’s no single source. It’s a mixture of all these things. To be absolutely honest, it’s a question of who is the stronger at any time. You will find that not much comes from the Secretary of State, but that the Secretary of State has the responsibility for it. If they don’t do anything the civil servants will do it. It’s about people and it’s about people with convictions who can make things happen. I had a very clear view of where I wanted to go and what I wanted to do. We used to discuss things round a table and get contributions from everybody, so there’s often no single clear source of where a policy
comes from. Lots of people throw their ideas in and what emerges is policy.

A.McM. - You left office when Tony Blair retired in June 2007. You were the second-longest serving Sports Minister at over six years, but the longest-serving in a single stint (Denis Howell did five and a half years then five years). Were there things you still wanted to do for sport?

R.C. - I didn’t expect to be there that long, and I think it was too long, though it did give me the benefit of continuity. The reason I left after 6 years is that you need to freshen things up and change the management. After four years it was the election in May 2005 and the Olympic bid was in July and Blair wanted me to stay for that. Then he said would I stay on afterwards to set the whole structure up, take the bill through Parliament, establish the Olympic Delivery Authority, etc. All that took another two years, then it was time for me to go.

A.McM. - You’ve done other things since stepping down as a Minister, such as the review of the FA and appointment of an independent chairman. Can you achieve as much for sport now you are no longer a Minister?

R.C. - I enjoyed every minute of being Minister for Sport. It was fantastic and was the best job I’ve had and I was lucky to get out on a high. I got some great feedback from what I’ve done. The PM said to me would I do the job for the World Cup so I did. [A.McM. - It’s been downgraded since you left. Do you think that was sensible?] I am disappointed with that. I think it was a mistake, and it gives all the wrong signals. After ten years as a Minister I can see what the seniority of a Minister of State means. I think it was a bad mistake to put it back to Under-Secretary level and it gives all the wrong vibes. I’ve got to go now because I have another meeting. Sorry I can’t give you any longer.

A.McM. - Thank you very much for your assistance. Can I quote you in my dissertation?

R.C. - Certainly you can. And please send me a copy of your thesis when it’s finished. I would love to read it. [A.McM. - You’re not going to the Emirates stadium today to see Sarkozy with the PM?] Oh no, it’s just a bloody jamboree. I never go to things like that unless I’m forced to. If they tell me I have to then I’ll go, but in this case it was not necessary for me to go, now I’m out of government, so I didn’t. I can show you the way out now through the Central Hall. It was a pleasure to talk to you.

A.McM – Do you think Patrick Duffy would speak to me if I call him up?

R.C. – I’m sure Paddy would. He gave you his number, so give him a call.
2. Ms Patricia Ferguson (24 August 2007)

A.McM. - You were Minister for Tourism, Culture, & Sport 2004-07 in Scotland. Did you have a lifelong interest in sport?

P.F. - Oh yes, I certainly did. But I was no athlete. I was one of those kids who tried to do every sport possible to try and find one that I was good at. I had a father who was very, very keen sportsman back to his army days, where he was a PT instructor. He always encouraged me to at least maintain the interest because he reckoned that an educated spectator was a valuable thing too, so that stood me in good stead for later on because I was pretty good at knowing the rules for many sports. [A.McM. - I noticed from your website that you had an interest in hillwalking too.] Yes I do - it’s the kind of thing that doesn’t really need a lot of co-ordination, compared with most sports. And of course you can fit it in occasionally at weekends when you get the chance or travelling to other engagements.

A.McM. - Could you tell me something about what the job entailed on a day-to-day basis? Most UK Ministers for Sport spend a lot of time on other things. Did you find that was the case?

P.F. - Well, I had the tourism and culture bits as well as sport, and I also had international development, architecture, heritage, and that kind of thing. So it was quite a wide brief in the same way that the UK Ministers have had. But I think if you asked any Minister if they had enough time to give to the things they most liked to do, and the issues they most wanted to concentrate on, they would say that they didn’t.

P.F. - But what I found very useful was that we had the opportunity to work across the three main portfolios because there’s a lot of cross-over between culture and sport, and between tourism and sport. I found it was quite useful to look at it that way.

P.F. - One of the big things that we were involved in was trying to make Scotland a major events destination. A lot of the major events that you can actually bring in to the country are sporting events, so it was very useful from that point of view. It had its challenges – it was a very events-driven portfolio, so it was a case of spending a lot of evenings and weekends either at sporting events or at cultural events. I am very interested in sport and very interested in culture, so I would probably have done a lot of it anyway, but not necessarily as much as I ended up doing.

A.McM. - When I was in Glasgow recently I noticed a great deal of publicity for the 2014 Commonwealth Games bid. Was that a major part of your work, and did it pose a challenge trying to adapt Hampden back to having a running track for the athletics?

P.F. - Yes, the Commonwealth Games bid was an issue we worked on extensively. What will actually happen is that the level of the playing field in Hampden will be raised a metre and there will be two rows of seats taken out. That will give them enough room to put in a track and that will be returned to its normal condition afterwards, so it won’t be a permanent track. But we’re going to have a new indoor arena in Glasgow and that will be the legacy. It will be better than the indoor arena at Kelvin Hall because it will have a velodrome and all sorts of other things as well. That was the sort of balance that we came to. We couldn’t have a permanent track at Hampden because there would be no long-term need for it. There are other permanent track facilities in Glasgow, like Scotstoun.

P.F. - We also felt that because we also have Ibrox and Parkhead in Glasgow, in addition to Hampden, three major stadia, we felt that would try to use all of them, and that’s in the bid. We would use Celtic Park, Parkhead, for the opening ceremony so that we didn’t have the
bother of dismantling everything in time for the athletics starting. We would use Hampden, of course, for the athletics and we would use Ibrox for the rugby. We would also extend the existing national aquatics centre at Tollcross for the swimming and diving events and other watersports.

A.McM. - The UK “Sports Cabinet” was set up in 1998 and had been running for six years when you joined. Did you find it useful?

P.F. - It was very useful indeed. It allowed us to exchange good ideas that we might have had individually. It also allowed us all to input to UK Sport because it’s a nationwide body and to receive reports about what it was doing. I used to meet with its head, Sue Campbell, about every six months, just to make sure we were up to speed with what was happening. She also had a very good relationship with the chair of Sports Scotland as well, as I did. So we had lots of connections in different ways which were really helpful in giving us the overall picture of sport throughout Britain.

P.F. - However, it was good to do it formally at a ministerial level as well. Another good thing was that it allowed us to meet as Ministers informally. We usually did that the night before at a working dinner amongst us all and to chat informally about the things that we didn’t want to raise formally.

P.F. - From our point of view we often did that. One of the very early things we did was getting all of the home nations signed up for the Glasgow Commonwealth Games bid. So it meant we could announce that we had the home nations in agreement for the Glasgow bid and it meant we could tie in their votes more or less. We would always have hoped to have got them anyway. But it gave us a good start to be able to say that all the home countries were backing us and giving us their votes. So I would say that overall it was a very good forum for getting us all together.

A.McM. - How often did it meet?

P.F. - It was supposed to be every six months, though sometimes it got knocked off track a little bit by unexpected events, but we usually tried to get the meeting rescheduled for another date within a month or so of the original one. So it was by and large about every six months.

A.McM. - Where did it meet? For example, did it rotate to each of the four locations of London, Belfast, Edinburgh, and Cardiff?

P.F. - Yes it did rotate to all the capital cities of the UK. We tried to meet in each of respective capitals in turn to give everybody a shot at hosting it.

A.McM. - Did all four UK Ministers turn up for every meeting (Richard Caborn, Michael McGimpsey, Alun Pugh, and yourself, even Tessa Jowell)?

P.F. - Oh yes they all did turn up, or they sent someone if they couldn’t make it personally, and so did Angela Eagle, another Labour MP. There was always representation from all of us. It was also good, for example, because we were always thinking about a new velodrome in Scotland and when we were down in Cardiff we got the opportunity to go to Newport to see theirs and how it all worked. So it was a chance to see that in practice, when you may not have made the trip just to do it on its own.

A.McM. - Could you take any kind of policy decisions, or was it a discussion forum?

P.F. - It was used mainly for discussion if there were areas of concern or major issues then we
could raise them there. Because a lot of it is devolved to the four home countries it was good just to make sure that we were all on the same wavelength and that we didn’t have the kind of difficulties that could arise if we didn’t meet to talk about them regularly. Though we all did that informally anyway by lifting the phone, it was always good to have the formal structure too.

A.McM. - Was the UK Minister (Richard Caborn in your time) dominant or was Tessa Jowell? Did he (or she) see himself as leader?

P.F. - I think we all had quite a good relationship with Dick and with each other. He did come as the UK Minister for Sport, despite the fact that we all had responsibility for it in our own countries. He didn’t try to dominate things, really. He was very inclusive certainly from my point of view. When I was in Melbourne last year for the Commonwealth Games he said to me that he had been round all these guys doing the lobbying for the Olympics and asked if there was anyone at all he could introduce me to or any doors he could open for me, or anything at all he could do for me then just to tell him. He really wanted to help our bid for 2014 Commonwealth Games. He was very helpful in that way.

A.McM. - He was seen as very influential in the successful London bid for the 2012 Olympics. Do you think that was true?

P.F. - Yes, certainly he was. He was very passionate about it and it’s a shame he won’t be seeing it through, but that’s politics. He’s off to do the World Cup bid for England in 2014 or 2018, whichever is possible. He was very helpful in that regard for getting the Olympics, as were other colleagues too. When they had connections and knowledge they would be happy to use those for you too, as I mentioned about us getting the Commonwealth Games.

A.McM. - Did he (or Tessa Jowell) try to influence policy in Scotland and make it the same as for the whole of the UK?

P.F. - No, they didn’t actually interfere too much at all. I think the devolution process has worked quite well because obviously while we have athletes who compete on the world stage at the Olympics as part of team GB we also have athletes who compete for Scotland and locally as well. So it’s good to have that kind of mix because the athletes like competing at the different levels. It’s good for them, and it’s appropriate also I think for politicians to mirror that by representing the UK on the one hand and their home countries on the other when the need arises.

A.McM. - Were there arguments over the authority of the home countries in terms of funding, resources, etc. amongst all the Ministers or UK Sport?

P.F. - No, not really, because we had our own sources of finance and it was up to us to disburse money as we thought best for sport in Scotland. What we did want to do though was make sure that as many Scottish athletes as possible got the opportunity to be on the World Class Performance Programme and to make sure that they had a level playing field for all of them. This was something that everybody wanted to achieve. You have to remember that those balances have to be seen to be fair as well throughout Britain. That was something that everybody was quite keen on wherever they came from in the country.

A.McM. - I know that Alex Salmond of the SNP is talking about a separate Scottish Olympics team. Is there a serious debate about this or is he making a political point?

P.F. - No, there is no demand for that at all in Scotland from amongst the competitors. It’s not something the athletes want and it’s not something the governing bodies want either. It’s not
something we would have supported when we were in government. There are all sorts of reasons why it shouldn’t happen. For instance, the IOC constitution would not allow it in any case, but also because our athletes don’t want it. They have the best of both worlds by competing for Team Scotland in the Commonwealth Games or other events and also compete for Team GB.

P.F. - Many of our athletes have won gold and other medals as part of a British team – Shirley Robertson in sailing for example has won British team medals, and Chris Hoy in cycling has won sprint medals as part of a GB team. People like that are much recognised for being part of a national team and this has actually helped their careers rather than anything else. It wouldn’t have been possible otherwise.

A.MeM. - What were your main achievements for sport in Scotland?

P.F. - I suppose I would say my job was a shared achievement because I got a lot of support and help from the First Minister who’s passionate about it too, but also from other ministerial colleagues from whom I used to get money occasionally. I got other kinds of support from health and education, for example, because we had shared agendas across government in Scotland. So it was all done with a lot of support from them. I suppose getting the Commonwealth Games bid up and running was the major thing I did during that time when I was in office.

A.MeM. - Is it a job you would like to do again if Labour get back into power in Edinburgh?

P.F. - I’ve no idea if I would get the job again because politics is a funny old game, but I would love to if I was offered the chance. We had actually said in our manifesto that if we won the Commonwealth Games bid, for Glasgow, which we’ll know in November, we would then have a dedicated Minister for Sport and I would have loved to have done that. That would have been a Cabinet-level job doing just sport.

A.MeM. - There’s been a debate in England for many years about what level the Minister for Sport should be, for instance in Cabinet. There seems to be a similar one going on in Scotland, though the Westminster model of a junior Minister reporting to a Secretary of State is not the same is it?

P.F. - Well I was a Cabinet Minister you know but not doing only sport because I did a whole lot more. Unfortunately that’s not now the case because the SNP has reorganised the functions. The Minister for Sport now also has responsibility for housing and communities and isn’t a Cabinet level Minister any more. I think that’s actually unhelpful.

P.F. - However, It’s a bit like the Westminster system because most Ministers had a deputy when we were in, though I didn’t have one and I was all on my own. But I was at Cabinet-level rather than just being at the deputy level. At the moment the numbers in the Cabinet are greatly reduced to about six - previously there were about ten or eleven of us. This was partly because we were in coalition and had more members to draw on and we had to have representatives of both parties. The SNP doesn’t have as many members as we did in coalition with the Liberal Democrats, so they’ve had to change things to suit what they’ve got.

A.MeM. - Thank you very much for your assistance. Can I quote you in my dissertation?

P.F. - Yes, certainly you can.
A.McM. - Do you think Alun Pugh would speak to me?

P.F. - I think he would. The last time I spoke to him just after the election in June he was still trying to make up his mind about what to do next. I'm not sure if he's actually managed to find a job yet. I'm sure you could get in touch through the Welsh Assembly because they still keep in contact with him and send mail on.

A.MeM. - Could you please tell me about the circumstances that led to your appointment as Minister for Sport?

N.M. - I got a telephone call from Michael Heseltine, when he was Secretary of State for the Environment. Sport was with Environment at that time before Heritage and Culture, Media and Sport were set up. I had been at Education for two years since the election and it was time for a change.

A.MeM. - I read in your book that Michael Heseltine said to you “You do like sport, don’t you?” when he was appointing you. Did you have a background in sport?

N.M. - Yes I did indeed. I played good club hockey in Essex and I played minor counties cricket for Essex as well, and I played a lot of rugby. Although I’m a Scotsman like my father, my mother was a Welsh hockey international and my grandfather was a Welsh rugby international many, many, many moons ago.

A.MeM. - So you had a long pedigree in sport, going back many years?

N.M. - Well we were steeped in it and I’m a member of the MCC and Essex Cricket Club, and various golf clubs. I played sport, I played cricket for as long as I could, even when I was a Member of Parliament. Then I found that nothing worked quite as well as it used to. My only exercise now is on the golf course. I’m looking forward to a week or ten days in March in Scotland.

A.MeM. - Are you playing golf there?

N.M. - Yes, I am playing golf on the east coast at St Andrew’s. My father was born in Ayr and I have known that coastline very well over the years, including Troon, Prestwick and Turnberry I still make it my business to go back whenever possible. Then I am going to the Open in July at Carnoustie, hoping for a Scottish win. It’s been a long time coming.

A.MeM. - You said in your book that being Sports Minister also involved dealing with Gypsies and gems, national parks, zoos, planning, and so on. Did you actually spend much time on sport?

N.M. - I did not spend as much time on sport as I would have liked, especially the planning of it and the liaising of it as I could have done. The town and country planning aspects took up a lot of my time, as you would expect, dealing with things from power stations to bypasses and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, SSSIs, ancient monuments, minerals and planning and land legislation or reclamation that we took through. Then there were of course the Gypsies, the zoos, national parks, Royal Parks, and nature conservation. Also we did the big Bill which I took through, which was the main heritage bill that we had never had before. All that took a lot of my time, and in terms of sport, I think there’s no doubt at that time we were dominated by football.

N.M. - As you will have read, there were the problems at Luton, and then we had the tragedy at the Heysel Stadium. I think I found the most difficult thing was dealing with the Football Association and the European Football Association because my officials and I pleaded with them not to have that final match at the Heysel but they went ahead and did it. I remember Margaret Thatcher saying to me, “I cannot understand why you cannot go to watch a sporting event without having to kill people, having to battle hooliganism on the streets, why you couldn’t just enjoy the spectacle”. I used to say to her well it doesn’t happen at rugby, it
doesn't happen anywhere else.

A.MeM. - It's better now than it used to be though because of the all-seater stadiums and other factors, isn't it?

N.M. - Exactly, and my successor, Colin Moynihan, had a terrible time with the Sheffield disaster. I think that we probably asked far too much of our Police. I think the Police at that stage were not well organised in trying to find out who the perpetrators were. They certainly weren't interested in sport, they were just interested in the bloodlust.

A.MeM. - The post was well-established by the time you held office. Do you think it was seen as an important one in government?

N.M. - Not necessarily. We sometimes struggled to get recognition and support from the inner-circles of government. The budget was always very small. I think at that time we were also trying to do our level best to implement initiatives with the Education Department and with the local education authorities because the prime purpose of sport is to make certain that the breeding grounds are good in schools. So we tried to do that as well though it wasn't always easy. That was quite a difficult problem.

N.M. - We cut across the work of other departments quite a lot, such as the Home Office, Education, and Trade and Industry for tourism. Then of course I had the problem with the cricket teams and the rugby teams going to South Africa.

A.MeM. - I was actually going to ask you about that. Reading through Hansard, as I have done, I have got an impression of the things you said and did, as well as for all the other Sports Ministers over the last forty years, and South Africa was clearly a prominent issue throughout.

N.M. - How interesting. [A.MeM - It was a very interesting exercise and it took me over a year to read through it all for every Sports Minister.] One of the problems I found was that I had more problems with the Conservative backbenchers than I did with the Labour Party on the Gleneagles declaration. I think that if you said to me that in my lifetime we would see Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa that would have seemed a long way away in 1985. It's amazing how it happened so quickly, but I personally was delighted because I played a lot of cricket with Graeme Pollock in the early 1960s. We played club cricket in Surrey and I was just delighted. I saw him many years later in Newlands in South Africa when I went out there with my wife and there he was sitting alongside all the coloured players, West Indian players, Sri Lankan players. But of course he just said, "I could never have believed this possible".

N.M. - I think the Gleneagles problem was very difficult because of our commitment to the United Nations anti-apartheid committee. That was paramount of course and it brought me into conflict with a lot of my old friends from rugby and cricket, especially the governing bodies. My old friend Graham Gooch took a team to South Africa with a lot of other players that I had known and played with many years before. It made life very difficult and uncomfortable for me for me. However, one overcomes these things.

A.MeM. - After reading through Hansard I did a calculation for each Sports Minister, looking at the issues you dealt with in sport in comparison with other matters and I came up with a calculation which indicated 23% of your time was spent on sport and 77% on other matters. Would that seem about right in your view?

N.M. - Absolutely spot-on. Absolutely right. I think you were right with your calculation,
which might have been eighty/twenty or seventy-five/twenty five from my memory. That’s very interesting. It’s a fascinating bit of research.

N.M. - And it’s always a difficult question to know to what extent a government has a right to interfere in sport. It’s best left to be run by the governing bodies though government still has to provide the funding. Of course sport is still a national voice that can generate a lot of national pride. When your sports teams are doing well, as you and I know. North of the border when our rugby team is doing well we all feel good. [A.McM. - and our various British football teams too, which doesn’t happen a lot nowadays.] It doesn’t happen a great deal, no, unfortunately.

A.McM. - What I also did was a sub-analysis looking at the issues in sport and trying to define what was a policy issue and what was not policy. I’ve come up with 34% policy and 66% non-policy for yourself. In other words about a third of your time devoted to sport was on sports policy and the other two thirds to operational matters in sport.

N.M. - Yes – how interesting! I’ve never done the calculation, but again it seems about right. Policy was never a strong point for us anyway. We tended just to go about things in a commonsense way. Each of the individual sports and governing bodies had their own policies and it was not for us to interfere too much. Of course there was policy in the sense that we would support this sport or that sport but not to tell them how to run their businesses.

A.McM. - What I found with the later Sports Ministers, particularly from when the Department of National Heritage was set up in 1992 by John Major, was that they have tended to devote more time to sport and to sports policy.

N.M. - I think that’s right, and undoubtedly having a Prime Minister like John Major who was himself devoted to sport was a help. I know that when he was a Whip on the government benches and I was a Minister he used to pass me messages. We used to test each other on how many left-handed batsmen there were in a team of England eleven, and who was top of the averages in 1966, all that sort of thing. So when he got in as Prime Minister he undoubtedly acknowledged that sport should play a higher profile as it does in some other countries. And I think they got it right, and I think it’s a good system they have now.

N.M. - Later Sports Ministers seem to have less to do with water, or planning, or transport that those in my time and that’s all to the good. I always wanted to see the Minister at a higher level, the Minister of State level, though perhaps not Cabinet, and that has actually happened. Perhaps they interfere more in policy than we did, particularly if the government is giving out a lot more money.

A.McM. - Do you think the funding provided by the National Lottery has made a significant impact, set up as it was by Mr Major’s government?

N.M. - It certainly does, and what you’ve got it a Secretary of State at the Cabinet table. When I was there I worked for Kenneth Baker, Patrick Jenkin, and Michael Heseltine and they were not really too interested in sport. I think in some respects the Foreign Secretary was more interested in sport because of the situation internationally with apartheid and other matters. Sport would always come up to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting which the Prime Minister attended and it would always come up on the various agendas whenever the Foreign Secretary travelled to the United Nations. I went to the Cabinet two or three times before the World Cup in 1982 to talk about it, and about tours to South Africa, and when several South African teams came here to play rugby. All that caused many problems, and of course there was the famous D’Oliveira case some years before.
A.McM. - When I looked through Hansard, I identified a number of issues that you have already mentioned, such as football hooliganism, apartheid, and Gleneagles. What do you think the other main sports policy issues were that you dealt with during your time in office?

N.M. - There were quite a few, but I think the main ones were Zola Budd; sponsorship of sport, especially tobacco; sale of school playing fields; sporting contact with Argentina, because there was a move to boycott them due to the Falklands dispute by people such as Tam Dalyell and Denis Howell; saving the Grand National course for the nation; drugs in sport; and possible Olympic bids for London and Manchester.

N.M. - The Zola Budd thing I thought was appalling at the time. I very nearly resigned over it because I felt that the newspaper, the Daily Mail, were just running it because they thought it was an interesting story which would help England or Britain to win a gold medal and nobody knew how good the runner was. In actual fact she wasn't any good at all. It was run by the Home Office who were terrified of the power of the Daily Mail. They asked for my views, and I said, “Look, you would not ask my views of the medical condition of somebody, so why do you think I would say someone should run for Britain or not”. I would not tell the England cricket selectors who to choose for their cricket team, although I might have an idea or two at the moment!

A.McM. - Do you think you were able to influence policy on any of these issues, or did the Secretary of State have the major input?

N.M. - Well I think we never really had policy discussions around a table. Policy for sport didn’t come from Cabinet Ministers at all, at least not when I was in office. It was worked out a much lower level, usually with civil servants. The points I did make were more and more at Cabinet committees involving other departments, for example working with Trade and Industry. I have sat on a couple of Cabinet committees dealing with tourism and they were chaired by Lord Young, or David Young as he was before, and I used to make the point that you cannot isolate tourism from big sporting events like the World Cup or Olympics. If you had World Cups, if you had big events, if you had the Olympic Games, and if you were hosting a number of other international sporting activities, Wimbledon, tours by rugby teams, various events around football, cycling, swimming, or whatever, they would by their very nature fill hotel bedrooms. There would be a benefit to tourism.

N.M. - I used to make the point that you cannot isolate tourism from big sporting events like the World Cup or Olympics. I always used to make certain that any tourist board reporting to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had made close contact with the Regional Sports Councils so they could work together to find out where the big sporting events were likely to be.

A.McM. - You also mentioned in your book that Denis Howell was writing his own job description for a Cabinet Minister in terms of bringing sport, tourism, and “quality of life” issues together in the way you’ve just described.

N.M. - Yes, absolutely! All of us used to think at one stage that really was what was needed, and Denis certainly did. If you want to have policy arguments you need to have more than a junior Minister at the table. And I think that the Labour Party have done that. I think that the Conservative Party in 1992 got off to a bad start with the Department of National Heritage because David Mellor had publicity for all the wrong reasons. It was a major distraction (though I can’t use the word “major” because he might not like it!). There were huge distractions at that time and it never got off the ground. I think Blair picked that up quite quickly. Blair has associated himself with quite a lot of policy-making for sport.
A.McM. - Mellor was only the Secretary of State for a few months before Peter Brooke came in, wasn’t he?

N.M. - Peter Brooke or Virginia Bottomley, I can’t quite remember.

A.McM. - It was Peter Brooke after David Mellor. He didn’t seem to be much interested in sport, though perhaps you had a different impression?

N.M. - He was a keen cricketer. He played lot and once took a very good slip catch off me. Those were the days before we had wobbly hips!

A.McM. - The other Secretary of State you worked with was Tom King. Did he have an interest in sport?

N.M. - Yes I did work with him! I had forgotten Tom. He was very interested in sport, more so than Michael Heseltine, or Ken Baker, or Patrick Jenkin. But that was in the run-up to the 1983 election and there wasn’t too much about sport at that time. He was only there for a few months.

A.McM. - Did you have close relationships with the Sports Council, the CCPR, and the British Olympic Association?

N.M. - I always enjoyed working with them very much. We had Dicky Jeeps as chairman of the Sports Council, then John Smith. Sadly I had to ask Dicky Jeeps to leave because he had been there a long time and I had to ask him to step aside. That was a very difficult business, but anyway he went.

N.M. - The CCPR were a very good organisation with Mary Glen-Haig and Keith Mitchell as chairmen and Peter Lawson as secretary. I liked dealing with them because they brought together all the governing bodies of sport. A fine organisation who knew their stuff.

N.M. - The BOA was run by Dennis Follows as chairman and Dick Palmer as secretary. I always used to get on very well with them both when we went to events or met up at meetings.

A.McM. - Was it easier to work through the representative bodies rather than the individual governing bodies, since it could be difficult to get round them all?

N.M. - Yes absolutely! It was much easier to go to them and their annual meeting in January which was always in Bournemouth for two or three days. And the Sports Council I think was October or November. You could always meet 20 or 30 of the key governing bodies of sport at these gatherings. I found that most encouraging, and entertaining, and stimulating. They were a good audience and they understood it. I think they all used to bemoan the fact that you couldn’t ever elevate sport within the Cabinet and the government. Anyway that’s all in the past, it’s all changed now.

A.McM. - How did you meet with the individual national governing bodies? Were there regular arrangements?

N.M. - We used to have one-on-one meetings. Many would request to come and see me and I always agreed. I never missed a chance to support them at weekend functions. I spent an awful lot of time at weekend events such as Wimbledon, rugby, cricket, watching cycling, other championships, all that sort of thing, basketball, netball, hockey. There was always
something on most weekends to go to, either a conference, a competition, or something. I
would go to watch club rugby or international rugby, and I would always try and entertain
any visiting dignitaries from France or Australia or Samoa or Fiji. I would always try to meet
all the visiting representatives. It was a labour of love. I always made it my business to go to
watch Scotland play whenever I could, having to try to be impartial. When we beat Wales in
Cardiff once by 29 points to 6 I could scarcely contain myself. [A.McM. - That must be
quite some time ago?] Yes it was some years now, I don’t remember how many, but it was
wonderful when it happened.

N.M. - I enjoyed dealing with governing bodies. There were many governing bodies of sport
who were very well organised and I certainly made it my duty to try to introduce as many
sportsman and sportswomen into the business of running the Regional Sports Councils,
people like Bernard Gallagher, Mark Nicholas, Bill Beaumont, and Clive Lloyd. People like
that I got in to help run regional sport. One of the best things I ever did was to bring in Bobby
Charlton to be chairman of the North West Sports Council. In fact I wanted him to be
chairman of the Sports Council and I also wanted Chris Chataway to be chairman of the
Sports Council but they both declined it. Chataway was too busy. Then he became a member
of the BBC and he turned me down.

N.M. - There are also the friendships I have developed with some sportspeople. For example,
there’s Ken Schofield the golfer. I hadn’t met him but he wrote to me around 1981-82. He
wanted to come and talk to me about golf. It was a friendship that went on and still goes on. I
still see him and play with him. That was largely to do with the importance of the Ryder Cup
and how golf could become more involved in the lives of young people. How could we help
young people take up golf? As you and I know in Scotland, there is a presumption in favour
of junior golf, and in England it’s a totally different matter, it’s more elitist. When my own
young sons wanted to play in the 1970s they were frowned on. Whereas there are signs up
around Gullane and Leven and St Andrew’s that only the under 14 years olds may play here
at certain times. It’s wonderful, it’s part of the natural culture.

N.M. - That was good, and I managed to quite a lot of things to help young people and
improve access such as pay as you play. I would meet the governing bodies of golf whenever
I could. I thoroughly enjoyed it and I used to enjoy meeting them more when I was preferably
at a weekend event and not likely to be interrupted by some problem in government or some
Parliamentary question on the Royal Parks, ancient monuments, historic buildings or what
have you. So a good time to meet the governing bodies was informally at weekends, rather
than structured arrangements during the week.

A.McM. - Was there a select committee at the time you were in office?

N.M. - No there wasn’t one that dealt only with sport. It used to cut across the work of other
select committees, and I think in the main I was usually summoned by the Home Office
Select Committee to answer questions on football hooliganism and violence. I used to
accompany a Home Office Minister and they would want to quiz me about my relationships
with the Football Association and the Football League. It was quite useful having colleagues
there that I knew, even from other parties. There was a Labour MP called Jack Dunnett who
was the chairman of Notts County and he was president of the Football League and so it was
quite useful having him in the House of Commons because he was the MP of one of the
Nottingham seats and I could often talk to him in the corridors and say, “Look Jack, what are
we going to do about something or other”, and he would always be very helpful and very
constructive.

A.McM. - How would you describe your relationships with civil servants?
N.M. - We had our own sports and recreation division, called SARD at the Department of the Environment, where our relationships were always excellent. Happily the people who dealt with sport had a big interest in it anyway. They were very motivated by sport and usually came from a sporting background. They had a two or three year tour of that particular department. They were full of ideas and I suppose you could say that's where the policies were developed, especially when they went out to talk to governing bodies. They used to do sport all the time, whereas I had to split my time doing many other things.

A.McM. - Were there different sets of civil servants for sport and for your other, non-sports duties?

N.M. - Yes indeed, and it was sometimes difficult to separate all the different activities. Certainly you had to read up pretty quickly at weekends on documents they gave you when dealing with sizeable planning applications or coal mines applications.

A.McM. - What do you think your main achievements were for sport?

N.M. - I think the main achievements were:-

N.M. - Bringing together so many of the governing bodies, something that had not been done before. We were able to work more closely together, and meet more frequently on many informal occasions, as well as the few formal meetings we had.

N.M. - I think also the thing that I hope we did was to enhance the role of the Sports Council in the regions of the country by gaining a bigger profile and by having a proper chairman who was a sportsman or sportswoman together with officials in the regions who were coordinating the sport there.

N.M. - I was also determined not to isolate or outlaw tobacco alongside all the other pressures we were coming up against in sport because it undoubtedly had not been isolated or outlawed by the Department of Health. I said you can't do this to tobacco because it means an awful lot to cricket and golf. And I know that most people in sport are not encouraged to smoke just because they see the Benson and Hedges Trophy, or tobacco advertising in golf, rugby, cricket, or whatever. It was putting a lot of money into sport. The day when the Department of Health comes and says it is going to outlaw tobacco is when we would do it as well. You don't use sport as a whipping boy. I used to resist that year, after year, after year. I always had a steady ally in Denis Thatcher because he was a heavy smoker.

N.M. - I used to argue that it was no good telling me to stop sports people going to South Africa if we didn't stop English business people going to South Africa or to Zimbabwe. It should come as a whole package, rather than just trying to penalise sport. That was my attitude to the 1980 Olympic boycott too.

N.M. - I think those are a few of the successful policy initiatives that I look back on, although none were what you might call major policies. Though you know it all goes so quickly and I had a lot of fun at the time.

A.McM. - How do you think the profile and definition of sport has changed over time for the Minister? For instance, is there now more of an emphasis on health and fitness, rather than competitive sport?

N.M. - I think a lot has changed. In my day there were probably about 25 to 30 governing bodies of the main sports, whereas there are probably about 60 now. Certainly the world of athletics was the most successful at that time, 1981 to 1985. We had Coe and Ovett, Steve
Cram, Daley Thompson, a whole raft of winners. I was joking the other day with a friend of mine at the golf club that I can’t understand the problem. When I was in power we won the Ashes twice! That was just a good thing for me being around at the right time. But you can see the point I am making. There are just more governing bodies of sport around now than there were, and there are so many more of what are minority sports than when I was a Minister, at which we are successful.

N.M. - There is absolutely the problem we have with less emphasis on competitive sports, perhaps reducing the pool of talent we have at the highest levels. I can’t understand what’s going wrong with our football because we have rely on so many imports to make the league work. I still can’t quite work out whether or not we are producing enough sportsmen, enough soccer players from our own backyard, or whether or not we are just a nation of spectators. When I was watching all the cricket over the last few weeks, all those thousands of people who go and watch I couldn’t bear doing that as a youngster, I’d want to be participating. I’ve got the feeling that maybe we’re more spectators now than 40 years ago.

N.M. - Though there is now more access than ever for things such as skiing, fencing, swimming, running, cycling, and the facilities are so much better than when you and I were youngsters, this doesn’t necessarily translate into international success because much of it is non-competitive. I think there are more facilities and people are more aware now. You read all the newspapers on sport and you just realise how many fixtures and events that are going on, just how many there are throughout the country.

N.M. - In 1948 at the Olympic Games they had about 12 or 14 events, but now there are at least 30 or 40. I remember when Colin [Moyhnan] and I went to the Olympic Games in 1984 in Los Angeles I spent most of my time watching the hockey because I understood that and we won a silver medal. The best player was Sean Curley who scored lots of goals. I preferred to go and watch that than some of the other things such as shooting. You can’t really watch shooting. And I didn’t understand the bows and arrows stuff because it wasn’t something I found interesting, and I wasn’t much good with that. The swimming I found interesting, but I didn’t enjoy that silly stuff, what do you call it. [A.McM. - synchronised swimming?] Yes that was it! Clive James once called it formation drowning.

N.M. - I understood the hockey and I loved going to the Olympic Games stadium to watch the track events but the 100 metres you couldn’t really see because it was all over in about 9 point something seconds with Carl Lewis. You could watch Backley throwing the javelin and Tessa Sanderson. It was tremendous watching that and the high jump, but the other ones were over in 9 seconds or 22 or 44 seconds and I didn’t find them all that entertaining. Whereas watching the hockey with the Indians and the Germans and the Dutch and the Australians and the British team was absolutely outstanding with the speed of the play. Watching the three-day eventing was interesting too.

N.M. - I think nowadays you’ll probably find with the Olympic Games in 2012 there will be about 45 events going on. Incidentally, I am delighted about the Olympic Games coming here in 2012, which I hope will be successful and I’m sure it will be. I was keen to have them many years before but it wasn’t very popular at that time because of terrorism and Ulster and other things. Seb Coe has done an absolutely outstanding job. You see that’s the importance of having somebody who understands sport.

A.MeM. - Seb Coe didn’t actually go far in politics because his time in Parliament was cut short when he lost his seat. Do you think that Minister for Sport would have been a career he would have chosen?

N.M. - Well I think he might have eventually been Secretary of State covering sport if he
hadn’t lost his seat and we had won the election. His ambitions were probably higher than junior Minister. In many ways he is probably better off where he is running the Olympic Games or organising it because he understands the Olympic movement. He understands Olympic politics as much as Princess Anne does because they’ve been on the IOC for all these years and at the same time he’s one of our greatest athletes ever.

N.M. - My guess is he would have been disappointed losing his seat and not going much further in government. Some of us did plead with him not to go down to Falmouth with all the Liberal territory and some of said you would be much better off looking for a seat in Surrey or Hampshire or Sussex. But anyway he went off down to Falmouth and it was very sad when he lost it because he could have done an awful lot if he had stayed on and we had won but we’ve been in Opposition since 97. If a Conservative government ever came back in, which I hope it does in the not too distant future the possibility is that he could be a Minister from the House of Lords. He could well be Lord Coe as Minister for Sport or Secretary of State and it might be a good thing to put it up there in the Lords.

N.M. - That reminds of Chris Chataway again. He was in my office one day, the same day that Seb Coe was coming up see me. They met in the corridor and they both said, “I’ve always wanted to meet you”. I said, “Don’t you know each other” and they said, “No, we’ve never met”. And I said, “How unforgivable of me. I should have introduced you. If I had known you didn’t know each other I would have brought you together for a drink”. Chris Chataway, said, “I’ve always wanted to meet you” and Seb Coe said, “You’re my hero”. Chataway was a wonderful athlete who trained on 10 cigarettes a day. Unthinkable now.

A.McM. - In your book you seem to suggest that Labour and Conservative policies for sport were very similar. Was there a consensus in sport policy, compared with the ideological differences on most other issues?

N.M. - Yes I think there was a broad measure of agreement on many aspects of sports policy. Indeed I relied on the Labour Party for quite a lot of support, particularly when it came to the Gleneagles declaration. I found myself being criticised from people behind me. John Carlisle was always very vociferous and there were some others in my own party. I had to rely upon Denis Howell and Neil Kinnock very often to speak in support of what I was trying to do.

A.McM. - Did you know any of the other Ministers for Sport before or after you and could you comment on them?

N.M. – Well, I’ll comment a little on some of them, if I can remember. A good man Denis Howell was and always very helpful to me. I knew him well and we agreed on most things to do with sport.

N.M. - Eldon Griffiths was in the House at my time and he in fact used to do quite a lot for paraplegic sport. He organised the first Olympic Games for paraplegics which he held in this country about 1984 or 85 I think but he’s now living in California. I haven’t seen or heard of him for years.

N.M. - My dear friend Hector Monro died recently. He was a very good friend of mine, a lovely man, and I succeeded him. [A.McM. - He nearly resigned over the Olympic boycott in 1980?] Yes he did, he was almost forced to go over the Olympics because he was extremely brassed off over that. The problem was that Margaret just did not consult. It was Carter who got everyone round the table and said, “What are we going to do” and the boycott was the result. Well that was that anyway and they agreed to do it but I think it was a great pity. It hurt him badly and he was on the verge of resignation.

285
N.M. - I knew Richard Tracy because he was neighbour of mine in our parliamentary seats. I didn’t know him very well and he wasn’t there a long time. I don’t think he enjoyed it very much.

N.M. - Colin Moynihan was a pretty good friend of mine. His parents lived in my old constituency of Sutton and Cheam, so we had a lot of contact and he came out to canvass for me when he was still a schoolboy in the 1970s. I played golf with him and I always got on very well with him. A very, very good man. I liked him a lot.

N.M. - I never knew Robert Atkins very well. Our paths didn’t seem to cross much. Of course I knew of him in the House of Commons but by that time I had retired from Parliament and become chairman of Securicor. Were there others?

[A.McM. - Iain Sproat?] Golly yes, I’d forgotten about Iain. I went to see him once after I’d retired when he was a Minister and somebody asked me if I knew him, but I’ve forgotten what it was about. Somebody asked me to do it. He was a very keen cricketer, Iain, and wrote a very good book on cricket. I think he was under John Major wasn’t he? [A.McM. - Yes he was and so was Robert Key.]

N.M. - Robert Key? Was Robert Minister for Sport? [A.McM. - He was Minister for just a year but reshuffled because of a financial scandal concerning other MPs.] Oh yes, I remember now. I think it was something to do with Al Fayed, wasn’t it. But I don’t remember him as Minister for Sport, perhaps because of the short time he was there.

N.M. - Caborn’s been there some time now. Must be one of the longest serving. Don’t really know him though.

N.M. - Tony Banks I do remember, but not much, and Kate Hoey I don’t know. I can’t really comment on them.

A.McM. - Why did you leave office? In your book you mention that around the middle of 1985 you had almost had enough because of the “Little Englander” attitude towards hosting the Olympics in the UK. Was that a factor?

N.M. - Exactly, it was the main reason I went. I didn’t like the rejection out of hand of the Olympic Games and the Little Englander attitude. Also, I realised that I had been a junior Minister for six or seven years overall, including at Education before sport. I was getting close to fifty and my daughter was going to university so I just got a bit bored with what I’d been doing. I felt that I couldn’t go anywhere else, so I offered to resign and Margaret Thatcher accepted it. We stayed very good friends and I played a lot of golf with Denis Thatcher subsequently and supported the government fully. But I didn’t like the rejection out of hand of the Olympic Games bids and the “Little Englander” attitude. I felt that an awful lot of the things that had happened in the last year or two with the Bradford fire, and the Heysel, and so on were very bad. I felt that the Home Office and the Police and the Football Association and League were not doing enough to police the game better. It took a lot of time organising that and I didn’t miss it. I was happy to move away.

A.McM. - Was there any possibility of a comeback under Michael Heseltine, whom you supported for the leadership of the Party in 1990?

N.M. - By that time I had become chairman of a couple of companies and I made it quite clear that I wasn’t interested in a comeback. Once I had made up my mind to leave politics, I always said I was doing this because I had known him for a very long time. During his election campaign for the leadership I made it quite clear to him that he owed me nothing and
that I was quite happy to do other things. I promised my wife I wouldn’t go back to doing it. Also my children were growing up and I hadn’t seen much of them, So I wanted to see more of them now that they had started to become late teenagers and that I was enjoying the work that I was doing. I knew that I was going to give up the House of Commons at the next election anyway. So it was all good fun, it was interesting.

A.MeM. - Thank you very much Sir Neil. I am very grateful to you.

N.M. - I’m delighted you contacted me. I was pleased to get your letter and know that someone is interested in what we did all those years ago.

A.MeM. - Would it be possible to quote you in my dissertation?

N.M. - Certainly you can. I have no objection at all.

A.MeM. – Do you think any of the other former Sports Ministers would talk to me?

N.M. – Try Colin Moynihan – he’s probably your best bet.
4. Mr Iain Sproat (31 May 2007)

A.McM. - Hello Mr Sproat. Thank you very much for agreeing to talk to me.

I.S. - I was very glad to. I actually come up here to London about once a week now. I have plenty of time now that I'm retired, and my time's my own. Have you been up in London long today? [A.McM. - I came up this morning and went to the Queen Mother Sports Centre. I went running there, then swimming before coming here.] I used to live near there when I was an MP, in Dolphin Square actually. Funnily enough, I never went in to the sports centre. Perhaps it was something to do with being a Minister – I was too busy. Anyway, what did you want to talk to me about?

A.McM. - You were one of the longest-serving Conservative Ministers for Sport at almost four years, just behind Neil MacFarlane. Could you please tell me about the circumstances that led to your appointment.

I.S. - It was quite involved actually, and went back a long way, but I'll tell you some of how it came about. I was a special advisor to the Prime Minister at the time of the 1987 election, when I was out of Parliament. John Major was at that time, I think, at Social Security and we had barely spoken. I met him by chance and he was under a lot of pressure with the job and not very happy in it. I'm sure he hoped for a change after the election. As I recall he became Chief Secretary to the Treasury then. We started talking about cricket because he was a fanatic for it. He was worried that his son was taking too much of an interest in football and asked me to send some of my books on cricket to try to get him more involved in that. I was happy to do it, so I sent a few, but I don't know if it made any difference.

I.S. - I was out of Parliament from 1983 to 1992, then I got back for Harwich. When it came to the first reshuffle after the 1992 election I got a call from 10 Downing Street asking me to go there and see the PM. I went, not knowing what to expect, and there was John sitting on his own at the long Cabinet table. The first thing he said to me was, "What are we going to do about England?" and I replied, "Well, I think it's a bit much asking Alex Stewart to be captain and also be the opening batsman, so that needs to be changed." Then he said to me, "No, no. I meant what are we going to do about the country, the economy and all that? It's all a bit of a mess."

I.S. - I had no answer for that, but I don't think he had a job in mind for me along those lines anyway, although I had been at Trade and Industry from September 1981 to June 1983. I think he remembered me from our discussions on cricket, so he offered me the Sports Minister job, and of course I accepted it. Certainly, I would have liked a Cabinet-level job, but my nine years out of Parliament put me right out of the picture, and it was nice to get back in at any level.

I.S. - But actually, there was another reason which I would prefer it if you would keep quiet about for now. Apparently, Jeffrey Archer was desperate for the job and John wanted to keep him out. Archer had just got his peerage and really wanted to be in government but there was no way John Major would have him. [A.McM. - He was a good sprinter, running at the same time as Menzies Campbell in the sixties, wasn't he?] Yes, but I don't think he would have been a good Minister and John knew that. John had a serious agenda for sport, as we will no doubt discuss, and he couldn't have Archer in there. Archer's agenda was just for himself.
A.McM. - When you became Minister for Sport did you continue writing books on cricket?

I.S. - Yes I did. I got special dispensation from my Secretary of State to carry on doing them because they didn't conflict with my job. I've always been interested in writing and publishing. I'm now part-time chairman of a small publishing house. We are just putting out the complete works of Alexander Pushkin in an English translation.

A.McM. - You seemed to do a great deal on matters other than sport, such as tourism, ancient monuments, libraries, museums, listed buildings, Royal Parks, National Lottery, film, TV, broadcasting, and so on. Could you tell me something about what the job entailed on a day-to-day basis?

I.S. - That's a fair old list. How did you compile it? [A.McM. - I read every one of your speeches and Parliamentary questions in Hansard, as I did for all the other Sports Ministers. I calculated that you spent only around 21% of your Parliamentary time on sport. Did I? I had no idea of the figure really. But yes, there was all that and more. I was one of the last Ministers for Sport who has so much to do. When DCMS was set up after 1997, the Ministers could concentrate much more on sport than I, or my predecessors, were ever able to do.

I.S. - Overall, the figure of 21% on sport may be accurate, and I have no reason to doubt it, but it did not quite work out like that in practice. Sometimes sport was right at the front taking all my time and sometimes it was other things. For example, there could be days when I would work only on libraries or museums. I remember one document called Reading: the Future, which was a paper on libraries. I had to spend days on that to get it from first draft to something useful. At other times it was all sport and little else, especially in a crisis, such as an episode of football hooliganism. It depended very much on circumstances what I was involved in at any particular time.

I.S. - In terms of sport, there were always sporting events to attend in the evenings and at weekends. There were meetings with sports governing bodies or the Sports Council, committees, conferences and the like. Sometimes it could be an annual conference of the CCPR or an overseas event, such as the 1996 Olympics or Euro 96 at home. There was just so much to do and never enough time to give to sport.

I.S. - I did quite a bit for the arts and heritage as well, you know, sometimes as a result of sport. I remember attending a rugby league game up north in a mining constituency in County Durham. I was taken round a colliery by some miners when I said I had never been down a pit and would quite like to do it. First they showed me round the buildings, where I saw a picture on the wall of an eighteen inch coal seam being worked by a miner on his side. I misread the date as 1881, when it was really 1981. I couldn't believe it!

I.S. - Anyway, they took me down the pit and I saw lots of old tools left lying around, some very ancient. I actually used one to knock out a lump of coal which I still have. I told them the tools should be in their museum. They said they didn't have one, so I arranged for a grant of £500,000 to set one up. It's still there and thriving. Last year was the tenth anniversary, to which I was invited. The pits in that area have all closed now of course, having been there since 1797.

I.S. - There was a great deal of inter-departmental work involved, for example with Environment. John Selwyn Gummer was in charge of it all the time I was Sports Minister and I didn't like him at all. We had to deal a lot with local government because much of sport is
done at that level, and of course Environment is the department responsible. Gummer did not appreciate sport or what local government did for it. However, his junior Minister, David Curry was very good to work with.

I.S. - Another department we had to work closely with was Education. Gillian Shepherd was the Secretary of State there for part of the time and she was a very unhelpful person in relation to sport in schools. She was just not interested, especially as a core subject for inspection. Before her we had John Patten at Education and he was no different. We tried to build bridges but they did not want to. When they did it was just plain stupid. For instance, they wanted to put things in *Raising the Game* that had nothing to do with sport in my view, such as pastoral care. I had no idea what they meant by that. There have been people in sport from a religious background, like David Shepherd in cricket who went on to be the Bishop of Liverpool. But he had no particular religious brief in cricket and I thought that was something we should stay well clear of. Sport and religion do not mix very well as we see in Northern Ireland or Glasgow.

I.S. - They were very protective of their own area and did not want interference. You see that’s the problem with sport – it cuts across so many other departmental interests in Education, Environment, Health, and so on. There’s was very little co-ordination and no incentive for departments to co-operate with each other.

A.McM. - Was it a big handicap having to deal with so many subjects outside sport, because it must have severely limited the time you could devote to sport?

I.S. - Yes, it certainly was a disadvantage most of the time I was there. From the sporting point of view it would obviously have been much better to have concentrated only on sport, but that was a luxury I didn’t have. It was just not possible at that time with the departmental set up the way it was. It was always envisaged that the Sports Minister doing just sport would not have enough to do! I know it sounds silly, but it’s true. I certainly could have filled my days with only sport, though I think other Ministers would have felt it was just like me being on holiday all the time. Ministers at National Heritage had to multi-task, whereas I think those at DCMS now have a very cosy time. However, it’s not apparent to me that they have done more for sport than I did with much less time to do it.

A.McM. - What were the main sports policy issues that you dealt with during your time in office?

I.S. - Oh, there were so many of them. For example there was the issue of drugs in sport, because doping was a longstanding problem. Sports grounds safety came up a lot too, with the Taylor Report around at that time. There was always something about football going on like transfers, Euro 96, hooliganism, or reform of league structures. Football to me is now tainted with disrespect for the rules, cheating, lack of ethics, and far too much money for its own good. The standards of play are not even very high and are getting worse, despite the money. Or is it because of it? Sometimes I don’t really know. Other things at the time were tobacco sponsorship, bids for international events, the Olympic bid for Manchester 2000. That would that be a fair list, wouldn’t it?

A.McM. -You focussed a lot on school sport, didn’t you? It was one of the main elements of *Raising the Game*

I.S. - Yes I did indeed. Schools sport was one of my main areas of interest, as was the sale of playing fields and the encouragement of team sports in schools. We spent a lot of time trying to stop the sale of school playing fields. You see, it was mainly Labour authorities who were doing it, not the Tories. Sometimes it wasn’t as bad as it seems because it would be the sale
of a redundant school and fields where a new one had been built. There was not necessarily a
net loss of playing fields in that case because there was some replacement, though where
there was a real potential loss we tried to stop it.

I.S. - The biggest barrier from the National Heritage point of view was the Department of
Education. They were a quite dreadful department with no feel so sport at all. They had no
interest in sport in schools and they did not care either. They did not pay any heed to the
wider government agenda of health, sport, fighting obesity, and so on. We at National
Heritage saw school sport as the first vital step in getting young people interested, then
through them to local sports clubs. Those ideas were built into my report Raising the Game
in 1995. We used to have inter-departmental meetings with them and I kept bringing up these
issues.

I.S. - For instance, we in National Heritage wanted sport included in the national curriculum
but they would not have it. I suggested that the schools inspectors should also inspect schools
for sporting excellence and was told it was not possible because the inspectors finished at
3.30 when school finished. Since many sporting activities took place after school the
inspectors could not therefore inspect them. It left me utterly dumfounded and frustrated. I
just couldn’t believe it.

I.S. - I was very keen on team sports, which I wanted much more of in schools. I happen to
think it builds all the virtues of teamwork, fair-play, and respect for authority that I value. Of
course there are the added benefits of health and fitness, as well as the seed corn of sporting
excellence for the future. I never really made much headway with schools until I got John
Major’s personal authority and endorsement behind Raising the Game.

A.McM. - Raising the Game came out in July 1995, with the Parliamentary debate in
June 1996. You also instituted the Sports Council restructuring, which was going on at
the same time, or just before. In the background was the National Lottery, which made
a lot more things possible. Would you say those were your main achievements?

I.S. - Raising the Game was probably the most important achievement of my time as Minister
for Sport, and it’s something I’m very proud of. It was the first statement of sports policy
since Denis Howell’s White Paper of 1975, a full twenty years before. John Major backed me
on that. I actually wrote it all myself, though John Major insisted on putting in a long
foreword on the benefits of the Lottery, sport in schools, and the British Academy of Sport.
The Academy was something I was very keen on indeed, based on the Australian model
which proved to be so successful in the Sydney Olympics of 2000. We didn’t want the
government to run it, but only to facilitate and encourage it.

I.S. - The Academy was at the top end. Below that, we wanted to develop sport through the
schools and community clubs. There was great potential in developing links between local
clubs and schools, using Lottery money for facilities and so on. In the schools we put forward
the proposal for two hours of good quality sport and games per week, although the education
people resisted this constantly. John Major backed me on that and now it’s considered the
bare minimum, though it’s hardly a lot really. In reality, I doubt if they even do as much in
the majority of schools.

I.S. - We saw the whole thing as a continuum from schools and clubs at the bottom, through
to elite sport and the British Academy at the top. Running beside this, there was great
potential for sport in the universities and colleges, as there is in the USA, providing another
route to top class sport for young people leaving school. All of this was to be developed by a
variety of agencies, the private sector, Sports Council, partnerships, coaches, and others. It
wasn't for the government to run sport, but to make sure there was an appropriate framework
for it to run itself with government backing.

I.S. - It's just a pity Labour didn't carry through with it when they came to power in 1997. Tony Banks felt he had to disown it because it was Tory policy and he was told to by Tony Blair. Tom Pendry, Labour's sport spokesman when I was Minister, was very much in favour of it. [A.MeM. - I spoke to him and he gave me your address. He said that Labour and the Conservatives really had a bipartisan approach to sports policy. Was that true?] Yes we did actually. We worked very closely together and had an excellent personal relationship. He had actually been a good boxer at university and knew about sport. When I showed him a draft of *Raising the Game* he agreed with everything we were doing, especially the Academy of Sport. He only added a few suggestions and didn't want anything taken out.

I.S. - Then one day when Tom and I were actually together in the House not long before the 97 election he got a telephone call from Tony Blair. He came back quite upset because Blair had told him not to agree with Tory policy. There was not much he could do about it and probably hoped that Blair would forget about sport after the election because he would have more important things to deal with. Then Tom could get on and do what he wanted. He was bitterly disappointed when he didn't get the job and Banks did, after having shadowed sport for years. I sent him a letter of sympathy after the election and he took me out to lunch in return. [A.MeM. - He read out your letter to me when we spoke. He was very touched by it and had it near to hand.] Did he now? Well I'm glad it had some beneficial effect.

A.MeM. - How involved were you in influencing policy on sports issues? For example did you get closely involved in writing *Raising the Game*, or was it driven by civil servants?

I.S. - I can say that every word of *Raising the Game* was mine. I did it all, but I had the good fortune that John Major was very much in favour of it and behind me. In fact, he tried to claim it as his own document. Without his backing though I doubt if I could have done as much. The Secretaries of State, Stephen Dorrell and Virginia Bottomley had no interest whatsoever. They didn't actually oppose it, but they just saw a statement of sports policy as being of no consequence to the greater good of the department. On the other hand I did actually get resistance from the civil servants. The ideas in it were mine, or ones I had inherited from Robert Key and Robert Atkins. Because they were not really the civil servants' policies they had no sense of ownership nor the will to see them through.

I.S. - The Sports Council was also against it because they thought that the Academy would remove some of their functions. I knew it would but I insisted to them that we must have it. I also drove through the Sports Council restructuring into UK Sport and Sport England, which they didn't want either. I saw it as the best way forward to have a Sports Council for England to parallel the ones in Scotland and Wales. In that way UK Sport could concentrate on elite sport for the whole of the UK. This is essentially the structure that exists today.

I.S. - Actually, to get any policy decision through it has to have the support of the Secretary of State at least. In my case, I really bypassed them by having a PM in Major who was interested in sport. Secretaries of State are very often not interested in sport because they feel they have more important things to do. It is not a high priority for them, so it's therefore very difficult for someone at my level to influence policy in normal circumstances.

A.MeM. - How would you describe your relationship with:--

(a). The Secretaries of States you worked with at National Heritage? In particular, did they get involved in sports policy-making or did they leave it to you?
Peter Brooke (Sept. 1992-July 1994)

I.S. - None of the Secretaries of State were really interested in sport in its wider sense as an activity of government. However, Peter Brooke was very keen on cricket. In fact, I would say he was fanatical about it. I don’t remember him being at all interested in any other sports. He was a lovely, civilised man who was very good to work with and we got on well together. But like all Secretaries of State he had to have the final word on decisions. He would leave things to me in general so long as I didn’t bother him, though for anything important he had ultimate authority. I don’t think he actually wanted the job and fell into it by accident after David Mellor had to leave. Unfortunately I didn’t get to work with Mellor, who was genuinely keen on sport as well as the arts. Brooke was more of an arts man. MelIor set up the National Heritage department after the 1992 election and apparently did an excellent job in his short time there.

Stephen Dorrell (July 1994-July 1995)

I.S. - Dorrell knew very little about sport and showed no interest at all. In fact when I found out that his father had played once at county level for Worcestershire I tried to talk to him about it. He just said, “Oh yes, that, and by the way what about such and such museum?” He just didn’t want to talk about it and had no feel for sport at all. He didn’t actually oppose what I was doing but didn’t actually support me either.

Virginia Bottomley (July 1995-May 1997)

I.S. - Virginia and I had an early row not long after she came in, not about sport but something else entirely. She would never have been passionate enough about sport to have a row about it. After that, she just left me alone to get on with it. I think she was actually quite a good Secretary of State in general terms, despite having no knowledge of or interest in sport. The person I thought who would have done really well in the job was Ann Widdecombe. I think she would have got it if she had been prettier. She was actually a lovely woman to get on with, despite her fierce demeanour, and would have been great in Cabinet.

(b). The Sports Council and related bodies (e.g. CCPR, BOA, UK Sport)?

I.S. - The Sports Council was a terrible organisation to work with. They were very unhelpful to me and tried to fight against government policy all the time, especially Raising the Game. And of course, they didn’t like my proposals for restructuring either because it would reduce their influence. They only wanted us to give them money then leave them alone to spend it. An equally difficult, or even greater, problem were the devolved Sports Councils in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Not only were they fighting against me, they were also fighting against the Sports Council as well because they saw that as an English organisation that was a rival for resources. The Northern Ireland one was the worst. They had responsibility for a number of cross-border sports and felt they should have more resources in the light of these particular problems.

I.S. - There was certainly no coherent British sports policy was all these organisations, and that was why I wanted to set up UK Sport to address this territorial rivalry. I just did not get on well with any of the Councils because they saw me a trying to restrict their powers or dilute them with initiatives like the British Academy of Sport. The Sports Council and the CCPR probably thought that they drove sports policy in Britain, but they really didn’t. In my experience, it was civil servants who mainly got what they wanted because they had control over the process of giving out money and they knew how to manipulate the levers of government most effectively. Ministers come and go but the civil servants have the benefit of continuity and a longer view of things.
I.S. - The CCPR seemed to be adequate in what it did, though we had no financial control over them as we had with the Sports Council. They just went their own way as an independent voice for the sports governing bodies that the Sports Council could not be. Denis Lawson was the general secretary when I was there but he left because of some financial misconduct. In fact, all it related to was him buying paint for his house which he charged to the CCPR. I got on very well with him but his biggest problem was poor record keeping. I kept telling him to set up proper records and he said he didn’t need to because he kept everything in his head. He knew what was going on he told me and had everything under control. I think he drank too much as well. He had the support of the Duke of Edinburgh, the patron of the CCPR and that protected him for a while. The Duke was always a strong supporter when I met him. I wouldn’t say the CCPR had much influence on government policy, though of course we consulted them because of what they were.

I.S. - The British Olympic Association did an excellent job for Olympic sports, which of course is only a small part of sport in general. It’s the elite end. I instituted a programme of grants for top athletes and I was proud to see some of the recipients doing well in the 2000 Olympics. I could actually see some of my legacy coming through, though Labour were in power by then and no doubt tried to take the credit. There’s always a long time-lag in things like that and governments very often don’t get to see the results of their policies when in office. The next government can claim the credit, or blame their predecessors for things that go wrong. The BOA were strong supporters of the British Academy, because they could see what it might do for elite sport. As part of a world-wide movement, they tended to take their policy focus from the IOC, rather than government. We in turn did not interfere much with them, at least not since the boycott in 1980.

(c). The heads of national governing bodies? How often did you meet with them? Were there structured arrangements?

I.S. - I tended not to have a great deal to do with them, except when I met some of the chairmen or chief executives at sporting events. We had no formal arrangements for meetings, though I did sometimes have them into my office. This was more likely with football, in response to some crisis or other, or incident of hooliganism. I usually went to annual conferences of the Sports Council or CCPR, but not often to those of the individual organisations. There were far too many of them and, as we’ve already discussed, I had a lot to do besides sport. I did go to some annual dinners of the bigger ones and knew most of the main people in an informal sort of way.

I.S. - I suppose I met more with the heads of cricket and rugby union more than the others because those were the sports I knew most about and liked to watch. I’m originally from the Borders and was brought up watching and playing rugby. I tried to bring the two codes together without much success. I once helped to organise a game where one half was played under union rules and the second was held under league rules. The number of players on the field depended on the code in each half. I didn’t like league at first but it grew on me. There was always the problem of the league poaching players from the union “amateur” code and turning them into professionals. Now it’s different of course when all the top players are professionals, though we have the two codes to this day. I still have a video of that match.

(d) What about the civil servants? Did you deal with a different set for sport and non-sports work?

I.S. - There were many different sets of overlapping civil servants, depending on the area I was working on at any given time. Sir Hayden Phillips was the permanent secretary at the DNS from when it was set up in 1992. He was a clever little Welshman but I don’t think he
had much of a sporting background. Like all civil servants who get to that level he had worked in a number of different departments over the years. Under him there were many others I worked with in the sporting and non-sporting aspects of the job.

I.S. - The civil servants were actually more obstructive on policy initiatives than the Secretaries of State were. They always wanted things to go through them for referral upwards to get a decision. They assumed that a junior Minister couldn’t take decisions, since these were for the Secretary of State to do. They were invariably bright, able, lively people to work with but always bound up with civil service norms and traditional ways of working. They kept me away from the PM, even on Raising the Game. They insisted I should go through the Secretary of State, since that was the recognised route, until John Major intervened. That happened when I met John Major by accident once and told him what was going on and he tried to help. He actually wrote me a letter to show to the civil servants, in which he authorised me to talk directly to him. He said to me, “Do you want me to write a letter?” and I said, “Yes please. It can only help.” It was a bit better after that. It’s quite extraordinary, but that’s the way they work.

I.S. - Another barrier to getting through to the PM was the special advisors he was surrounded by. Sarah Hogg was head of the Policy Unit for a while and there were many advisors who came and went. One in particular was Nick True who was total pain to me. He was a general factotum who drafted speeches for John Major, amongst other things, before he went on to greater things. But he also saw himself as some kind of gatekeeper to Major. He was actually quite a good cricketer, not that that gave him a real feel for sport. He thought Raising the Game was pointless for Major, that it was only sport, that it was not important enough for the PM. He tried to keep me away from the PM but I showed him my letter of authority when I had to, even although he was not really a civil servant in the traditional sense. He was really a political advisor.

A.McM. - In his biography of Major, Anthony Seldon mentions his devotion to sport, especially cricket, a number of times. He quotes an unnamed Cabinet source as being amused by this obsession. Do you think that’s how it was viewed?

I.S. - Yes it certainly was. His Cabinet colleagues just could not understand what he was on about with sport, or appreciate his passion. I actually think the Lottery was one of his greatest achievements as PM with all the money it put into sport. Nobody had ever done that before. His support for me on Raising the Game and the Academy of Sport were quite astonishing for a man in his position.

A.McM. - To what extent and in what ways has the profile (and definition) of sport changed over time for the Minister? For instance, is there now more of an emphasis on health and fitness, rather than competitive sport?

I.S. - I think the definition of sport is a very loose one for some people who don’t know much about it, and I’ll give you an example. When I was Sports Minister I had a terrible time with the civil servants and Ministers in the Education Department. I was at a cross-departmental meeting with them once and asked how many hours of games were played each week in schools. I was given a really facetious answer along the lines of, “Well Minister, that depends on the type of school you’re talking about.” It made me so angry with them. They clearly had no idea and didn’t care either. Sport in schools was of no interest to them. Eventually they gave me some bogus figure for all “sports-related” activity. This included silly things like food, nutrition, and well-being. It even included watching videos of sport! Quite ridiculous. Much of it was clearly not real participation at all, which was why we tried to redress it in Raising the Game. To me, and most sensible people, sport means things like team games, athletics, swimming, tennis, etc., not just looking on or talking about it.
A.McM. - How important is the post of Minister for Sport? How important, in your view, should it be? (e.g. Cabinet?). Was it a disadvantage being at the PUSS or Minister of State level in terms of policy-making?

I.S. - It will never be in the Cabinet, and it probably doesn’t deserve to be either. You can’t really justify it being at the same level as defence or foreign policy, or other things like that. Of course it would make a difference if it was in the Cabinet because that immediately raises the level of importance just by being there. My job was really too junior to change things, even with the backing of the PM on some occasions. Definitely Secretaries of State have a lot more power than junior Ministers, with their Cabinet status and permanent secretaries reporting to them. In my situation, I felt like I was reporting to the permanent secretary, who in turn reported to the Secretary of State. There’s a subtle distinction there. Even when I was promoted to Minister of State after two years that relationship did not change. I was still a junior Minister outside the Cabinet and as such could not command the full attention of the civil servants. Their primary duty was to the Secretary of State, not to me.

A.McM. - Did you know any of the other Ministers who held the office? Could you comment on any of them?

I.S. - I can tell you a little of what I remember of some of them, so long as you don’t attribute it directly to me. Some of them are still around and I don’t want to be critical. Can you remind me of some of them? [A.MeM. - First there was Denis Howell then Eldon Griffiths.] Oh yes, Denis was a fine chap, with whom I got on well. He was an excellent Minister in the best tradition of cross-party working. An old Labour man and patriot of the best sort. Towards the end, just before he died, he used to tell me that Tony Blair was no good and a bit of a fraud. All that stuff about him watching Jackie Millburn play when he was a boy was a pack of lies. He just couldn’t have done it because of his age.

I.S. - Eldon Griffiths was a lovely man who actually wrote widely on other things like foreign affairs. He was a Minister before I was in the House and I don’t really know how effective he was. As a person, when I knew him, he was a very decent man. Robert Atkins was a fine chap but rather lazy. He was there not long before me and I picked up on some of his work on reorganising the Sports Council. The “Atkins’ Review” had been kicking around for a long time. Robert Key was only there for a year before me and didn’t do very much about it. He really had no time to make an impact.

I.S. - Tony Banks was useless. Tom Pendry should have been given the job. Banks didn’t even know very much about football beyond Chelsea. Kate Hoey was a lovely girl and quite good in her time at sport. She wasn’t there long enough and couldn’t quite pull it together somehow.

I.S. - The current Minister, Richard Caborn, is a person I don’t know much about. He doesn’t seem to do very much and doesn’t have much to show for six years in the job. That’s the longest unbroken stint ever, longer even than Denis Howell managed.

A.MeM. - Did you expect to stay as long in the post? Was there a possibility to a move to another post, or promotion to Cabinet after you became a Minister of State in 1995?

I.S. - Being out of Parliament 1983-92 really damaged my political career, there’s no doubt about that. In the period leading up to the 1983 election I saw a list of the new Cabinet that Mrs Thatcher was going to have if she won the election. I was on that list to be in the Cabinet as Secretary of State for Transport. Unfortunately I lost my seat and it took ages to get back in again. I could actually have gone to the Lords then, but I wanted to get back into the
Commons and resume my career there. By the time I got back it was too late for the Cabinet. I suppose I got a consolation prize at sport. When I was there 1993-97 I didn’t really expect to move on to the Cabinet at that time because my opportunity had really gone. I even missed out on the knighthood because there are no longer political awards any more and the offer of a Lords’ seat never came again. Timing is everything in politics.

A.McM. - Do you have any regrets about your political career?

I.S. - I actually think I’ve been very lucky in politics. I’ve met or worked with every Prime Minister since Churchill. I was taken to Parliament in 1954 and introduced to Churchill and he muttered something to me which I didn’t understand. I got on well with Mrs Thatcher and worked as her advisor from time to time. I think she would have promoted me if I had stayed in Parliament while she was there. Then there was Major. He was a weak man in many ways and had his faults but he was a very genuine man at heart. He meant well and did his duty for the country. He had a great sense of duty.

I.S. - The PM I got on best with was actually Harold Wilson. He was very friendly to me when I was a Minister at Trade and Industry in 1981-83. I was responsible for lots of quangos, including one on statistics of which Harold was the chairman. The government was all for abolishing quangos at the time so I wanted to abolish that one. I was advised by the civil servants not to because Harold only had three months to live and this gave him a sense of purpose in life, so I let it go. After a few months he showed no signs of dying so I asked the officials what was happening. They said, “Oh, he’s had a recovery and is now OK for another three months.” So I let it go again and he actually lived for some years after that. We got to know each other quite well and when I lost my seat in 1983 I asked him for a signed photograph which he kindly sent me. He was a very decent man. As PM he thought there was enough evidence to deal with P.G. Wodehouse as a traitor from during the War. I used to read a lot of Wodehouse and Harold told me this story about him. He refused to have him prosecuted because Wodehouse was an old man and no good would come of it. A very kind thing for Harold to consider.

I.S. - I also got to see many sporting events I would not otherwise have done and meet some of the greatest sportsmen and women of the age. For instance Ian Botham was a man I liked and respected. He was also a very good Conservative. I once heard him on the radio during one of his long-distance walks and he was absolutely brilliant in his defence of why he voted Conservative. He was also a great role model for young people coming into sport and I appointed him to the Sports Council. One of the best things about sport is meeting people like him. I was really very privileged.

A.McM. - Were there things you still wanted to do for sport in 1997?

I.S. - Certainly there were. I wanted to see through Raising the Game and establish a British Academy of Sport. There were still things to do and I would have liked the greater time available to Ministers now under DCMS. I had too many other responsibilities. By the way, I would be very willing to come to Loughborough and give a talk if anybody is interested. Some scholars contacted me in the early days after 1997 but very rarely now.

A.McM. - Thank you very much for that offer, which I’ll pass on to my supervisor at Loughborough. I’m sure he might be interested. Thank you for your assistance as well today. Can I quote you in my dissertation?

I.S. - You can cite me in general terms and use some quotes, so long as they’re not disparaging of living individuals.
A.McM. - Can you suggest anyone else I might contact (e.g. civil servants or Ministers)?

I.S. - As far as civil servants are concerned, it's best with retired ones. Those still working would find it hard to co-operate. I would try Sir Hayden Phillips. I think he must be retired by now. John Major might speak to you if he's not too busy.
5. Mr Richard Tracey (11 April 2007)

A.McM. - Could you please tell me about the circumstances that led to your appointment in 1985, since you had only been in Parliament from 1983?

R.T. - Yes, that’s right, I had only been an MP for two years, when I was appointed by Mrs Thatcher. You know it happens that some MPs get promoted quickly. I was lucky because I became a Parliamentary Under-Secretary pretty quickly. Alongside me there were people like Michael Howard who also became a Minister pretty quickly. Others did in our particular intake. In the intake before us there were various people that did get promoted very quickly also. It just depends on who they spot as being quite good in the House and so on, with a bit of a record of being involved in politics before. So that was the way it happened.

R.T. - Speaking for myself, I followed on after Neil Macfarlane. Neil had been doing it for a few years alongside other things. In his time there was the Heysel Stadium disaster with football hooliganism and Mrs Thatcher, who appointed me, particularly asked me to give a lot of attention to football hooliganism which I did.

A.McM. - Was it a surprise to become Sports Minister, even although you had a strong interest in sport? Who’s Who lists riding and boating as your current sporting interests, and you had also been a motorsport journalist before becoming an MP.

R.T. - No, not really, it was not a total surprise. I was involved in sport at university and school in rugby and rowing and things. Subsequently when I was at the BBC I was involved in quite a lot of sports reporting and sports writing. So I did have a pretty good knowledge of sport and I was always interested in it. I also used to come to where you live in Canterbury to see the annual Canterbury cricket festival. It’s a wonderful cricket ground and I loved the old tree. There was a great friend of mine who was much involved, a fellow called Doug Smith who was a PR man and very keen on sport, particularly on cricket. I think he was the chap who used to run the all-party cricket group in the House of Commons, though he wasn’t an MP. He used to invite some of us down to the Canterbury cricket week. For instance Jonathan Aitken, who was MP for Thanet, and Roger Gale who is still a Kent MP. I also knew the Canterbury MP, Julian Brazier, who was in the House in my time.

R.T. - Although I should explain to you that the Sports Minister, when I took it on, was one of the responsibilities of the Department of the Environment. It did change around from different departments to another. Actually the first man responsible for sport, would you believe, and he used to tell me quite often, was Lord Hailsham. At the time he did it sport was in the Education Department. He was really prior to Denis Howell in doing it I think. It would have been in the previous government before Wilson decided to appoint Denis Howell.

A.McM. - Could you tell me something about what the job entailed on a day-to-day basis? You seemed to spend a great deal of time on planning, housing, listed buildings, historic sites, etc., and relatively little on sport.

R.T. - I came in to do the job and was immediately told by the Secretary of State, Kenneth Baker, that, “Actually you’re one of the planning Ministers as well.” So I was assisting another Minister in the Department of the Environment on planning. Royal Parks and Palaces I also had to do, which included obviously the likes of Hyde Park and Richmond Park and the main Royal Palaces in central London, but also Hampton Court and so on. I also had a lot of regeneration stuff to deal with which was in some ways part of planning. I was involved in the Bristol docks, Hull docks, Salford, and the New Towns too. We had all those running, you know the New Town Development Corporations like Peterborough, Washington and various other ones.
R.T. - So you'll understand that, in a Tory government, we were really expected to do a lot of other things as well as sport. I suppose one tended therefore to be able to get out and about to sports events, either in the evenings during the week or Friday, Saturday and Sundays. Admittedly, a lot of sporting events do take place at weekends, but I always felt we were somewhat constrained. Denis Howell, incidentally, was a good friend of mine for many years before I was ever in the House. I knew him because I worked for the BBC before I was a politician. Denis was definitely able to get around and to do a lot more for sport than the rest of us were able to because I think he had more time to devote to it than we Conservative Ministers did.

A.McM. - What were the main sports policy issues during your time in office?

R.T. - Football hooliganism, I suppose that was one of the major things we had to deal with. It was one of the major tasks I had and the major achievement of my time. I worked very closely with, on the one hand the Metropolitan Police and indeed the Special Branch. We were devising various methods to catch these people or to prevent them ever causing their hooligan antics. We developed the closed circuit television of course, partly through the Police, and partly through the FA and the Football League. Over time, they've now developed to the point where they can spot them in the crowd. You know, the camera will actually pick them up. We were dealing also with television on trains and on the routes to the grounds.

R.T. - There were also a whole lot of intelligence operations about who was doing these things. So the Home Office and Special Branch, and so on, were building up quite a dossier on the major hooligans and in that way that was the route we took to eventually cutting down on the numbers that caused problems. They were really causing some very serious problems. It blows up again still, but not as badly. In those days there were some serious fights that would go on in the crowds. Of course Mr Justice Popplewell sat on the enquiry that brought in the idea of all-seater stadiums. That was a very good idea that was in my time too, which I supported. I think a lot of the problems did grow up as a result of the very uncongenial conditions on some of the terraces. These have had a big impact.

R.T. - That was a major part of what we did for football. One thing that Mrs Thatcher was very keen on, and I don't know who put the idea to her, was all-ticketed matches, membership schemes, ID cards, and all that kind of thing. I was never very keen on them though. The FA and the Football League saw them as very difficult to administer. You know what it's like with crowds. A bit like last night with Manchester United and Roma at Old Trafford where there were a lot of people trying to get into the ground causing trouble. If you had turnstiles and people with membership cards or identity cards it would have been even more difficult to let people in.

R.T. - So I think over time with the FA and the Football League feeding in their information, and the Police too, that idea was dropped. I think it wasn't finally dropped until my successor, Colin Moynihan, who took over as Minister after me, did so. They tried it out at Luton. But it was a smaller club of course than some of the very large ones with large grounds which made it more difficult to work. The view of the Police and the FA said it could only work with very great difficulty and it was eventually dropped.

R.T. - Otherwise, in my time, we did a lot to try and promote school sport and dual use of school facilities. That was an area in which I had several conferences involving ILEA school sport and others from the education world and the sports clubs as well. We invited a lot of people to sit down and talk about how it could best be done to allow the clubs to use school facilities in the evenings and on holidays and also to encourage the clubs to go into the
schools to talk to the young people. You may have found that some sports clubs are not very welcoming to new members, so that was something that I was trying to break through.

R.T. - I don’t think I entirely succeeded, though I think it is probably better now. I’m involved now as Chairman of Sport England South London. We have an operation that’s called “Pro-Active South London”, one of these great new names. I think we’re finding there that there’s a lot more co-ordinated approach in that the clubs welcome the young people in. There’s a lot more effort being made to encourage them into the clubs and get them involved. So I suppose that’s something where the basis was laid 20 years ago when I was trying to do it first and it’s slowly developing.

A.McM. - Having read all your Parliamentary speeches and questions, I noticed you spoke a lot on tobacco sponsorship. It was clearly a very important issue at the time, wasn’t it?

R.T. - Yes it was. Interestingly enough, in my time, it was my relationship with the BBC that brought it about. The BBC producers of sports programmes, particularly in those days, and I know it’s a funny thing to look back now, had a problem with snooker. Snooker was one that found that the intrusion of tobacco advertising was really getting to them. The producers found that the tobacco companies were beginning to put up hoardings all round the snooker tables. They were also trying as well to paint the tables. For example, Gold Leaf was one of the major tobacco companies around. They wanted to paint the tables gold with their brand, all that kind of thing.

R.T. - What the producers said to me was that, because the BBC’s not supposed to advertise, it was becoming increasingly difficult to get a shot of a player playing a ball on the table without having Gold Leaf or Benson and Hedges, or whatever else in the background. So they said that they wanted to be more controlled. So what we got involved in with the tobacco companies was a series of discussions. I mean they were quite acrimonious discussions because in those days smoking was not looked upon in the way it is now. Twenty years later it’s interesting that there was a lot more support for smoking back in those days.

R.T. - A lot of quite influential people, for example one Secretary of State for the Environment, Nicholas Ridley, was a chain smoker, a total life-long chain smoker. To try and convince him of what we were trying to do was very much more difficult than convincing somebody like Kenneth Baker, who was my other Secretary of State. He was my first Secretary of State. Alongside Nicholas Ridley you’d got the influences of Denis Thatcher. Dear old Denis, whom I was very fond of, was there in the background also as a sort of freedom of the smoker man. There were people like that who knew a lot of those in the tobacco industry. So it was quite acrimonious dealing with Imperial Tobacco and some of the other main companies to try and persuade them that really smoking was not ideal for sportmen and women was a jolly long battle. I fact we did manage to tighten up on the regulations, particularly of televising sport and also warning young people that smoking was bad for their health and that kind of thing.

R.T. - So we did have some success. We certainly cut down on the amount of advertising around sports events, particularly snooker, but I don’t think it actually made me very popular with Mrs Thatcher for one, or did my career any good. Certainly commentators over the years have said that I fought a battle, long before what goes on today in advance of my time really to try to persuade people that smoking was really bad for them, particularly sports people. There we are; that’s where life is.

A.McM. - You also spoke a great deal on South African issues, such as sporting links, tours, the Gleneagles Agreement, and so on. You followed on really from Neil
Macfarlane on this, didn’t you?

R.T. - Yes, it was very difficult area. One of the things in my time regarding my involvement in apartheid issues, and the Thatcher attitude to it was the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh. The 1986 Games coincided with my time in office and that was an enormous struggle to keep them on course. There were various black African states that were going to drop out because Mrs Thatcher and Geoffrey Howe the Foreign Secretary wouldn’t come out categorically against apartheid. That really was a tightrope-walking job to convince them that we were understanding and wanted to encourage black athletes to go to the Games. We wanted full participation, and goodness that was difficult. It was a success to a certain extent because we kept the Commonwealth Games together and they were a success when they were on.

R.T. - Of course there was the financial chaos afterwards because, if you remember Robert Maxwell got involved in it. Then of course he didn’t pay over the money afterwards. But that’s part of the Maxwell heritage and legacy. The Games themselves were good though, despite the partial boycott.

A.MeM. - How would you describe your relationship with the Secretary of States you worked with Kenneth Baker (Environment; Sept 1985-May 1986) and Nicholas Ridley (Environment; May 1986-June 1987)?

R.T. - Well they got involved in policy quite a lot in things that interested them. Nicholas Ridley certainly did on issues like tobacco sponsorship that we spoke of earlier, but he was not interested in sports policy as such in any wider sense, because he didn’t know much about sport. However, he would ask me a number of questions such as, “Why are you doing this?” or, “Why is this necessary?” We did get into some quite complex discussions on matters of sports policy, though he had the ultimate say if he wanted it.

R.T. - Kenneth Baker got involved with many other things in sport, though they tended to be at a high level naturally. One of the things that coincided with my time in office was when Birmingham bid for the Olympics. I did get involved, partly because I’m from Warwickshire and Denis Howell was a Birmingham man and MP. And Denis Howell asked me. He fronted up their bid and did ask me to involve myself as Sports Minister. He said to me, “Come on you’re a Midlander; you should be supporting this,” and I did. I went to the IOC with them when they made their pitch and so did Sebastian Coe who was there with us. I had made Sebastian Coe deputy chairman of the Sports Council, particularly to promote youth sport because he was still running then, although coming to the end of his running career. He had just won his medals in Los Angeles in the 1984 Olympics, so he was a great figure to have along. We pushed that bid up to a point, although it was always probably set up for Barcelona, that particular one. Samaranch was a Barcelona man, he was president of the IOC, so he got the Olympics for them.

R.T. - Then of course after my time Manchester tried to get the Olympics but did not succeed. Here we are now with London and that’s good really. Over the years we obviously developed a better technique. In my time I remember there seemed to be many more borough councils in London that were Conservative-controlled. Across the board, not just Conservative but Liberal Democrat and Labour leaders of the councils were not all that keen on having the Olympics in London for all sorts of reasons. You know, traffic congestion, potential terrorism was already beginning to show up a bit on the radar. Basically they seemed to think in those days that London would be crowded out, and then there was the cost.

R.T. - I remember that when I stopped being Sports Minister I was chairman of the London MPs at the beginning of the 1990s. London started to try to make a bid at that point.
Sebastian Coe was involved. There was a chap called Richard Sunray who is on the London 2012 board, who is a local government man in the Labour Party in London. As we talked to various people in London local government at that point it was very clear that many of them were not at all keen on having the Olympics in London. Over time, with a Labour government, and a whole lot of Labour local government leaders in the period when they were building up to making the bid, and with Labour politicians nationally they got a lot more support.

R.T. - What always happens with the Olympics is that the national government of the country has to put down a bond really, a bond of support for the Olympics. That was an area which in Mrs Thatcher's time that kind of thing had to go to the Cabinet. It probably still does and I imagine the Labour government had to take it to the Cabinet. In my time there were people in the Cabinet who were not wildly enthusiastic about having the Olympics, with all the ramifications of it. It wasn't something that I had to present to the Cabinet. I think probably Kenneth Baker had to take it to the Cabinet. But there were people such as Norman Tebbit who was one who was not very keen on the Olympic Games. That was when Birmingham and Manchester were bidding, going right back to that time.

R.T. - So anyway, Secretaries of State did get involved in policy. After my time, people like Chris Patten was Secretary of State for the Environment and he got involved. After that, sport went back to Education for a bit, after Colin Moynihan it did. Robert Atkins was in Education, then I think Robert Key. I kind of rather lost track of all the different places it went to, though of course it finished up in Culture, Media and Sport as it is now. It was there when Mellor was the Secretary of State. [A.McM. - It was actually National Heritage when he was there.] Oh yes, that's right. After Key I think the last Tory Sports Minister was Iain Sproat.

A.McM. - How involved were you personally in influencing sports policy?

R.T. - One area of policy I did get involved in as Minister was with the Sports Council. I had a lot to do with the Sports Council. As Sports Minister I used to meet the chairman of the Sports Council and all the Regional chairs a couple of times a year. We used to sit down for a whole couple of days and have policy discussions. Something that emerged from that time was the need for a National Lottery. I was always impressed with the idea. So after my time as Sports Minister I got involved in the campaigns in the House to get the National Lottery going. There was a chap called Sir Ivan Lawrence who is still around, though not an MP any more, but he was a great promoter of the idea of a Lottery. At various times we launched debates in the House after my time as Sports Minister to discuss the National Lottery.

R.T. - We never really got very far with Mrs Thatcher because she always saw it as an area of gambling almost. But we did make progress when John Major became Prime Minister. So there was Major as the Prime Minister and I think it was Lamont as Chancellor of the Exchequer. That's when we really did go forward. Of course it was then that the National Lottery Bill was produced around that time. I think Robert Key was the Sports Minister then. I was on the Lottery Bill committee. I took it through the House with Key as Minister. It was interesting actually because I remember there has been quite a bit of debate recently on the use of National Lottery funds for things other than sport and heritage. Of course, there we were, a Conservative government in power taking the Lottery Bill through and on the other side the Labour Opposition were arguing about all this money that's raised must be used for sport and good causes and all that. We'd say, "Yes, we don't have a problem with that, we absolutely agree that it should be". Look at what's happened now, with a Labour government when National Lottery money is being used for hospitals, and all sorts of other things. This is absolutely what they were opposed to in those days, so the old wheel turns full circle.
R.T. - The Sports Council had a network of regions and we had some very good people as chairmen of the regions. There were people like Bobby Charlton, who was involved in the North West; Richard Sharp the former rugby international in the South West; Peter Yarranton in London; Trevor Brooking in East Anglia. All these chaps were staffing up the ranks in the regions as administrators and leaders. It was very good, I found, the Sports Council with the likes of those sorts of people. You got some fantastic feedback from them in the regions. I don’t know if the same sort of thing exists any more as it did then, but I don’t think so. You’ve obviously been talking to David Pickup, as you said in your letter, so he can tell you too.

A.MeM. - You said you worked closely with the Sports Council. Did you also work closely with other bodies, such as the CCPR and the BOA?

R.T. - Oh yes, of course we did. We had to work with all of them. But the CCPR was an unofficial body in the sense that it was independent of government, whereas the Sports Council had been formed by government, and by Denis Howell. In fact in Denis Howell’s time I think when he was Sports Minister he was actually chairman of the Sports Council. But of course that had all stopped by my time. The chairman in my time was John Smith, who was the chairman of Liverpool Football Club and also chairman of the FA at that time. He held all those jobs and he was a great man. The CCPR was a body that used to be quite critical of the Sports Council and at the same time of the Sports Minister if he wasn’t agreeing with them. They probably got on better with Denis Howell than they did with any of the Tory Ministers.

R.T. - Prince Philip was very much involved with the CCPR. He was the patron or president of it. There was a chap, I forget his name now, Peter somebody or other. [A.MeM. - Peter Lawson?] Yes, that’s right. He was chief executive, I think when I was Minister. He got into trouble and left under a cloud due to some financial mismanagement. That was after my time, though he was around for a very long time. He was quite a difficult character to deal with because he was very critical, particularly of Conservative governments’ sports policy. He used to summon Sports Ministers to go and speak at the CCPR conference, which I did a couple of times, and then give them a hard time. As I say, it was a less official body than the Sports Council.

A.MeM. - Could you tell me something about your dealings with the civil servants at the DoE. Did you find them good to work with?

R.T. - I got on very well with them. The officials were all great guys across the board, both for sport and my other work. Of course, a great deal of policy and ideas come from them because they tend to be there for longer than Ministers and can take a longer view. There’s one who is, I think, much involved still in the East End for the London Docklands Development Corporation, a chap called Eric Sorenson, who was very bright civil servant that I dealt with on regeneration. Of course he then ended up in the LDDC dealing with the London Arena and all that kind of thing in subsequent years.

R.T. - I don’t know if you’ve spoken to any of them. There was a chap called David Teasdale who was the main sports civil servant in the Department of the Environment when I was there, who’s retired now. David Pickup may still have a contact number for him. He was seconded to the Sports Council at one point after my time but then I think he retired from the civil service. He was involved in some business venture with Sebastian Coe’s leisure centres that he started up in Trust House Forte hotels.

R.T. - David Teasdale was a significant guy around in my time. Another one who is now in public relations is Warwick Smith. Now you might be able to track him down because he had
quite a lot to do with sport. Before my time he was private secretary to Neil Macfarlane. Then in my time he was actually working with Teasdale as one of the civil servants in the Department of the Environment. He was sort of deputy to Teasdale but he was working for a PR firm called Huntsworth more recently. I think he’s left there now but you could probably track him down by that route if you want to talk to officials.

A.McM. - Did you find it difficult dealing with different sets of civil servants for the sport and non-sports part of your work?

R.T. - Yes, that’s right, it could be difficult, absolutely. You had to switch from one mode of operation to another. For example, I’d have a meeting with officials from sport in my office and then I’d possibly have a meeting with a lot of people from planning or from regeneration or the New Towns or something else. Part of planning was dealing with things like sand and gravel pits. You could end up having meetings with them but equally you might in the evening or even during the day have to go to a conference and make a speech about sand and gravel development or regeneration development of a New Town. Yes, it did require amazingly flexible thinking. As I mentioned earlier on Denis Howell didn’t really have to deal with that kind of complexity of having his brain jumping from one thing to another. But it could be tricky.

A.McM. - How important is the post of Minister for Sport? How important, in your view, should it be? For example, should it be at Cabinet level?

R.T. - Obviously the job did grow in importance because Harold Wilson I think probably gave Denis Howell only that responsibility and not much more. I know he was responsible for drought, wasn’t he? [A.McM. - Yes, but he did an awful lot of other things, including water supply, canals, National Parks, and so, even education matters at different times.] He probably was given more time to devote himself to sport than we were. Certainly a whole lot of my colleagues and predecessors and following Sports Ministers in Tory governments did find that they did have a lot of other things to do.

R.T. - Well I was an Under-Secretary and this is a rather typical sort of Conservative thing. We were all Under-Secretaries for sport in the Tory governments. In Labour governments they are more likely to have been made Ministers of State. Dick Caborn, I think is a Minister of State and Denis Howell certainly was. I don’t know what Tony Banks was. [A.McM. - He was an Under-Secretary and so was Kate Hoey.] Oh were they? I wasn’t sure of that.

R.T. - Well some other countries have a Cabinet Minister for sport. Some people in sport think that should be the same in Britain. You know, people who have been in sport all their lives are more likely to say that. I’m not sure that it’s important enough or does justify that. I think maybe the Minister of State level is right. But in all honesty if you’ve got a Secretary of State who is in the Cabinet that’s really sufficient. I had Kenneth Baker and Nicholas Ridley.

R.T. - I’m not sure about Tessa Jowell as a Minister, full-stop. I don’t think she comes from a sporting background. Dick Caborn is somebody I’ve known for years. He was involved in developing youth games in Sheffield. He has probably got a deeper sporting background than me.

R.T. - I’m not sure that some ex-top sportsman would necessarily make for a good Minister, though Moynihan was, I suppose, a cox, but that’s hardly a real sporting pedigree compared with some. He’d been involved with rowing at university at Oxford or Cambridge, wherever he was. Sebastian Coe obviously springs to mind as an Olympic gold medallist who got into Parliament and never got near to being a Minister. I think he may have been a Whip when he was in the House of Commons. I don’t think you need a top sportsman any more than you
A.MeM. - Chris Chataway, for example, didn't become Minister for Sport when he was in the House. Do you think he was more ambitious?

R.T. - Chris is still running you know. He’s about 75 years old now and I saw him running a half-marathon in Richmond Park about a year or so ago. It was started by Roger Bannister. Poor old Roger’s now got serious arthritis. He started the thing and there was Chris Chataway running in it. He did terribly well too, and he ran in the last London Marathon. He never was a Sports Minister of course, and ended up in the Cabinet I think at Post and Telecommunications under Ted Heath. He’s a very old friend of mine, is Chris, because he was a broadcaster too at the BBC. He certainly wasn’t around in the Thatcher government. I think he’s given up politics before she became Prime Minister in 1979.

A.MeM. - You left office after only two years and held no other government office. Were there things you still wanted to do for sport?

R.T. - Well, I’d completed most of the major things I was asked to do. As I said earlier, the football hooliganism thing was what I was asked to do. I think I near enough completed that in the two years. The schools sport was an ongoing thing, particularly when school sports grounds were being turned over by education authorities for house building and things like that. But that’s always gone on and still does.

R.T. - But I think it’s good thing for Ministers to move on. I’ve never been convinced that politicians should stay for too long. After all, it’s not like being an official who needs to sit there for years and years in a job. It’s better to move to another department and bring a fresh mind to bear on things. So I went on to do other things. I was on the Public Accounts Committee for four years, which was a tremendously interesting area.

R.T. - I was also involved after I stopped being Sports Minister in developing the televising of Parliament. I was on the Select Committee that did that. We did actually bring about a lot of changes to the ideas that had been around for televising Parliament. In the late 1980s there had been ideas of having big cameras in the chamber, which would have been horrendous because the House of Commons chamber is a very small one really for 650 Members, though you can’t actually get 650 Members inside in any case. That was an interesting area where we brought in the remote control cameras, some small ones hanging below the galleries and all that kind of thing. I think it very much improved the whole area of televising the House. That’s me really, I do like to have a new challenge.

A.MeM. - You’ve spoken quite a lot about Denis Howell, Colin Moynihan and others. Could you comment any further on them or others?

R.T. - Well, Eldon Griffiths was between Howell’s two stints. He must be quite an old man by now. [A.MeM. - He told me by email from California that he’s writing his memoirs now. It would be helpful if you would as well.] I guess he might write his, but he was quite a while before me and I didn’t know him well. Perhaps he’s been around more and has more to say. He must be over eighty by now. But I have no plans to write them.

R.T. - Dear Hector Monro is dead now but Neil Macfarlane is still alive. [A.MeM. - I spoke to him a couple of months ago and he was very helpful.] He did it for quite a while. We talked before about tobacco. Well he was much more willing to allow the tobacco industry to be involved in sport than I was probably. He took the view that sport’s got to get money from somewhere and of course it got a great deal from tobacco. But as we’ve seen over the years since the medical view of tobacco in sport is that the two just don’t go together.
A.McM. - You are still involved in sport through South London Sport England. Did you carry on with your sporting interests after leaving Parliament in 1997?

R.T. - Yes, I am still doing things in sport, as I mentioned earlier, in relation to my work with Sport England South London. So I've still kept my interest in sport going after my time as Minister for Sport. Sport is something that's a lifelong interest for those of us who love it. However, I still work for a living and my job is actually with the Battersea project here in London.

R.T. - I've been three years doing the community relations for the company running the project, which in fact has just changed. It was a Chinese company that had been at it for quite a long time. They've come up with some extravagant and exciting plans for the power station. But they sold out recently. I think the main chap was more an ideas and design man than a developer really and he probably became a bit exhausted. He sold out to a big Irish developer called Treasury Holdings. They've only been there for three months. I'm still involved in plugging them into the local community, the local authority, the Greater London Authority and all the rest of it. With a big project like this you need all the friends and support that you can get. With any luck it will go forward now. It's been in a derelict state for a good many years. It is very, very complicated in planning terms. Of course the building itself is a Grade 2 listed building and that doesn't make it any easier. That's what I do now, though not full-time. I'm semi-retired really, but I do quite a lot from home.

A.McM. - Thank you very much for your assistance. Can I quote you in my dissertation?

R.T. - Yes of course you can, absolutely. I've said almost everything I have to you on the record.

A.McM. - Can I call you again if I need to follow anything up?

R.T. - Yes, sure. My home number is probably the best way to get hold of me. That's 020-8870-3184. My email address is rdicktracey@msn.com. If you want any help with contacts let me know and I'll see if I can help with any of my fellow Sports Ministers. You can get hold of Colin Moynihan through the House of Lords. There are several routes to get to him. He's the Chairman of the British Olympic Association, which is in Wandsworth, at Wandsworth Plain where their offices are. He's also involved with London 2012; he's on the committee of that. I think he does turn up at the House of Lords. He got a sort of strange hereditary peerage after his half-brother died and he inherited it. Robert Key, of course is still in the House. Robert Atkins is in the European Parliament. [A.McM. - I've tried both and got no reply.] I'm surprised really, because Robert is still very interested in sport. [A.McM. - Iain Sproat didn't reply either.] He may still be involved with Rothman's Cricket Yearbook. I've rather lost track with Iain because he certainly didn't become a Lord or anything, nor an MEP. I don't know that he's much involved in sport now though cricket is his great love.

A.McM. - Tony Banks is dead. Kate Hoey didn't get back to me but she got a chap called Patrick Cheney to call me, who was very helpful. Do you know him?

R.T. - Yes, I knew Patrick Cheney. He was some kind of policy adviser to Denis Howell, possibly private secretary to him. He is obviously still around for Kate Hoey. If I can give you any help with politicians, or with any of those civil servants I mentioned, do let me know.
A.McM. - Thank you again Mr Tracey. I'm very grateful for your help and your kind offers with contacts.

R.T. – My pleasure.
Appendix 7: Notes

1. At the soccer European Cup final between Liverpool and Juventus on 29 May 1985 in the Heysel Stadium in Brussels, 38 fans were killed and over 400 were injured after a riot broke out. It led to a ten-year ban on English clubs playing in Europe, later reduced on appeal to five years. The Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, became convinced that identity cards were essential as a means of controlling entry to grounds, although the football authorities were opposed to them. The ID card scheme was finally dropped in 1990 when Colin Moynihan was Sports Minister. Macfarlane, N. (1986) Sport & Politics: A World Divided London: Collins; Kelly, G. (1999) Sweet F.A. London: Collins

2. The increase in funding to the Sports Council 1972-90 was more than double what could be expected if it had only risen in line with inflation, when it would have gone up to £18.6m, rather than the £41.9m awarded. There was then a period of stability from 1990 to 1995 when the rise was broadly in line with inflation, but much greater rises thereafter which were well above inflation. “Quarterly Index of Retail Prices”, www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/tsdataset [accessed 3 November 2008]

3. The Tote was set up by Act of Parliament in 1928, effectively as a government bookmaker. There have been attempts to privatise it over the years, none of which have succeeded. It remains under the control of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport until a long-term private sector solution is found. “The Tote”, www.culture.gov.uk [accessed 3 November 2008]


6. Lord Donoughue never actually held government office under Harold Wilson or James Callaghan. As Head of the Prime Minister’s Policy Unit in the 1970s he was classed as a civil servant, though he clearly felt he had more power in that role than as a junior Minister some twenty years later. Donoughue, B. (2003) The Heat of the Kitchen London: Politico’s

7. From 1965 to 1970 the chairman of the advisory Sports Council was Denis Howell. Since he was also Minister for Sport, the body had a very close link with government. When the Sports Council was made an executive, independent body in 1972 by Eldon Griffiths, he ended this dual role as chairman and Minister for Sport. Sir Roger Bannister then became the first independent chairman in 1972. Coghlan, J.F. (1990) Sport and British Politics Since 1960 London: Falmer

8. The poll tax or “community charge” as Mrs Thatcher liked to call it, had its origins in the mid-1980s, when civil servants and Ministers were charged with finding a new way of financing local government to replace the “rates”. Despite much public opposition, it was introduced in Scotland in 1989-90 and England and Wales in 1990-91. Because of its unpopularity, and difficulty of collection, it was replaced by the “council tax” in 1993 when Michael Heseltine was Secretary of State for the Environment. Heseltine, M. (2001) Life in the Jungle: My Autobiography London: Coronet Books
9. Ken Bates was owner and chairman of Chelsea Football Club from 1982 to 2003, when he sold it to Roman Abramovich, although he remained chairman until 2004. He was a very prominent member of the FA for many years and a driving force behind the rebuilding of Wembley Stadium. He was chairman of the consortium charged with its reconstruction, Wembley National Stadium Ltd (WNSL) from 1997 to 2001. When he resigned this role he blamed lack of progress in the project on Kate Hoey as Minister for Sport. The construction of a running track around the stadium was a feature strongly supported by Hoey but opposed by Bates (and Tony Banks), who wanted the stadium to be used exclusively for football. WNSL received £120m in public funding for the project from Sport England, only £20m of which was ever returned. Bower, T. (2003) Broken Dreams: Vanity, Greed and the Souring of British Football London: Simon and Shuster

10. When Glasgow bid for the 2014 Commonwealth Games it was intended that the main stadium would be Hampden Park, which was largely rebuilt in the 1990s and the running track removed. The plan is to take out several rows of seats nearest to the playing field and install a track around it. When the Games are over, this temporary arrangement will be reversed and the seats replaced. Interview with Ms Patricia Ferguson (24 August 2007).

11. The debate of 17 March 1980 on the UK’s response to the American call for an Olympic boycott lasted for almost seven hours. On the Conservative side, it was led by Ian Gilmour, the Lord Privy Seal, who was deputy to the Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington, who was in the House of Lords and thus not able to lead the debate personally. Mrs Thatcher saw it as a foreign policy issue, rather than a sporting one, so the Minister for Sport was sidelined. Other speakers that day included Michael Heseltine (Monro’s boss at the Department of the Environment, and senior figures from the main parties. Hansard: House of Commons Debates, 17 March 1980, vol. 98, cols. 31-168; Macfarlane, N. (1986) Sport and Politics: A World Divided London: Collins


13. In actual fact it was a series of metal crush barriers on stairway number 13 that gave way on the terracing under the pressure of human bodies, not the stand. The terracing was not overcrowded by the standards of the time. Holt, R. and Mason, T. (2000) Sport in Britain 1945-2000 Oxford: Blackwell

14. Although the reorganisation of the UK Sports Council into the English Sports Council (later Sport England) took place in 1996, the regional bodies were established for many years before this. In fact, they were created in 1965 by Denis Howell, just after the Sports Council itself. Coghlan, J.F. (1990) Sport & British Politics Since 1960 London: Falmer

15. Only 4 of the interviewees were female, while the remaining 25 were male.

16. William of Occam was a 14th century English philosopher and Franciscan monk. He postulated that it was likely to be the simplest explanation of a problem which turned out to be the correct solution, unless it is known to be wrong. Burnham, P., Gilland, K., Grant, W., and Layton-Henry, Z. (2004) Research Methods in Politics Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan