



## Sport and the Olympics

*Britain has a proud sporting history and is privileged to be hosting many high-profile sporting events over the next few years including the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Commonwealth Games and the Rugby League and Union World Cups. We have also put in a strong bid to host the Football World Cup in 2018 which would round off a superb decade of sport in this country. However, there are concerns that the Government is not doing enough to maximise the potential legacy from hosting these events. The Government pledged to get one million more people playing more sport by 2012 as part of the Olympic legacy but so far little progress has been made. Over the last 20 years there has been a rapid increase in obesity, while levels of physical activity have declined. Today, worrying numbers of men and women in England are either overweight or obese. This is costing billions of pounds a year, but the policies of successive Governments have been woefully inadequate in getting people active and addressing the problem.*

**Sports participation.** Despite numerous Government pledges, little progress has been made on getting the nation active. The level of sports participation among women is currently declining and on present evidence it seems highly unlikely that the Government will meet its participation targets.

**School sports.** School sport is claimed as a success story by the Government but in reality many children are still not doing nearly enough sport while at school and are dropping out altogether once they leave education. Much more needs to be done to ensure young people don't slip into inactivity as they grow older. Children should be given a chance to try out a wide range of sports and strengthened links between schools and clubs will ensure that young people have greater freedom to exercise and play sport at school and beyond.

**Obesity and inactivity.** Liberal Democrats will take action to reverse the rise in obesity and inactivity under Labour. We will increase levels of funding to grassroots sport through a combination of ending government raids on lottery funds, moving the lottery to a gross profits tax and using money from dormant betting accounts. Funding will be targeted more effectively so that it benefits those who are currently inactive.

**Playing fields.** We will protect playing fields so that everyone has the opportunity to take part in sport and activity in their local area. We will close loopholes that allow playing fields to be sold or built upon without going through the normal planning procedures.

**A real legacy from the Olympics.** While we want the Games to be a success in 2012, they must also be a success in terms of legacy. The financial foundations of the Games have been shaken by the chaos and confusion, and undermined by raids on the lottery good causes fund in the run up to the Games. The Liberal Democrats have great concerns about the impact this will have on grassroots arts and sports organisations sustained by the Lottery good causes fund. We will change the way the National Lottery is taxed to increase funding for grassroots and community organisations and therefore boost the potential for a sporting and cultural legacy from the Games.