

## SPORT & RECREATION IN FROME

Good morning and welcome to you all. My name is Gary Collinson and I am a Town Councillor in Frome. In addition to this I am involved with Frome Town Football Club as Football and Operations Director and also employed by Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership as an Adult Participation Officer. This is a role created to help increase sport and recreational participation amongst adults within Frome and encourage community organised activities.

I'd like to talk for a few minutes about sport in Frome, some of the things we have been working on recently and some of our future plans. Sport has always been popular but, in my opinion somewhat neglected by all levels of government but hopefully this is set to change, particularly with Sport England – a primary funding source – looking to change their focus to participation rather than facilities.

As a nation we have enjoyed a successful summer of sport, in particular with the Rio Olympics where GB provided an impressive medal return.

Frome even had a contribution to make here where Emily Diamond, who lives in the Town, formed part of the bronze medal winning ladies 4x400m team.

And to top it all we finally won a penalty shoot out!

There's another really interesting Olympic table though and relevant to all of us although unfortunately not for much longer – that shows the strength of a united Europe

Frome has other notable sporting individuals including;

Jenson Button –F1 World Champion

Petra Wiltshire – Mountain Bike World Champion

Paul Ryman – International Tri-Athlete and Iron Man competitor

And a couple that we have high hopes for;

Ryan Wheeler – 7 professional fights unbeaten hoping for a title fight soon

And Finlay Mead (15) who has just become British BMX Champion in his age group

But our focus shouldn't be on the elite, important as they are, it is imperative for health and wellbeing that we encourage people "off the sofa" and to get involved in physical activity, whatever their age or ability. There are always barriers to participation such as cost, access to facilities or simply not knowing what is available.

We are fortunate in Frome to have a vast range of volunteer run sports clubs and organisations, examples of which and some further images are at the end of this presentation and there are few gaps if you know where to look.

If we look at recent happenings one of the major projects has been the £2m (2,350,000 euros) refurbishment of Frome Leisure Centre by Fusion Lifestyle. The leisure centre, which contains a 25m swimming pool, was built in the 1970's and was badly in need of bringing up to date.

The works have included creating a much larger modern gymnasium, refurbishment and improvements to changing areas and provision of a children's soft play area. They run a variety of health and fitness classes as well as swimming lessons. There is provision for several indoor and outdoor sporting activities although the outside space is still much in need of improvement but hopefully this will happen in the near future.

Also this year Frome Town Council in association with Frome Selwood Tennis Club secured funding from the Lawn Tennis Association and Sport England to build 3 new tennis courts on the Mary Bailey playing field.

These courts replaced some old and damaged ones that were past repair and have enabled more access through an online booking pay and play system. In addition the Council has funded a series of free sessions to ensure that cost is not a barrier to participation on this new facility.

The courts appear to be getting well used and this has proven a successful partnership arrangement.

The final project I would like to share is our newly installed outdoor gym. This was funded by a contractual commitment when the new hospital was built and is situated on land now owned by the Town Council.

Once again this provides full and free access to fitness equipment in an attractive environment and is proving very popular. I am hoping to arrange for fitness professionals to be on site at certain times in order to help people learn how to use the equipment safely and effectively.

We also hope to increase the available equipment in future and particularly provide more challenging apparatus for those who are further along their fitness path.

## FUTURE PLANS

It isn't all about organised sports, and we are also making arrangements to cater for walkers and cyclists by for example improving footpaths, providing better signage and opening up new routes.

Walkers are welcome is a tourism initiative that shows Frome is a "walker friendly" town.

It is hoped that this will further strengthen our tourist proposition and encourage those that have yet to consider Frome as a destination to give it a try. We have an extensive network of walks starting in and around the Town to suit all ages and abilities and good public transport links to other popular walks.

Walking at some level is accessible, and free for most of us and with the provision of the right information, interesting routes and encouragement is one of the simplest ways to get people exercising.

Frome's Missing Link is a campaign to link Frome with a local cycle network by filling the section yet to be completed. Although this is proving a difficult and expensive project we are hopeful that it will eventually be completed successfully providing a safe and interesting traffic free walking and cycling route.

Whilst most sports are available in and around Frome there are some obvious exceptions. Through my position with SASP I am looking to increase participation and in particular playing rounders, running, walking football, men's hockey and basketball.

We also hope to establish a park run in the near future on the Old Show Field site where the outdoor gym is situated, utilising the newly resurfaced footpaths.

In addition we hope to provide more football pitches, especially an artificial 3G surface in order to meet the Town's requirements.

We established a Sports Forum within the Town which is meeting quarterly to share information and ideas and this has helped break down many of the barriers to communication between existing clubs and I believe this could become the strongest driver for improvements going forward.

## OTHER SPORTING OPPORTUNITIES