

I am writing to you as your constituent and a member of <your curling club>. I am very concerned that despite the enormous efforts it has made, Kinross Curling Trust, a charitable trust, is facing significant financial challenges because of the impact that the present restrictions are having on its ability to operate. However, whilst my specific concern relates to Kinross, this is an issue that affects all curling rinks across Scotland and that should be a concern that I urge you to raise with the Minister For Sport.

The ancient sport of curling is a sport is enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities. Gone are the days of play on frozen lochs. Now in Scotland there are 23 indoor facilities some community owned, some private and some local authority.

All have been adversely affected by Covid and as I write only 3 facilities (the national centre for elite players at Stirling, Inverness in Covid level 1 and Aberdeen in level 2) are open for curling. Some others for example Kinross having incurred the costs of opening in early October were forced to close when Perth & Kinross and Fife were moved to level 3 where the restrictions at that level made it uneconomic to continue.

The current restrictions in the definition of indoor group activity limit play to under 18s and up to 6 adults from 2 households. These restrictions take no account of how curling is played in teams of 4, 8 per bubble, and the extensive measures already invested in to make curling rinks Covid safe. These include:

- *creating one-way systems and wearing face coverings off-ice*
- *adapting rules to maintain 2m distancing and just 1 sweeper during curling games*
- *reduced number of sessions per day to allow sanitisation of venue and equipment*
- *use of bubble system to avoid contact between groups*
- *physical distancing signage on and off the ice*
- *increased ventilation and air filtration*
- *bookings through clubs in advance for all sessions, avoiding cash handling*
- *having trained covid officers at every facility and every club*

Another factor that is a massive concern for a few rinks is the local authority travel restriction, two most affected are Kinross and Greenacres. Kinross is in Perth & Kinross but draws half of its members from Fife. The Greenacres Ice Rink is in the hills above Howwood in Renfrewshire but draws most members from Glasgow as well as East Renfrewshire, North Ayrshire and Inverclyde. What would really help those facilities is an allowance for their members within perhaps 20 miles to be allowed to continue to play.

Curling is a seasonal activity and nearly all income to survive the full year is generated between September and April. Annual set up costs and wages are substantial and generally the community and privately owned businesses get no financial support from the public purse but rely on fees paid by users. This year has seen some support through furlough and Covid grant schemes. But for some this will not be enough to allow opening and 3 facilities have decided not to re-open until autumn 2021. Others may follow, while some hope to open in

January but firm decisions are impossible as the uncertainty about Covid levels remain. There is a very real prospect that if nothing is done some rinks might not be able to reopen next autumn.

You can assist by urging Ministers to review the restrictions placed on curling by recognising

- a. Whilst curling is an indoor sport the numbers of players and the ventilation systems now in place at rinks provides a Covid Safe environment with 8litres of fresh air per person per second being introduced into the rink
- b. Curling is a competitive non-contact sport with the 2-metre social distancing rule being entirely possible to adhere to on the ice.
- c. Curling teams are not drawn from one household, so the 6-person two household rule will simply not allow curling to proceed in any meaningful way.
- d. The lack of curling rinks across the country means that all rinks draw members from more than one local authority area; if they are forced to restrict visitors to their own LA area it will not be financially viable to reopen. There needs to be some relaxation, say, a 20 mile catchment area.
- e. The serious financial position that many rinks are now in. If these rink fail, we will quickly lose grassroots curling; the lifeblood of the sport.

Yours in curling

<your name and contact details>