

Mr Andrew Lansley MP  
Shadow Secretary of State for Health  
House of Commons  
Westminster  
London  
SW1A 0AA

15<sup>th</sup> July 2009

### **Improving public health by cutting VAT on sports goods**

I am writing in support of the Conservative Party's Public Health Commission's recommendation to cut VAT on sports goods to encourage the public to take up more exercise and thereby improve their health.

The Federation of Sports and Play Associations (FSPA) is the voice of the UK sports and play industry, and this year we celebrate our 90 years heritage serving the trade. We are ideally positioned at the heart of the industry, acting as the first point of contact for our 17 associations and over 500 member companies, which span across four main sectors – play, sport, golf and angling. We represent manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers, sales agents, retailers and operators of sports and play goods and services.

I have read with great interest the report by the Public Health Commission "We're All In This Together – Improving the Long-Term Health of the Nation". With over 80,000 avoidable deaths occurring each year in the UK due to poor lifestyles and lack of exercise, the FSPA welcomes any initiative which encourages people to become more physically active. The Commission's recommendation to cut VAT on sports goods is particularly welcomed by us as it has the twin appeal of not only improving public health, but also boosting the UK's sports and leisure industry.

It is clear that the problem of obesity is growing in the UK and there needs to be real incentives offered to people to move towards a healthier lifestyle. The FSPA feels that the introduction of tax breaks on sports equipment and gym memberships would have a positive impact in this area, particularly in the current economic climate, when people are understandably concerned about their finances and perhaps trying to curb their spending.

Of course, the FSPA has long been aware of the health benefits of exercise, healthy living and how that can have the knock-on effect of saving the NHS significant amounts of money. I would very much welcome a meeting with you, at your convenience, to discuss how increasing sports participation in the UK can greatly assist in improving the health of the nation and how we might be able to work with you in this area of policy.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Montgomery  
Managing Director

Mr Dave Lewis  
Chairman  
Public Health Commission  
Unilever House  
100 Victoria Embankment  
London  
EC4Y 0DY

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I have read with great interest your Commission's report, "We're All In This Together – Improving the Long-Term Health of the Nation". With over 80,000 avoidable deaths occurring each year in the UK due to poor lifestyles and lack of exercise, the FSPA welcomes any initiative which encourages people to become more physically active. The Commission's recommendation to cut VAT on sports goods is particularly welcomed by us as it has the twin appeal of not only improving public health, but also boosting the UK's sports and leisure industry.

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I would very much welcome a meeting with you, at your convenience, to discuss how increasing sports participation in the UK can greatly assist in improving the health of the nation and how we might be able to work with you in any follow up to the Commission's report.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Montgomery  
Managing Director