



FSF NEWS: Football Needs Freedom of Information Act [Aug 2011]

The FSF believes that football's governing bodies should be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FoI). Sport's governing bodies should be held accountable in the same manner as government departments, local councils, and civil servants.

Currently organisations like the Football Association (FA) are exempt from the Freedom of Information Act as are other sporting bodies such as the English Cricket Board, British Cycling Federation, and British Olympic Association (BOA).

The FSF argues that sports governing bodies should not enjoy the same privileges as private companies. Governance of sport is a matter of great public interest because of the huge amounts of public money spent on sport and sporting events.

England's failed attempt to host the World Cup in 2018 cost the FA an estimated £15m while local councils spent £2.1m in an attempt to become host cities. No internal inquiry was ever held by the FA to examine why the bid failed – despite it being a matter of massive national interest given football's popularity and the impact on the public purse.

Failed bids cost millions but their impact is miniscule compared to the billions of pounds worth of spending a successful bid can trigger. The government's latest figures estimate that the Olympic Delivery Authority's (ODA) construction programme will cost £7.25bn.

The FSF also argues that sports governing bodies should be answerable to the public thanks to their role in encouraging sport-specific legislation when one of the world's great events such as the Olympics or World Cup comes to town.

In the Olympics' case new legislation was introduced to protect the Olympic brands while the FA used the prime minister and Prince William to promote the 2018 bid. FIFA would also have demanded exemptions from normal United Kingdom tax laws if the bid had been successful.

Raj Chandarana, of the FSF, said: "Sport is not just another business commodity – it is at the cultural heart of the United Kingdom and fans of every sport deserve to know what their governing bodies are up to for better or worse. The Freedom of Information Act has been crucial in increasing

transparency in other walks of life and we believe sport could benefit from it too.

“In effect, sport’s governing bodies are public bodies, because of the importance of sport in our national life, and the fact that sport receives financial backing and other forms of help from government. In a football context this is illustrated by the Commons Culture, Media and Sport’s inquiry into football governance.”

- ENDS -

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- The FSF is the national supporters’ organisation for all football fans from England and Wales comprising more than 180,000 individual fans and members of local supporters’ organisations from every club in the professional structure and beyond. For more info <http://www.fsf.org.uk/about-the-fsf.php>
- Fans can join the FSF free of charge and it only takes a minute, simply visit: <http://www.fsf.org.uk/join.php>

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