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Press Release

## **£371,000 Lottery boost to get more women in Oxfordshire playing sport**

Under strict embargo until January 6, 2011

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Thousands of women in Oxfordshire will benefit from a new project to get them playing sport thanks to a £371,000 National Lottery award from Sport England.

*Oxfordshire Active Women* is one of 20 projects to secure funding from Sport England's £10 million *Active Women* fund. The targeted investment will help get more women from disadvantaged communities – and those caring for children – playing sport as part of the drive to deliver a mass participation legacy from London 2012.

Last month (Dec 2010), new Sport England figures revealed the size of the gender gap in sport. At present, one in eight (2.761 million) women regularly play sport in England. Whilst this has increased significantly in the past five years, it still trails behind men's participation, with one in five (4.176 million) taking part. Sport England figures also show that women from disadvantaged communities play even less sport, with less than one in 10 women taking part.

*Oxfordshire Active Women* will be led and coordinated by the Oxfordshire Sports Partnership working with local authorities, leisure providers and national governing bodies of sport. It will get 6,000 women across Oxford City, South and West Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and Cherwell taking part in athletics, badminton, tennis, netball, football and/or gymnastics.

By tackling known barriers to participation – including childcare commitments, inconvenience, no 'buddy' to play with, and expense – it will deliver sessions at a time, place and cost that suits local women. Alongside taster sessions, the project will create opportunities to get into coaching and volunteering – allowing participants to become role models in their sport and inspire many more women to get involved.

It will also see the recruitment of sport activators to drive participation, while further consultation with local schools, community groups, sports clubs and children's centres will ensure that what's on offer adapts to changing needs and delivers for years to come.

*"We are delighted to be able to improve the options available for women to participate in sport in Oxfordshire",* said Toni Bridges, Active Recreation Manager at the Oxfordshire Sports Partnership Core Team.

*“Key to this project is that activities will be tailored to local communities, where women have told us how they want activities to be delivered. We hope that by removing specific barriers to participation in local areas, we can really help women to become more active”.*

The 20 successful bids were selected from hundreds of applications to the *Active Women* fund.

Jennie Price, Sport England's Chief Executive, said:

*“For many women with children or those managing a tight budget, sport – and time to themselves - can slip down the list of priorities. The projects we're funding today have asked local women what is stopping them from getting involved and what sports interest them, before coming up with an offer that is appealing and accessible.”*

Today's announcement was welcomed by the Minister for Sport and the Olympics, Hugh Robertson MP and Gail Emms – one of Britain's greatest ever badminton players, who won World Championship Gold and Olympic Silver medals.

Hugh Robertson said:

*“We have many fantastic female athletes in this country, but not enough women participating at sport's grassroots. More needs to be done to encourage women to participate in sport, particularly those from disadvantaged communities. The £10 million being invested by Sport England will give women the chance to try out new sports as part of a dedicated programme and hopefully keep them in sport in the future.”*

Gail Emms, who became a mum nine months ago with the arrival of Harry, said:

*“As a new mum, I know only too well how difficult it can be to make time for yourself and to get out there and play sport. The projects receiving investment from Sport England today will make a big difference because they've really thought through the challenges women face in becoming regular sports participants.”*

## **ENDS**

### **Notes to editors**

Sport England is focused on the delivery of a mass participation legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. We invest National Lottery and Exchequer funding in organisations and projects that will grow and sustain participation in grassroots sport and create opportunities for people to excel at their chosen sport.

*Oxfordshire Active Women* will be led and centrally coordinated by the Oxfordshire Sports Partnership – part of the national network of County Sport and Physical Activity Partnerships, which aims to:

- Increase and sustain participation in sport, active recreation and active living
- Widen access to sport, active recreation and active living and reduce inequalities
- Improve levels of performance in sport
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Continue to develop thriving communities.

The £371,000 Lottery funding is the latest funding to be secured by the Oxfordshire Sports Partnership, taking funding received by Local Authorities in the county to over £1 million since the partnership was established in 2006. A successful partnership with the highest county participation rate in the country (25.9%), the Active Women project will help improve this further.

Five local authorities, together with the Leisure Providers, will contribute a total of £470,000 to the project. These partners will take a leading role in implementing *Oxfordshire Active Women* in their local areas:

- Oxford City: Oxford City Council and Fusion Lifestyle
- South Oxfordshire: South Oxfordshire District Council with Nexus Community
- West Oxfordshire: West Oxfordshire District Council with Nexus Community
- Vale of White Horse: Vale of White Horse District Council with Soll Leisure and Active Nation
- Cherwell: Cherwell District Council with Parkwood Community Leisure