

## ORAL CONCOURS 2013

### ANGLAIS - LVI

#### Women's sport is underfunded and ignored, charity claims

##### Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation fears that London 2012 legacy is being squandered

Women's sport is sidelined, underfunded and ignored, according to a broad coalition of MPs, peers, sportswomen and broadcasters who have warned that the legacy of a historic summer for women's sport is in danger of being squandered.

The Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF) called coverage of women's sport – only 5% of media coverage – shocking and said the government must do more to promote women's sport.

Research from the charity revealed that women's sport receives just 0.5% of all commercial sponsorship, while only one in five board members of national governing bodies are women.

"It has been the most amazing summer for women's sport, and we must not now let the moment pass," said Sue Tibballs, CEO of WSFF. "More coverage is not going to just happen on its own – we need action from the government, media and commercial partners to make this happen."

The charity was joined at a meeting in the House of Lords by Olympic gold medallist rower Katherine Grainger, journalist Clare Balding, Harriet Harman, shadow secretary of state for culture, media and sport, Lady Grey-Thompson and Barbara Keeley MP.

They called for more media coverage, more programmes aimed at girls in school, more female leadership in sports organisations and more opportunities for women and girls to get involved in sport. "Only 12% of girls at the age of 14 are taking part in the recommended amount of activity – and that has very serious ramifications beyond sport," said Tibballs. "This summer, we saw female athletes who were strong, powerful and inspiring. Let's see them celebrated as athletes, rather than dressing them up in evening gowns."

Three-quarters of people surveyed by the charity wanted to see more media coverage of women's sport, while 81% thought female athletes at London 2012 provided better role models for young girls than other celebrities.

Grainger said she had not become a sportswoman to be a role model, but took her role seriously. "It was an amazing summer for women's sport, everywhere I've gone since then everyone is still buzzing with excitement and sense that everything is possible," she said.

"The stage was utterly set for the girl power Olympics." Women had won medals "because they were capable, inspired and because they were good enough," she said.

Balding, who became a favourite with viewers during the Olympics and Paralympics, called on broadcasters to show more women's sport. "What about if editors in newspapers and radio shows dedicated just one item a day to women's sport?" she asked. She called for the media to be "honest" about the sport they covered: "it is not the sport, it is the men's sport," she said. Broadcasters and newspapers were missing a opportunity to meet a desire for more coverage of women's sport. "This is the moment for a broadcaster to stand up and say we believe in this we're going to support this," she said.

Harman joined with WSFF in calling for an inquiry into media coverage of women's sport by the culture, media and sport select committee. She called for women in sport to be "strident, stropky" and not to accept the status quo.

She also called for more aggressive use of the Equality Act, saying it should not be legal for men to be paid more prize money in sporting competitions, for women to be excluded from sporting clubs or for mens teams to travel in business class, while women were in economy.

"If these things are not against the law we need amendments to the Equality Act", she said, adding that if they were against the law "we need to sue the backsides off people".

The Guardian, 24 October 2012