

## **Chairman's Report Partnership and Magic**

### **Introduction:**

Many of us develop a professional expertise that spills over into our everyday lives, building our confidence and giving us a skill that is transferable to all that we do. Achievement breeds success and discovery that you can become really good at something (especially if it has been against expectation) creates a lasting warm feeling of 'can do'. Even after 30 years of involvement with DSUK, I still find myself overawed by the impact on participants and I'm still trying to pin-point the identity of the magic ingredient. What is it that is so special about snowsport that causes this profound therapeutic and life-changing benefit and why is it that snowsport turns out to be one the most accessible sports for all people, regardless of their disability? There are undoubtedly clues to the magic, found in the evidence in our year-book from our disabled members, their family and friends, as well as our instructors and volunteers, all of whom tell their stories in the following pages.

Much of the success of 2011 can be seen in the partnerships that are forged throughout the charity. As well as an agenda being promoted by the Trustees to seek and nurture corporate partnerships in support of the DSUK programme of activities for people with disabilities, it is the individual 'partnerships' that provide the commitment and loyalty given by all our [Staff and Volunteers](#), and often go beyond their duty to ensure that we are able to continue to deliver a high quality programme to our membership. The reports published in our upcoming yearbook show many stories that can corroborate the success and impact of our 2011 programme. Our members continue to make remarkable progress in their snowsport achievements, while carrying the personal sporting and therapeutic benefits through the work-play barrier, and delivering individual success stories that are inspirational.... just look at the number of medals the GB squad have brought home this year!

In striving to provide the magic to ever more people with disabilities, the Trustees have continued to review, prioritise, develop, align, expand. It seems DSUK is not lacking in ideas that would benefit people with disabilities through snowsport. Delivery of the ideas is limited only by sufficient trained staff, volunteers and, of course, financial resources. Thus, a target in 2011 was to debate the opportunities and prioritise their delivery, to build strategically on the core DSUK structure.

### **Overview of the Year**

A key theme to 2011 was 'partnership'. DSUK was originally built on the partnership between the disabled person and snowsport enthusiasts who asked "why shouldn't you have a wheelchair on top of a mountain". The same philosophy of partnership has underpinned our further development through more than 3 decades, but this is now realised in collaborations that bridge from the individual volunteer to the corporate body. 2011 has been exceptional in spearheading corporate partnership. The Crystal Partnership is becoming a strong operational model of considerable mutual benefit. The stories from both Crystal employees and our members tell of the success of this venture, even at the early stage of its development. The choice of partnership from within the snowsport industry closely follows the DSUK founding philosophy of sharing experiences with mutual gain. It delivers a relationship whereby Crystal employees can work alongside DSUK members on their overseas activities, learning about provision for people with disabilities, while also show-casing the work of DSUK through Crystal to a wider public. This widens understanding of our work within the industry and informs more people with disabilities (either directly or through their skiing friends) of the opportunities. The reintroduction of the 'corporate Helper' also gave valuable support to 2011 DSUK activities. This allowed the Trustees to put their full support behind a financially viable overseas activities programme that included a corporate personal development programme. The benefits to both disabled and corporate members have been profound.

Following the 2010 review of the organisational structure, the Trustees approved plans to modify the organisational framework to enable development. As a result, during the 2010/11 financial

year, the Trustees were able to endorse a major development programme of the DSUK Ski School, focussed on the snow centres around the UK. This would complement the enthusiastic network of local groups but required an increase in instructors and support staff. The success stories that have resulted are reported in the 2010/2011 Yearbook and evidenced by the 2000+ lessons delivered by our instructors in 2010/2011. This shows how the 'magic' is being experienced by increasing numbers of people with disabilities who join in DSUK activities for the first time.

### **Fundraising**

So how can we sustain the magic? Against a world economy where news items on austerity measures have been frequent, DSUK has also found it difficult to maintain the traditional profile of grants and donations to support the 'magic'. Indeed, we undertook our own austerity measures in 2009, resulting in a major restructuring and, through diversification of our fundraising approach and by developing new partnerships; we have continued to sustain a moderate development programme. Thus, my optimism remains strong and the work continues to underpin development with appropriate financial security.

This (and indeed, all our activities) has to be supported by good fundraising. Despite the impact of economic constraints on trust and grant funding, the Trustees recommended continuing effort in this direction. We are cautiously satisfied with the returns on this strategy and the clear endorsement that grant and trust awards bring to our charitable work. However, as reported in the last year-book, diversification of our fundraising is important to maximise opportunities and minimise overall risk. An Events Fundraiser was appointed during 2009/10 to bring special expertise to the team with the goal of delivering higher returns in events fundraising activities. The approach for 2010/11 was to explore a more diverse portfolio, mixing nationally recognised landmark events with new experimental events and small local-interest fundraising activities. In particular, the re-branding of the Skiathon to include corporate team participation is worthy of special note and a clear model for further success.

This was an experimental planning year, but a strategy has emerged that will drive our event fundraising calendar around a core group of prime events, well distributed throughout the UK and supported by strategic event-partnerships to maximise the impact of our fundraising efforts. With this strategy, the Trustees anticipate that the Events Fundraiser is properly placed to deliver an increased return on investment (ROI) in the forthcoming year.

As highlighted in the Treasurers' financial report. Our results for 2010/11 have continued to be satisfactory. Despite the general trends of reduced income available from charitable grants and trust funds, our results for fundraising in this sector remain solid and the overall financial management has remained strong. The final phase of financial restructuring will occur during late 2011 to provide more reporting detail, which will enable more accurate planning and risk management. We continue to build on a broad and more robust fundraising programme that has greater potential to withstand downturn in charitable donation. However, the Trustees recognise that risks remain and will continue to follow a strategy of review to identify appropriate development activities for next year.

### **Governance**

Governance of DSUK is undertaken by a [Board of Trustees](#), with management and delivery delegated to an expert and dedicated Staff through the CEO, Fiona Young. The Board includes both appointed and elected members and, in line with Charity Commission guidance, looks upon contributory expertise as a key factor in recruitment of new Trustees. We continually review the expertise of the Board and seek a broad range of skills, knowledge and experience.

### **Looking forward**

The Trustees will continue to endorse a plan that supports core activities but expands opportunities for collaboration and partnership. Partnership will remain a key theme during 2012, with a particular goal directed towards improving and expanding corporate partnerships, in a

manner that also provides an underpinning of DSUK Activities. An ambitious plan has been approved for further development of the ski school, doubling the number of lessons delivered in 2010/2011 and thereby making local access to snowsport for people with a disability a reality. The team development also remains a strong and important focus, with new team coaches beginning their work with our talented athletes. Can 2012 surpass the success and magic of 2011? The key objectives will remain:

- To increase participation in snowsport and active social recreation by people with disabilities, including opportunities for casual, recreational and club activities, coaching and competition.
- To provide sustainable and regular activities for recreational and competitive snowsport for disabled people through local and regional groups.
- To establish partnerships between other relevant groups and individuals involved in disability and snowsport, both nationally and internationally, thereby enabling better integration of facilities for people with disabilities.
- To develop pathways and opportunities for recreational members to experience competition (see the Access for All Ski League in association with Crystal)
- To develop pathways and opportunities for performance development for people with disabilities who are talented snowsportsmen.
- To increase the number and quality of people involved in disability snowsport – instructors, coaches, volunteers, administrators and coordinators. A strong focus on volunteers is being developed and a major volunteer recruitment programme is in planning.

Lisa Hall  
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Autumn 2011