

Written evidence submitted by Nicole Cooke MBE (BDA0012)

Contents

- 1.0 Summary
- 2.0 My experience
- 3.0 Governance
 - 3.1 Examples of the symptoms of this mal-governance
 - 3.2 Conclusions to issues of Governance
- 4. 0 Issues relating to Performance Enhancing Drugs (PEDs)
 - 4.1 Background and current status
 - 4.2 Personal experiences
 - 4.3 The international situation
 - 4.4 PEDs removed from exemptions
- 5.0 Finale

I have been asked to submit evidence to the Culture Media & Sport Select Committee.

I have requested that part of my evidence is written and present this to accompany the question and answer session.

1.0 Summary

I wish to present to you evidence for **two problems** that you may wish to consider.

The **first** one relates to the governance of a sport that receives annually significant financial support from the public purse and the fact that such funds are not distributed equitably and in a decent manner for the benefit of the whole of the target population. I summarise that as a ***sport run by men, for men***. I have attempted to achieve redress on a number of occasions but have encountered a governance structure at the National Federation – British Cycling - that is not responsible to anyone other than itself for its own actions. It has an Executive Board, but this exerts minimal control of its executive officers and is filled with a majority who approve of the mal-distribution of public funds. The oversight that should be in place via UK Sport is, at best, token.

The **second** relates to how measures and schemes put in place to fight the abuse of performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) are inadequate and ineffective in planning, management and execution – the so called “war on PEDs”. I summarise that as ***the wrong people fighting the wrong war, in the wrong way, with the wrong tools***.

Since both of these require the support and activity of management involved in the governance of sports, at a variety of levels, there are obviously areas of mutual inclusivity in the problematic areas.

I believe both of these problems have a direct bearing on why an employee, whose salary is paid out of the public purse, is directed by his managers, also paid out of the public purse, to spend several days driving from the south of England to Manchester and back and then catch a plane to fly to France and back, all to urgently deliver a package, the contents of which he claims he is ignorant of. And throughout, the management can direct him to do this with no thought for the responsibilities of his post, as British Women's Road Team Coach or the work he is paid to do, and all to the benefit of a private organisation, because there is no body to which effective appeal can be made, by those disadvantaged by such actions. The Director of the BC cycling performance program, Sir Dave Brailsford, and the National Coach, Shane Sutton, are both working for Team Sky in management roles as well as their public roles and can misdirect because they know that they have the approval to do so from the two cycling representatives on the Board of the Team Sky holding company, Tour Racing Limited, Ian Drake and Brian Cookson who were respectively CEO of and President of the Executive Board British Cycling throughout this period.

UK Sport, the body that I believe is charged by charter to have ultimate responsibility for the effective distribution of public funds from the Lottery to sporting organisations, provides no oversight and means of censure of this compromised governance structure. My personal experience is that UK Sport actively resist attempts to be made accountable, instead, always directing the athlete back to the governance of the sport. The only time I achieved a measure of satisfaction was when I engaged my MP in a serious matter and he raised it with the Minister for Sport, who in turn took it to the CEO of UK Sport. Such a resolution path is not practicable when asking why the National Coach has refused to allow a camp to be run for the British Women's Road Team and the National Women's Coach is instead directed to act as courier for his long term friend and ex professional team mate Bradley Wiggins at Team Sky or spend some weeks riding a moped in front of him as part of a training regimen, directed by the National Coach. These are merely front line symptoms of a management that is not subject to censure.

2.0 My experience

My experience is that of a cyclist actively engaged in the sport and exclusively extracting my livelihood from it for the period 2002 through to 2012. Therefore my account relates to British Cycling (BC) and its relationship with UK Sport, UK Anti-Doping (UKAD), the Union Cycliste International (UCI), World Anti-doping Agency (WADA) and clubs and organisations affiliated to BC. Throughout this time Brian Cookson was President of BC.

3.0 Governance

The fundamental problem appears to be that Sports Governance in the UK has not moved sufficiently from a model that suited small-time amateur club operations with small National Federation (NF) budgets funded out of modest levies on activities by participants, to that of an organisation responsible for the equitable distribution of millions of pounds of public money each year. Methods of oversight and consequent accountability are not effective.

Policies, rules and regulations are based on the NF, in my case BC, being the ultimate arbiter of everything to do with the sport, in particular how officers employed by BC conduct their affairs. The management at BC are able to show discrimination and favouritism for projects and individuals without check or balance; they are answerable only to themselves.

I believe there are a variety of routes for public money to be distributed to BC. These include, funding for hosting major events of both National and International stature, funding for the construction of facilities, funding for support of athletes in preparation for World events, the World

Class Performance Programs (WCPPs) and funding to encourage participation in sport by a wider section of the general population.

I understand that the role of UK Sport in the distribution of Lottery funds to NFs is clearly defined in an over-arching contract that places the responsibility for the fair and proper distribution of that public money with UK Sport.

My personal experience is that during the period 2001 to 2003, UK Sport in the persons of its then Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Richard Callicott and its then Director of WCPPs Liz Nicholl, who is now CEO, resisted this notion entirely. Instead they sought to place ultimate responsibility for how funds and support services purchased with public funds were distributed, entirely with the NFs and stated they had no function of oversight. I, my father, and my solicitor were in much written communication over this very point. We were entirely unsuccessful in achieving a resolution of any form until the matter was referred to my Local MP, Win Griffiths, and he very kindly brought it up with the Minister of Sport, Richard Caborn who then asked Richard Callicott to justify this position. Consequently the BC Director of WCPP Peter Keen resigned and later in that same year Richard Callicott also left office. A further contributory factor to Richard Callicott's departure was the dispute Callicott had with the then Head of the anti-doping testing program within UK Sport (it was not independent at that time) Michele Verroken. This centred on whether Rio Ferdinand's failure to attend an Anti-doping test should be treated as a doping infraction or not. Rio Ferdinand had recently been purchased for £30 million by Manchester United, a fee that was a new record. Were he to be banned, his team would not get economic reward against this investment. At this time both FIFA (President Sepp Blatter) and the UCI (President Hein Verbruggen) were resisting all calls for their sports to sign up to the new WADA protocols which clearly defined missed tests as infractions.

My experience is that even though in the case I brought to UK Sport, although I was able to eventually get UK Sport to accept ultimate responsibility for the disbursement of funds and services procured with public funds, UK Sport do not offer effective oversight and do not hold BC to account, in fact the reverse is true with the model mainly being that BC and affiliated projects spend and distribute as they and they alone see fit, and also spend over budget with little fear of censure.

3.1 Examples of the symptoms of this mal-governance

To support this assertion I give a modest selection of examples taken from across my chronological experience.

A WCPP program existed for Juniors (ages 17 & 18) when I was 16. This provided a modest financial support for equipment and travel expenses for athletes of this category. At both 15 and 16 I met the performance criteria for this program. I was denied entry because I was "too young". At 16 I became the Senior British Road Race champion beating all the senior elite athletes supported by the Senior WCPP, despite my youth. When I turned 17 the program had been cancelled by the Director of WCPP Peter Keen. Keen was personal coach to the senior rider who was second to me in the British Championships the year before. I could not dispute his decision as BC were the arbiters of their actions and Keen was fully supported by BC senior management. When I became senior, another excuse, this time predicated on a false representation of the factual situation, was generated to prevent me having any access to lottery support. At this stage, and with experience, I took things further and in the period 2002/2003 we arrived at the impasse I described with UK Sport.

One of the early excuses UK Sport used for insisting that they could not intervene was that this was solely a dispute between an athlete and a NF and they had no power to intervene. Further, I had not used the BC Appeal procedure – I must follow their due process. My representatives wrote back to

detail the construct of the “Appeal Procedure” BC had written to hold themselves to account. The Appellant had to submit the details of the Appeal and then BC management would request down-payment of financial security to cover all assembly, accommodation, maintenance and administrative costs of the appeal panel, which would be due by the Appellant, should the case not be found in favour of the Appellant. The construct of the Appeals Panel was at the gift of BC. The decision of the Panel would be submitted to the Executive Board and the Appellant had no right to know the nature of it. Then in a final twist, the Executive Board gifted themselves the ability to not be bound by the decision of the Appeals Panel and determine whatever decision they wished. I informed UK Sport I would not use this “Appeal Procedure” and the question was asked of UK Sport if given the nature of the process and the financial commitment required by the Appellant, they would either. No reply was received. When my representatives wrote again asking if UK Sport should be distributing public money to organisations who wrote such clearly un-just policies and should not a requirement be that if a NF wished to present itself as an organ for distribution of public money, it should have to pass some fairly modest threshold of competent governance, I received a reply to the effect that Appeals Policies within individual sports were the responsibility of each NF and not a matter UK Sport should consider.

This inadequate response formed a key point in the case I presented to my MP. I was grateful of the efforts he made that resulted in the resolution of this issue.

Around mid career . c 2006, I received some information to indicate that UK Sport had appointed an Equalities Officer. I asked my representative to contact this person to see if they would engage with two issues that were current. I had asked Director of WCPP Dave Brailsford to facilitate other female riders joining myself on the continent. The Australian Cycling Federation did this by setting up two team houses, one for their male riders and another for females. Various reasons had been given about how this was not possible. Then, a house had been set up for the young male British riders in Italy. I believe this, together with all the support personnel and equipment was fully funded by a grant from Lottery funds approved by UK Sport. I had again urged that a similar facility was set up for female riders. I was told this would not happen. In June 2006 I returned to the UK from Italy to race the British Championships that were being held in Yorkshire. I knew that both the local council and a UK Sport approved major event grant contributed the major part of the event budget. Of the British Road Riders of the time, I was significantly the most high profile and highest attaining. British Male success on the international circuit at that time was non-existent and previous British Winner, David Millar was still serving his ban for doping. The event preparations were as normal. The prize purse for the women’s race was a tiny fraction of that for the men and the pre-race publicity was all about the male race with a token mention of the women’s race. I had just won the Women’s Tour de France, to follow up a win in the Italian Giro of 2004. It was put to the Equalities Officer at UK Sport could this bias be investigated and BC management held to account for such discriminatory action. The response was very clear. Such an investigation was not in the remit of the Equalities Officer at UK Sport and nor would that Officer do anything with the information provided. If I had any issues I should take them up with BC. That I had already done so to no effect, was not his concern. He would do nothing.

Very little was ever done to support female road riders during my career. At times odd riders would be supported for a period, while they were “in favour” but mostly, that support was only ever transient. In 2008 the plans were in place for the male only Team Sky that would use a variety of BC Lottery funded staff in dual roles. Dave Brailsford managed the project with BC CEO Ian Drake and President Brian Cookson on the Board of Tour Racing Limited the holding company set up to “own” it. Once again the designed in “oversight” were the people who approved the initial decision to

progress the project as male only. No successful appeal that it should be a male and female team was possible. This was run exclusively by men, exclusively for men. Other contemporary professional teams even those not connected to National Federations, ran male and female squads on the two circuits. To do so would not have been unusual or different.

It was evident to all that huge resource went into this project from BC, to the extent that in the autumn of 2008 as they all concentrated on this and the World Championships came up, and, as there was no male rider who could effectively challenge for a World title, they downgraded the whole preparation for that event. At those World Championships I found I could not get basic repairs completed for my bicycle by the BC mechanics. After my win at Beijing, British Cycling had bragged that the program of “marginal gains” meant that they had produced a skin suit for me to use whilst most of my competitors rode in shorts and a jersey. I had insisted on this in 2000, against the wishes of the BC management, and now it was trumpeted as an advantage of their thoroughness. However, for late 2008 they had once again “forgotten” to organise one and I was told to ride in shorts and jersey, which they had provided. Expecting this, I had brought to the championships my skin suit from the year before. Dave Brailsford was insistent that I could not wear it as it did not feature the logo of the new Sponsor Sky. Eventually a compromise was reached on the eve of the race, in which Emma Pooley, who had a needle and thread with her, cut out the Sky logo of the jersey and sowed it onto my old skinsuit. I won the World Title and became the first person, male or female to be World and Olympic road race champion in the same year.

In “Project Rainbow” the book by British Male Road Coach, Rod Ellingworth he describes assembling the plan for Mark Cavendish for the World Championships in 2011 and London 2012. This plan is being put together at this same time, late 2008. It is worth quoting verbatim. “....at the end of 2008 I wrote up a four year plan to win the road race in London.....the debacle of Madrid in 2005 summed up where GB was at the time.....(that I won a silver medal contesting a sprint with no lead out or support riders in the finale is ignored.).....At British Cycling there were a few people – Shane Sutton in particular – who were against me doing this. I think Shane felt that if we did all this for the lads, we would have to do it for the women, but I told him that wasn’t my problem”.

The facts are they did nothing for the women. Whilst this deluxe program ran out for the men’s London 2012 bid, Emma Pooley and myself self funded our flights to and accommodation in Australia.

For London 2012 the 2011 Trial Event was for men only, despite the current gold medallist in the road race and silver medallist in the time trial being female, we were again ignored. Staff at BC will point out that this was not their decision, but that of the London Games organisers. The manager of the Cycling events at London 2012 was an ex BC employee and worked in complete co-operation with the staff at BC. If they had wanted to put on a trial event for women they could have done so. That manager is ex professional cyclist Simon Lillistone who has his own “long journey with a bag, the contents of which and purpose of the journey were a complete mystery to him”. In his case he was transporting a “bag” for Lance Armstrong. A decade later it was confirmed the bag contained PEDs, but at the time the story of the “bag for Lance” came out, Simon Lillistone found he could not support the claims of his partner Emma O’Reilly, who stated that they were PEDs for Armstrong’s doping program to win the Tour de France.

3.2 Conclusions to issues of Governance

All of the above are modest symptoms. Cope was doing what he was told to do. Shane Sutton states he approved Cope’s trip with the jiffy bag. Nobody in the organisation anywhere would have asked

the question – hasn't Cope got another job to do? At fault are those who designed the program in the way they did. "Team Sky" and the simultaneous use of people also receiving a full wage from the public purse at BC, was all about optimising the road team for London 2012 and getting a British rider to win the Tour de France. Of course they really did not mean any British rider because I had already won the Tour twice. They meant a British rider who counts in their eyes and that meant a man. This was an exclusively male program; it was not open to women and would not support women, but resources paid from the public purse to support that tiny fraction of a program that was available to women were stripped out of the women's program to augment the men's program by flying out "unknown" jiffy bags or riding mopeds whenever needed.

This un-equitable and discriminatory distribution of resource was only possible due to the failure of UK Sport to hold the senior management of BC to account. Throughout my whole career, BC senior management and the Board could not have made it more clear to those they directed, that men and the actions and achievements of men, were all that mattered. This was obvious to all observers of the sport but UK Sport just stood by, watched and approved.

4. 0 Issues relating to Performance Enhancing Drugs (PEDs)

4.1 Background and current status

UKAD recently stand accused of not investigating Dr Bonar when evidence was brought to them by Dan Stevens. My total experience as an elite athlete brings me to a condition where I am not surprised that UKAD have done nothing. I have no faith in the actions in support of investigations conducted by UKAD or the testing they conduct, both completed at significant expense to the public purse.

Internationally, the conflicts of interest of so many of those charged with defending clean riders are such that they cannot be trusted to carry out their responsibilities effectively. National and International Federations can not be allowed to have any part in anti-doping activity. They are compromised at so many levels.

I have twice presented personal evidence to the agency in the UK responsible for anti-doping management. In the first case they stated they would not do anything with my evidence. On the second they took no notes during the meeting and informed me I could not be given any information of any sort as to how they might process the evidence I gave them. My belief, based on the lack of action I observed post this event, is that they did nothing at all on that second occasion either. On another occasion I asked them to follow up on the case of a rider who was apparently serving a two year ban and had been stripped of an Olympic medal but was being offered to me some 9 months later as a team mate and had already been back competing for several months and just become Pan American champion! After some initial good support from UKDAD, I was soon left to pursue this case with WADA alone. I found identical reactions at WADA to those at UKAD and when conventional inquiries were ignored, I had to resort to writing recorded delivery letters to Dick Pound in order to elicit responses. Needless to say the outcome was, that with a very dubious evidence trail in which the rider concerned changed her story about what caused the positive test result, several times, those in responsibility accepted her account and gave her medal back. I pursued the case for two years, attempting to elicit from the authorities explanations as to why they took the decisions they did, given the evidence before them. Finally I received an intemperate reply from Mr Oliver Niggli, (who appeared before this committee), on behalf of Dick Pound. It brought little relief that in 2015 that same rider once again tested positive, this time for human growth hormone at the Pan American games and is currently serving a four year ban. She retains her Olympic medal that was

given back to her by those who earn their livelihood with guarding the interests of the clean athletes.

Pertinent to the “jiffy bag” incident is that two of the protagonists are directly involved in the Linda McCartney cycling team. Both Simon Cope and Bradley Wiggins rode for this team. Team Manager Julian Clark and rider Matt DeCanio state that doping was practised within the team. Other BC employees and ex employees involved in the team are current U23 men’s road team manager Keith Lambert, ex team doctor Roger Palfreeman, who was doctor on the team, Max Sciandri and ex Team Sky manager Sean Yates who rode for a number of years on the same team as Lance Armstrong. Apparently UKAD have testimony from three members of the team stating that riders used PEDs. The investigation was started in 2012 when the claims were first made by The Times newspaper. UKAD did advise at the outset patience would be needed before outcomes would be reached. “All valid information that could lead to a prosecution will be followed up.” As recently as June 2016 three of the British members of this team, Sean Yates, Max Sciandri and Matt Stephens, who is a commentator on the sport for Eurosport, all stated that UKAD had made no contact with them. Four years on – how patient do we have to be, or are UKAD doing nothing?

I am not an expert on the legal framework under which UKAD management operate. I can only state from my viewpoint they appear very keen to grasp any excuse not to do anything a clean athlete might view as of merit.

4.2 Personal experiences

In my first full season, 2002 I became fully aware that the use of PEDs was still endemic in the sport and the “new clean era” post the Festina scandal of 1999 was a designed fiction. I note that the President of WADA, Craig Reedie appeared before this committee and was of the view that criminalising doping violations by the athlete was not a good idea and would produce no benefit. To back up this point of view he suggested that only two countries have enacted to criminalise acts in this field, Italy and Germany and only two people have been convicted as a consequence and therefore it is pointless. To counter I would simply ask him to identify just how have the big drug busts been achieved? UKAD have been presented with evidence from whistleblowers in respect of the Linda McCartney team and several years later have not interviewed key witnesses. Undoubtedly they have not done so because there is nothing to be gained, according to their defined terms of conduct of operation and the National Anti-doping Policy. Certainly no criminal offence has been committed. I would ask how could they have gone about gaining confidential information to confirm or disprove the allegations made against Dr Bonar? They had no power to engage in phone tapping, video surveillance and the other tools available to criminal investigations. At the age of 19 I was the only Brit on my team in Italy and I was encouraged by two members of the management of my team to dope. Not all were so inclined and another of those engaged in the management of the team specifically warned me about what was likely to happen and to urge me to be on my guard.

If William Dazzani operated in the UK rather than in Italy he would still be running doping rings, producing tragedy and misery in so many around him. As it was the Italian Guardia were empowered by legislation making it a criminal offence to receive and procure PEDs for athletes and were able to conduct an investigation – Operation Bike - using tools of the state to do so. They tapped phones and had recorded conversations of Olivano Locatelli speaking to William Dazzani advising him how athletes could take PEDs and still not test positive at events. They conducted video surveillance and they raided houses and found stashes of PEDs. They arrested the Directeur Sportif William Dazzani. I was ignorant that, during my time with the team, the Italian Police were conducting their investigation and so I took my experiences of Dazzani to the fore-runner of UKAD, I was told there

was nothing they could do. My representative specifically asked the director, John Scott, as they would do nothing, could they at least have the common courtesy of passing the intelligence I provided to the Italian anti-doping authorities. John answered that he would not do so, he and his organisation would do nothing with the information.

As a 19 year old female in a foreign country, I am grateful that Italy viewed the behaviour of Dazanni as criminal.

4.3 The international situation

Similarly it was the Spanish Police who ran Operation Puerto that ensnared Dr Eufemiano Fuentes. Now we can all decry the painful lack of subsequent action of the prosecutors on being presented with such bountiful evidence. Fortunately not all those receiving a very good salary from the public purse to “protecting the right to participate in clean sport” (UKAD), have swords apparently made of chocolate. If UKAD want an example of how to act they should just look at how diligently the Italian authorities pursued Spanish cyclist Valverde in the Puerto case. Valverde was careful not to race in Italy, where doping violations are a criminal offence. However he did not look closely enough at the route map for the Tour de France one year. The Italian authorities bided their time and waited until the Tour de France came to a finish in Italy and Valverde was then within their jurisdiction. They seized him and conducted a test and were able to get a sample of DNA. Later, when a temporary stand in Judge was maintaining the case in Spain, they succeeded in obtaining a sample from one of the blood bags held by the authorities there. As a direct consequence of this action and only because of it, Valverde was banned for two years.

This determined action is leagues beyond the bungling in relation to the case of the rider who was able to win the Pan American Championship, months after starting her two year ban. Her case was a prime example of why NFs cannot be allowed to have any part in the process. She tested positive at Athens and was stripped of her medal and had an automatic two year ban. She then appealed the ban. This appeal was processed by her home nation cycling federation, the same officials who had been celebrating their first ever cycling Olympic medal, when she won, just weeks before. The justification for the appeal was that the Federation doctor stated that he was at fault and had prescribed a medicine the athlete took the day before, that had caused the positive result. The Officers of the Federation decided that the Appeal should be upheld and she started racing again. The Federation then supported her claim to have her Olympic medal returned, seeing as she had now been declared entirely blameless by them. This was achieved, even if the reason presented at the two subsequent hearings was entirely different to that which caused the appeal to be upheld. NFs are responsible for executing anti-doping education, coach education, employing doctors, selecting athletes and promoting their sport. Valverde was a Spanish rider, he remained in their jurisdiction most of the time. The Italian authorities gathered the evidence to convict him, whilst those in Spain failed to act. Is it feasible to pretend that a home federation will act without bias in hearing cases of this kind? I have cited two examples, I could write about others.

If I were to understand Craig Reedie correctly, I believe that if he had his wishes the Italian authorities would not have been empowered to act in this manner. The French Police needed criminal legislation to be able to conduct investigations that blew apart the Festina scandal in 1999. The French Police needed criminal legislation to be able to take in Sir Dave Brailsford and David Millar for questioning and expose Millar as a cheat. After all, Millar had passed all the testing around a World Championship gold winning ride – he must be clean.

4.4 PED's removed from exemptions

It is this same lack of desire by those at the very top of the sport to engage in the fight that delisted known PEDs for out of competition (OOC) use. Before the committee both David Brailsford and Bob Howden stated that the number of therapeutic use exemptions (TUEs) issued in the sport of cycling had declined. They quoted the figure of 13. This is somewhat misleading as it represents only those issues by the UCI. There are a variety of other bodies that a cyclist can go to obtain a TUE. I have not seen assembled any figures for all cyclists competing in all cycling internationally. A further fact is that TUE numbers have declined because a whole series of PEDs had been taken off the list of banned substances if used OOC, or in the case of a range of Asthma medications, thresholds have been adjusted to higher levels so athletes can take drugs that have performance enhancing side effects, in small doses, and not trigger a failure.

In November 2003 I was unable to train or race due to serious career threatening knee injury. Together with the medical team and coaching staff we discussed possible treatments. At that stage the medical advice was not to elect for surgery but try remedial action and have an injection of the steroid triamcinolone. I had a TUE for this treatment receiving the same steroid that Bradley Wiggins used more recently. At the time it could only be used with a TUE, whether in or out of competition. That injection failed to address the medical problems and I continued not to race and ended up having surgery in May 2004. It was June 2004 before I had my first race subsequent to the injection in November the year before. I had a further TUE for the same steroid in September 2007, again it was out of competition and I would not race until five months after the injection. This is a powerful steroid with known PED properties. If the TUE process were to be reliably controlled, then an athlete would not be able to abuse its use OOC to prepare for a big event. In 2006, 12 of the 13 positive test results at the men's Tour de France were discounted by riders having active TUEs. 105 of the 176 starters were tested, and 60% had TUEs. In 2008, 76 of the 180 riders who started the men's Tour de France had TUEs. My personal experience is that sometimes I attended anti-doping protocols with other competitors who took in files with many TUEs. Obviously I was not privy to their personal medical records and conditions but it appeared that it would not be lost on many of the unscrupulous that a TUE was a very convenient way to mask a doping program. In 2003/4 I brought up my concerns with UKAD that the TUE approval process was being abused. Once again I was informed that UKAD would do nothing about my concerns to investigate it as in their view "there were a number of very poorly elite athletes competing". Eventually the authorities have acted to tighten up the issuing process, but current with that is the move that makes usage of these drugs with PED side effects, legal in OOC use. The significant majority of an elite athlete's time is spent out of competition. One gate was closed but a bigger one opened.

Of concern are the TUEs issued by the Team Sky/British Cycling medical team for this same steroid. Perhaps, the more relevant question, rather than the strange coincident chronology of the ailment, is to ask the BC/Sky medical team how often has this steroid been issued to athletes out of competition. Is it used properly - to help recover from career threatening injuries or has it ever been used to assist athletes losing fat and gaining power in the out of competition preparation for major events?

Undoubtedly the question would not receive an answer even if it could be asked and therefore we are back with those at the top of the sport and their apparent lack of desire to put in place effective rules or change them to be less effective – whereabouts violations slackening from "three missed tests in 18 months", being eased to the lower threshold of "three in 12 months"; another simple example.

5.0 Finale

I am led to believe that UK Sport apparently gave £100,000 to Craig Reedie to support his presidential bid at WADA. Similarly they gave £78,000 to Brian Cookson to support his bid at the UCI. Does the public get value for money from these bids or is this another example of UK Sport distributing funds to those that request them, with negligible consequent oversight?

With ex BC President Brian Cookson seeking another term in office perhaps it would be well to compare actions with manifesto commitments before committing further public funds to support a subsequent bid. Easily measurable was his commitment that within 12 months of coming into office he would ensure female professional cyclists all received a minimum salary. That he would do so would be astonishing, given his track record in power at British Cycling and on the Board of the holding company of Team Sky. Needless to say this has not happened and three years after his election the prospect of a minimum wage being introduced is even further away than it was at the time of his election. By all means let the UCI run their own elections and if the national representatives view him as the best candidate for the job, well good luck to both him and them, but I would suggest that there are more deserving demands on the public funds available.

January 2017