

Iain Gray appointed new chair of Hibernian Community Foundation



The senior Scottish politician, Iain Gray MSP, has been appointed as the new chair of the Hibernian Community Foundation.

The charity aims to harness the power and passion of football to make a real difference to people's lives. It partners with other organisations to improve health, promote learning and enhance opportunity.

In the past year the Foundation's activities created more than 10,000 opportunities for engaging with people in the community. These activities range from courses to improve literacy and IT skills to projects to help fans with fitness and weight loss.

Iain is a lifelong supporter of Hibernian Football Club and a season ticket holder. After seven years as a teacher trying to support young people to make the best of their opportunities, and twelve years with Oxfam organising for social justice and against poverty around the world, Iain Gray stood for the Scottish Parliament.

Elected as MSP for Edinburgh Pentlands in 1999, he held four different Ministerial posts, including Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning, alongside Donald Dewar, Henry McLeish and Jack McConnell. He also spent 4 years as a Special Adviser to the then Secretary of State for Scotland, Alistair Darling. The experience gave him a unique understanding of how devolution works.

He became MSP for East Lothian in 2007 and was Leader of Labour in the Scottish Parliament from September 2008 to December 2011. He is currently Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Finance.

Iain Gray said, "This is a great opportunity for me to build on the success that the Foundation has had in a relatively short period since it was created.

"The Hibernian Community Foundation has grown at a remarkable rate over the past few years and is now making a positive difference to many people's lives.

"I firmly believe that football clubs like Hibernian must now be about so much more than just the game on Saturday. They should be about how to improve the lives of people in the community 365 days a year.

"If we can use a love of football to channel youngsters into courses to help them into work, or children into homework clubs, or older fans into taking control of their own health and fitness then we should do it."

One of the main partners of the Foundation is Edinburgh College. Together, the Foundation and Edinburgh College deliver a range of courses at the Learning Centre in the South Stand at Easter Road.

The Foundation also includes the highly successful Hibernian Girls and Ladies Football Club, providing a model of development and premier league football for women in Scotland.

Previous chairs of the Foundation include the former Scottish Health Minister, Susan Deacon and the former Hibernian Chief Executive Scott Lindsay. The Chair of HCF is a voluntary, unpaid position.

At the moment, The Foundation are looking for participants for round two of the 'Still Game' programme which involves a wide

range of activities to get older fans together and having a good time in the South Stand at Easter Road.



The programme focuses on healthy activity and provides information about healthy diet, but also includes many other activities to keep people moving.

Participants choose from a variety of activities including exploring the history of Hibernian FC with behind the scenes look at Easter Road Stadium and Hibernian Training Centre, meeting club Legends and Q&A with former players, playing musical instruments through Music Box, personal safety and First Aid, internet use and other IT skills and wellbeing and positive mental health.

Glenn Milne from the Foundation told the Edinburgh Reporter: "I would recommend the Still Game programme to anyone interested in improving their health and wellbeing and learning new skills. Hibs fans in particular will get to meet some of the legends that they have watched over the years at Easter Road. The previous programme was very successful and enjoyed by everyone who took part. The programme is free to anyone over 60 and starts the week of 9 September and will run for 10 weeks. Anyone interested in taking part or who know someone who could benefit, should contact the community to register an interest at info@hibernianinthecommunity.org.uk or telephone 0131 661 2159."

Further information on the Foundation's activities in Health and Wellbeing; Learning and Education and Community Football can be found on the website at www.hibernianinthecommunitvorguk.