The 1970's were a good time for sport in Britain. Enthusiasm grew, participation increased, new facilities were built. And Britain's reputation grew in the arena of international sport.

But it didn't all happen by itself. The Sports Council was there, behind the scenes, helping things along. We saw the need to make sport more a part of everyday life. And we were there to provide the money for the building of facilities so it could happen.

In 1972-3 for example, we recommended, in two 'Provision for Sport' reports, that certain minimum amounts of money should be provided by the govern-ment to pay for both basic and specialist sports facilities.

Some thought the reports were unlikely to prompt action; but they did. Others thought the amounts of money specified were too low in relation to other countries.

But by 1981 many of the critics had been confounded. Targets for the new and replacement swimming pools had been achieved. And a large number of indoor sports centres and specialist facilities had been built as well.

With this effort by the Sports Council, and with more than a little help from the healthy economic climate and the gathering social awareness of sport, participation in indoor sport doubled in the 1970's. And participation in outdoor sport which doubled in the 60's, increased by half that again.
Having encouraged a broad-base of sport facilities, we then focused in on areas of special need such as encouraging participation in inner-cities; establishing eighty regional centres to promote excellence wherever it was to be found; developing community recreation schemes in partnership with professional football and rugby league clubs; and coaching and training schemes to get the best out of the country’s up and coming talent.

All in all, a decade of endeavour that bore fruit from street-level right the way up to Olympic level. The interest was there. The involvement was there. And Britain has a much stronger sporting foundation on which to build for the future.
Editor's comments - [ Origins of 'Sport for All', what the CCPR in the early sixties conceptualised as 'Opportunities for all':

The Council of Europe was the first international organisation to take an interest in sport and has been helping for more than 30 years to build an ethical framework for sports activities. Whether on doping, fair play in sport or action against violence at sports events, the Council’s pioneering work and humanist approach has brought it international recognition as a leading expert in framing a democratic approach to sport, geared to respect for human rights and covering the full range of sport from top-level to amateur.

The starting point for the Council of Europe’s concern with sport was culture. The Council for Cultural Co-operation (CCC) was set up in 1962 under the 1954 European Cultural Convention, and its Committee for Out-of-School Education had three sections, one of which dealt with sport. The section’s aims were very modest: it was simply a discussion forum for experts and policy-makers in charge of sport. “Our discussions were very theoretical and had no practical impact”, admits Armand Lams, a Belgian appointed to head the sports section in 1964. But the discussions were fruitful, since they gradually shaped a common European view of sport. After six years of thought and discussion, a basic text revolving around the idea of the right to sport for all was adopted in Bruges on 17 January 1968.

The idea was to put into practice an approach to sport that went well beyond the Olympic games, media-oriented sport and high-level competition, at a time when the prevailing trends were industrial and office work, urban growth and the rise of the consumer society.

Without turning its back on high-level sport or competition, the Bruges meeting laid the foundations for a democratic conception of modern sports activities. The participants concluded that sport must be understood in the modern sense, as a free and spontaneous physical activity practised in leisure time for the purposes of recreation and relaxation; sport in this sense covers sports as such and a variety of physical activities, provided that they call for a degree of effort.

This definition was designed as criticism of the politically motivated high-level regimenting, but it also aimed to promote the right of people of all ages, both sexes and all social groups to suitable sports activities.
The outcome of the Bruges meeting, seven years later, was the cornerstone of the Council of Europe’s sports policy, the European Sports Charter adopted in Brussels on 20 March 1975 by the 1st Conference of European Ministers responsible for Sport. This basic text marked the start of the Council of Europe’s pioneering role in sport, which has since made it a driving force in the discussion of sports issues in Europe. While the European Union, limited by its treaties, still approaches sport only from the admittedly important standpoint of economics, the Council of Europe takes a broader view, covering the right to sport for all, anti-doping policies, fair play in sport, action against violence at sports events and the design of sports grounds.


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