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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

SKILLSACTIVE LAUNCH CONSULTATION FOR SPORTS OFFICIALS

Today sees the launch of the long awaited industry-wide consultation to develop National Occupational Standards for sports officials in the UK.

SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council for sport and recreation, is leading the consultation process on behalf of sportsofficialsUK (soUK), in further steps to standardise officiating across the UK.

SkillsActive's entry to the workforce manager, Steve Mitchell said; "This is a real chance for the sports industry to have, for the first time ever, a set of National Occupational Standards that are accepted and agreed by a wide-range of sports, across the UK. It will also provide a framework to which National Governing Bodies of Sport can further promote officiating as a viable career option, as well as highlighting volunteering opportunities.

"Promoting officiating as a valued job role, a professional or Sunday morning club volunteer is equally as important. People forget that without a referee, umpire or judge, sport just wouldn't take place. There's never been a better time to get involved in officiating, with the recent announcement about London 2012, the sports industry is completely buzzing, all Olympic and Paralympic sports need officials too!"

Over the next few weeks, SkillsActive will be consulting on five draft National Occupational Standards that have been developed over the past two years, with support from the Football Association, Rugby Football Union, Rugby Football League, Lawn Tennis Association, as well as representatives from badminton, swimming, netball, athletics, triathlon, squash and motor sports.

Once the consultation process is complete, officiating will enjoy a number of generic standards that can be utilised across all sports, and will guide the design and development of qualifications in officiating. This can only help to professionalise the industry further.

Heavily involved in soUK himself, Andy Melrose, training and education officer for Rugby Football Development Ltd, believes developing National Occupational Standards is vital to attract more people into officiating; "Standards for officiating gives the role greater credibility within the sports, which then leads to more recruitment and retention not just of referees but also of administrators within officiating."

To take part in the consultation process, and find out more about the standards, visit:
www.sportsofficialsuk.com/consultations

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. SkillsActive is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for Sport and Recreation, Health and Fitness, Playwork, The Outdoors and the Caravan industries.
2. SkillsActive's mission statement is: "To ensure best quality, best business and best value within the Sector to achieve its economic and social potential."
3. SSCs are employer-led organisations that aim to tackle the skills and productivity needs of their sector throughout the UK. SSCs provide employers with the opportunity to provide leadership to meet their sector's skills and business needs. In return they receive substantial public investment and greater dialogue with government departments across the UK.
4. For more information about SkillsActive, please visit our website @ www.skillsactive.com
5. SkillsActive is currently developing a Sector Skills Agreement for the Active Leisure and Learning Sector which will define the Sector's skills needs and ultimately form an agreement between employers, Government and funding partners to shape the workforce for the next ten years.
6. sportsofficialsUK is a group of representatives from a number of National Governing Bodies of Sport, working together to standardise officiating in the UK.