

# **Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee**

## **CWLS (2) 11-06 (p3)**

**Meeting date: Thursday, 13 July 2006**

**Meeting time: 1:30pm - 4:30pm**

**Meeting venue: The National Botanic Garden of Wales, Llanarthne**

**Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee**

**Review Of Football In Wales: Issues From Evidence To Committee February – June 2006**

The attached paper sets out:

- i. the agreed Terms of Reference for the review
- ii. the organisations who have given oral evidence to Committee
- iii. the issues raised to date.

The paper does not at this stage attempt an analysis of the issues but identifies the key points that have emerged from the evidence to date. It does not include the written evidence; this will be included in updated paper to Committee for the meeting on 11 October.

The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the paper and
- ii. to identify any areas which it feels still need to covered in the review.

**MRCS  
July 2006**

# **Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee**

**Review Of Football In Wales: Issues Raised In Committee**

**February – June 2006**

**Introduction**

1. This paper summarises the main issues which have arisen from the oral evidence taken by Committee during the six meetings of the review held between February and June 2006 (Annex 1).
2. 16 organisations have given evidence to date. Additional written evidence has also been received (from 25 organisations) but is not included in this summary. It will be incorporated in an update of this paper for the review meeting (11 October) next term when the Sports Council Wales will also be giving an overview from its perspective. There will be a final evidence session beforehand on 28 September.

## **Issues**

3. The issues are set out under the headings of the terms of reference (Annex 2).

# **Effectiveness of the current structure supporting football**

## **A. In delivering for all**

### **Organisation of Football (including the relationship between the FAW and FAW Trust)**

- The inter-relationship between the various overarching organisations in football such as:
  - those between the Sports Council Wales (SCW), Football Association Wales (FAW) and FAW Trust particularly in comparison with the SCW's relationships with other sports governing bodies;
  - that between the FAW Trust and the Welsh Schools Football Association (WSFA); the Committee heard that the partnership and Service Level Agreement between the two organisations is currently under review;
  - between the Welsh Premier League, Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) and the FAW
- Generally the complex nature of the overall structure and relationships in Wales between the various organisations and entry qualifications for competitions both within the UK and Europe
- The lack of a strategic vision and plan for football which, it was suggested should identify how clubs can make sufficient money; ensure the national league is seen as credible for both semi professional and professional players; and for grass roots football
- The lack of professionalism within the system in, for example, meeting UEFA auditing standards
- The restrictions of the "confidentiality" agreement with the Football Association and a belief that there is no democracy, communication or transparency in the system
- The views of UEFA on arrangements in Wales

## **Football Development**

- The loss of players (and fans) to English clubs and the impact on Welsh football
- The possible duplication, within limited resources, of development support between for example the FAW Trust and the Welsh Premier League's club academies

- Too much fragmentation in football development, with schools, the FAW Trust and the League of Wales' clubs trying to do different things.

## **Volunteers**

- The impact that legislation on child protection and insurance is having on volunteers
- A large voluntary sector, much of which is untrained and unqualified possibly in child protection procedures.

## **Referees**

- The difficulties in attracting people to become referees, particularly young people who may be deterred by the aggression in the game that they meet or see; it was hoped that more former players might turn to refereeing as a career
- The fact that Welsh referees are unable to work in England

## **Women and Girls Football**

- It was felt that there are tremendous opportunities for women in refereeing and that it is a tragedy that there are no women referees on the international list
- Although encouraged to do so, not all clubs have development policies for women
- One of the key inhibitors for participation, particularly for girls, is the access to facilities, particularly grass pitches
- There is a specific strategy for the women's and girls' game. It fits in with the FAW Trust's strategy. It is hoped to have 10,000 players in Wales by 2010.
- In terms of development for women and girls, the relationship between key people such the Football Association, area associations, local authorities, Sports Council for Wales and the Welsh Schools Football Association is crucial. The accreditation scheme for clubs and schools will play a big and important role in terms of meeting the targets set in the strategy.
- There is far more television coverage of the women's and girls' game today on Sky and the BBC than there has ever been.

## **Broadcasting**

- The television rights for football including games on S4C; the need for wider exposure for Welsh football which in turn would increase sponsorship and advertising around the grounds
- Clubs not benefiting from broadcast matches
- Broadcasting rights particularly in terms of events of significance as described in "Listed Events"

## **Disability Football**

- A football disability programme has been in place since 2004; an associated strategy looks forward to 2010.
- A key aim is to have a pan disability club in each local authority by 2007 linked to schools

programmes

- The need for communication and management of partnerships between the 22 local authority football development officers and disability sports officers employed by the Federation of Disability Sport Wales
- Transport difficulties which inhibit the development of a competition structure and player development
- The need to develop a welfare policy with appropriate rules and regulations for disability football
- There needs to be partnership between the FAW, FAW Trust and the Federation of Disability Sport Wales in order to develop national squads for Wales

## **B. In contributing to the Welsh Assembly Government's Agenda**

- It was suggested that football is a powerful tool for participation, community health and social inclusion initiatives
- In order to build on the new initiatives within "Climbing Higher" there needs to be a joined up approach between the different funding agencies and relevant sectors such as health and education

## **Funding and Resources for Football**

### **Funding**

- Generally the lack of resources for football in Wales particularly for infrastructure; and issues surrounding the use of existing funds
- The role of the Welsh Assembly Government in funding football
- A suggestion that the FAW Trust be slimmed down and the monies invested instead in the clubs; the premise being that community and grass roots football would "take care of themselves" with appropriate funding and under the existing UEFA licensing rules
- There were reservations about the costs of travelling officials fees at games; these were felt to be unnecessary
- It was suggested that clubs are unable to progress through the system to the League of Wales due to limited funds
- It was felt that Wales is at a disadvantage in terms of funding for infrastructure projects since the Football Foundation in England, which has put £27m into non league clubs there, does not fund clubs in Wales
- The problems of attracting sponsorship in Wales in the absence of any corporate headquarters
- It was felt that the underlying problems relate to the structure of football in Wales; sponsorship might be forthcoming if that and the vision were sorted out
- The funding governing bodies receive from broadcasters in any field should make a significant contribution towards development; it is not clear that this happens in football in Wales
- Comparisons were made between the successes of the league system in rugby; it was suggested that there are vast differences in the funding structures
- It was suggested that there is a need for commercial directors in football

- The Welsh Schools Football Association is largely self funded apart from support from the FAW Trust for the under 15 and 16's
- There is no funding from the FAW Trust for grass roots football or for the under 18 international squad (which, it was claimed, is a contentious issue)

## Facilities

- The disparity in the infrastructure between North and South Wales and the extent to which the licensing standards required, inter alia, to host European games can be met
- That there are serious, ongoing problems in some areas regarding the quality of facilities and the state of some playing fields; their maintenance is a considerable challenge for Local Authorities
- Another challenge for Local authorities is matching supply and demand in their areas in terms of facilities and clubs
- It was claimed that the state of pitches is below standard in schools, leisure centres and local authorities and in contrast to other countries such as Slovakia, Belgium and Holland

## Future Direction and Priorities for Development

- Wales' performance was contrasted with the success of comparable countries within Europe in international competition; it was suggested that Wales can never compete with England, but should do so with nations of a similar size to Wales
- A proposal that there should be a thorough examination of Welsh football by external experts, not by the game itself, to look at
  - the relationship between the national team and the domestic game
  - the managerial structure of the FAW
  - funding at all levels
  - the pyramid structure and arrangements for promotion and relegation
  - the "exiled" clubs
  - young players
  - the relationship between the national body, the clubs and the Trust
- The investigation should include a wide range of interested organisations including the relevant football governing bodies in Wales, England and Europe
- The recommendations should lead to a 10 - 15 year strategy for football
- The suggestion that a review could be funded by UEFA
- A need for a strong pyramid system throughout Wales from grass roots to the national league to inter alia help stop the "quality drain" to England and give opportunities to young people
- The need for clearly defined and accountable objectives for football in Wales, including: funding; a review of support to the premier league; a complete structural review; and improvements in communications
- It was suggested that there needs to be a sea change in the outlook and professional capability of the FAW
- The best thing that would come out of the Committee's review would be look into ways of improving how the £4-5m that come into football is spent
- There was concern that the Committee's review would concentrate too much on the minutiae of the game rather than the main item which is how everything flows from the centre

- It was felt that it would not be unreasonable for public money to be invested in football provided that the development of young players could be improved along with greater community involvement
- It was suggested that the organisation and support of the Academy system needs to be reconsidered; one proposal was for the establishment of three regional academies in Wales
- One proposal was for centres of excellence to be set up in each unitary authority, staffed by teachers but with the support of football development officers and coaching staff working in partnership
- There would be a problem if the clubs were to be set up on the League of Wales structure rather than unitary authorities which are clearly defined
- It was proposed that there should be a national development centre for football; the Welsh Institute of Sport does not for example have suitable grassed areas for coaching; comparisons were made with Scotland which has a national development centre
- The WSFA would like to see Local Education Authorities enabling schools to release and fund teachers to accompany teams to games and other extra curricular work
- The skills, experience and expertise of the WSFA should be utilised fully in order to effectively support football in Wales
- One aim would be to have teams from Wales in the six impairment groups; funding is a key consideration to bringing that about
- It was suggested that there seems to be rather a lack of robust child protection procedures. A recent recommendation from an Assembly Committee childcare review was that the Sports Council for Wales should review its present policy regarding child protection and make grant funding to sports organisations conditional upon child protection procedures and routine Criminal Records Bureau checks being in place.
- In terms of child protection, it was countered that there should be some confidence in what football is doing in Wales. Through the support of the Trust, the FAW has established a welfare and child protection policy in 2002, and was one of the first governing bodies to have such a comprehensive policy established. It has a welfare and child protection department established within the Football Association of Wales, and it has very strong links with the NSPCC

## **Annex 1**

### **Evidence to Committee**

**1 February 2006**

Sports Council for Wales: Huw Jones, Chief Executive, Manon Roberts, Liaison Officer

**23 March 2006**

Welsh Premier League: John Deakin

**5 April 2006**

Football Association of Wales Trust: Neil Ward, General Manager, Phil Pritchard

## **11 May 2006**

Newport County Football Club: Chris Blight

S4C: Gareth Davies, Commissioner for Sport, Rhian Gibson, Director of Communications and Development

BBC: Keith Jones, Head of Programmes, Nigel Walker, Head of Sport

## **15 June 2006**

Rhyl Football Club: Joseph P Furnival

TNS Football Club: Mike Harris, Managing Director

North West Wales Referee Officer, Brian Lawlor

Supporters Direct: Richard Lillicrap

Colwyn Bay Football Club: Grant McIndoe, Company Secretary, Bob Paton, Chair,

Bangor City Football Club: Huw Pritchard

## **28 June 2006**

Welsh Schools FA: Cledwyn Ashford, Under 16 Selector, David Nickless, Under 16 Secretary, Keith James, Vice Chair

Youth and Disabilities Officer, FAW Trust: Jamie Clewer

Woman and Girls Football Coordinator, FAW Trust: Debbie Wise

Children's Commissioner for Wales: Peter Hosking, Senior Policy Officer,

Gareth Jones, Policy Officer

## **Annex 2**

### **Terms of Reference**

To review aspects of football in Wales in order to establish:

- The future direction and priorities for the development of football in Wales
- The effectiveness of the current structure supporting football in Wales including:
  - whether it enables delivery for all and contributes to the Welsh Assembly Government's agenda
  
  - the relationships between the FAW as the governing body and the FAW Trust as the development arm
  
- Funding and resources for football

(The terms of reference were agreed in Committee on 16 February 2006)