

Sport Wales paper to the National Assembly for Wales' Rural Development Sub-Committee

Inquiry into Rural Tourism in Wales

November 2010

Sport Wales
Sophia Gardens
Cardiff
CF11 9SW

✉ info@sportwales.org.uk

☎ 0845 0450904

We are pleased to have this opportunity to provide a paper to the National Assembly for Wales' Rural Development Sub-committee as part of their inquiry into rural tourism in Wales. We respond with particular emphasis to the sport sector.

About Sport Wales

Sport Wales is the national organisation responsible for developing and promoting sport and active recreation to the population of Wales. We are an Assembly Government Sponsored Public Body and are funded largely by grant-in-aid from the Welsh Assembly Government. We are also responsible for distributing funds from the National Lottery to sport in Wales.

Sport Wales is the delivery arm of the Welsh Assembly Government, and we provide advice on the development and delivery of sport and active recreation policy. We are responsible to the Assembly Government for driving forward its *One Wales* commitments related to sport, the sport and physical recreation elements of *Creating an Active Wales*, as well as our own strategies in relation to the development of elite sport. We work closely with other key sport and physical recreation providers, particularly local government, national governing bodies of sport and the non-sport third sector.

As an organisation we have developed two aspirations in order to enable us, and the wider sports sector, to deliver on the Assembly Government's key commitments, these are:

- To have every child hooked on sport for life; and
- To create a nation of champions.

These aspirations are intertwined and encapsulate our twin drivers of increasing participation and improving performance in sport in Wales.

We see the benefits of sport in the broadest sense, not only in improving the physical health of the Welsh nation, but also in reducing social exclusion, improving community cohesion, providing opportunities for learning new skills, and contributing to economic regeneration and growth in Wales. We believe that sport is at the heart of so many of our communities in Wales, and we want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to become involved and engaged in sport.

Sports Tourism in Wales

Wales is perceived to be one of the best locations in the UK for sporting activities due to the quality of our natural environment, excellent facilities, and continuing success as a host for major sporting events.

It is against this backdrop that in 2006 the Wales Tourist Board, as it was then, published *Sports Tourism: a framework for action*¹. This provided a framework for the Tourist Board

¹ Wales Tourist Board (2006) *Sports Tourism in Wales: a framework for action*. Cardiff: Wales Tourist Board.

and partner organisations to maximise the social and economic benefits of sport-related tourism in Wales.

Sports tourism is defined as: *all forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, participated in casually or in an organised way for leisure, business or commercial reasons, which necessitate travel away from the home and work locality*².

Contained within the Framework, a vision for sports tourism in Wales is outlined:

*Wales is recognised as an international sports tourism destination offering diverse and exciting opportunities for visitors through the quality and variety of our natural environment, facilities and distinct culture*³.

Three distinct markets for sports tourism are identified within the Framework:

- Active sports tourists: people who travel to take part in sport;
- Event sports tourists: people who travel to watch or compete at sporting events; and
- Celebratory sports tourists: a niche market where people visit sports museums and famous sporting venues.

We are supportive of this vision. Our primary role is to increase participation and improve performance in sport among the Welsh population. We have been continuously asked by Ministers to focus our attention on achieving outcomes related to our core role rather than 'spread the jam thinly'. In so doing, we appreciate that our work also contributes towards the three identified distinct markets for sports tourism.

The Sports Tourism Product

The sports tourism product in Wales is extremely diverse, and includes first-class sporting facilities, a high quality natural environment, a well-established range of internationally recognised competitive events and festivals.

Events

Through its major events strategy for Wales⁴, the Welsh Assembly Government aims to develop a balanced and sustainable portfolio of major events which will enhance Wales' international reputation and the well-being of its people and communities. Sport has a significant role here. We will continue to support the work of the Assembly Government's Major Events Unit and individual National Governing Bodies of Sport in attracting major sporting events to Wales.

² Ibid. p.4.

³ Ibid. p.4.

⁴ Welsh Assembly Government (2010) *Event Wales: a major events strategy for Wales 2010-2020*. Cardiff: WAG.

It is important that these events provide a catalyst for providing a legacy for sport in Wales and for the Welsh population. Golf is an excellent example of this. An integrated sports development strategy was a core element of the successful Ryder Cup 2010 bid. This sports development strategy has been supported with a £2m Assembly Government-funded strategic development programme to increase young people's participation in golf, and we allocated additional funding of £250,000 to the Golf Union Wales for both development and performance programmes. In addition, golf's clubs have received support with £1m of lottery sports funding for four Regional Centres of Excellence.

In conjunction with this sports development strategy was the promotion of Wales as a golf destination. Whilst the Ryder Cup 2010 was held at The Celtic Manor Resort, golf courses all across Wales were showcased; the most dramatic images showing courses in the rural and coastal locations of Wales.

Built and natural facilities

The built facility sports infrastructure in rural Wales is primarily in place to meet the demand of the local Welsh population. By way of example, we have 262 sports halls and 51 swimming pools⁵ in rural Wales⁶. This infrastructure does not necessarily allow for demand from tourists. There are areas of rural Wales that act as *honeypots* to the tourism industry, for example, Llandudno, Rhyl, and Tenby. In such areas, we need to be mindful that there is additional pressure placed on the built sports facilities and how this is accommodated.

In rural Wales, our facility infrastructure, both built and natural, takes advantage of the excellent environment for participating in outdoor activities.

Wales possesses a number of national centres of excellence, such as: our own National Watersports Centre, Plas Menai; Plas y Brenin (climbing), Capel Curig; Coed y Brenin Mountain Biking Centre, near Dolgellau; and the National White Water Centre at Tryweryn. Here, international quality facilities are matched with internationally recognised tuition and development opportunities; both of which are a draw for tourists from outside, and importantly, from our perspective, inside Wales.

Rural Wales has a wealth of natural facilities that we, in Sport Wales, encourage our Welsh population to utilise for participation in outdoor activities; these are also attractive to visitors to Wales. Such activities include: climbing and mountaineering; caving; windsurfing; surfing; yachting; canoeing and white water rafting; diving; paragliding; cycling and mountain biking; fishing; and fell running.

⁵ www.activeplacescymru.org.uk

⁶ *Rural Wales* denotes the following local authority areas: Denbighshire; Conwy; Gwynedd; Ynys Môn; Ceredigion; Carmarthenshire; Pembrokeshire; Monmouthshire; and Powys.

From our research⁷, we know that 40% of the adult population⁸ in Wales participate⁹ in *outdoor pursuits*, this compares to 27% who participate in *indoor games*, and 14% who participate in *outdoor games* (for definitions of activity types, see *Appendix*).

Utilising outdoor spaces for sporting and recreational activities is part of Wales' 'rural heritage'¹⁰. This cultural and political support for outdoor activities is synergised in the Assembly Government's strategy for sport and physical activity, *Climbing Higher*. Their vision is for:

An active, healthy and inclusive Wales, where sport, physical activity and active recreation provide a common platform for participation, fun and achievement... where the outstanding environment of Wales is used sustainably to enhance confidence in ourselves and our place in the world¹¹.

The Natural Facilities Database, jointly owned by Sport Wales and the Countryside Council for Wales, identifies some 2,500 sites where land-based, water-based, and air-based recreational activity can take place across Wales. It also details whether the activity is accessible for individuals and/or clubs, and information on protected areas in Wales (e.g. National Parks, SSSIs, and AONBs). This is useful in facilitating participation in outdoor activities.

Considerations

Sensitivity to the competing demands on rural areas

In terms of the encouraging the utilisation of the natural environment for outdoor activities, we need to be sensitive to the competing demands in such areas. From our data on natural sporting facilities, we know that 50% of sites are contained within a protected area. In partnership with the Countryside Council for Wales, we published *Codes of Conduct*¹², guidance which seeks to promote responsible use of the countryside; how to enjoy an activity while respecting owners, other users, and the environment. Responsible use helps protect existing access rights and makes it easier to obtain new ones. Alongside this, we have also published guidance to support organisers of sporting and challenge events in the

⁷ Sport Wales (2010) *Active Adults Survey 2008/09*. Cardiff: Sport Wales.

⁸ Adult population: 15+ years.

⁹ Participation in at least one activity in the 4 weeks prior to being interviewed.

¹⁰ Sports Council for Wales (1994) *A Sporting Chance for the Countryside, a joint publication between the Sports Council for Wales and the Countryside Council for Wales*, Cardiff: Sports Council for Wales.

¹¹ WAG (2005) *Climbing Higher: the Welsh Assembly Government strategy for sport and physical activity*, Cardiff: WAG.

¹² Sports Council for Wales and Countryside for Wales (1996) *Codes of Conduct: responsible use in the countryside*, Cardiff: Sports Council for Wales.

countryside to ensure that the activities exist in harmony with landowners, local residents, and wildlife¹³.

A supporting infrastructure

We need to ensure that facilities (built and natural) are accessible to tourists (from within and outside of Wales), that there is a co-ordinated transport policy, and that there is an infrastructure to support the activity; for example, accommodation and other amenities.

Partnership working

Strong partnerships across geographic, organisational and sectoral boundaries are required to ensure that the Welsh population and visitors to rural Wales have a fulfilling sporting experience. It is important that partnership working involves looking at the infrastructure to support the activity.

Partnership working is something that we are advocating very strongly through our two main partners: National Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Authorities. We have established partnership agreements with Local Authorities that encourage cross-department, cross-sector working with the aim of increasing participation and improving performance in sport in their locality. Their actions are responding to the needs of the locality.

We are also demonstrating partnership working in the field of rural tourism: our National Watersports Centre, Plas Menai works closely with Plas y Brenin to offer a complete outdoor sporting experience.

Alignment of strategies to support rural tourism

Alongside encouraging partnership working across geographic, organisational and sectoral boundaries, we need to ensure that our regeneration, leisure, and tourism strategies are joined-up on a local level, so that we're all moving towards the same goal.

¹³ Sports Council for Wales and Countryside Council for Wales (1998) *Sporting and Challenge Events in the Countryside*, Cardiff: Sports Council for Wales.

Appendix: definitions of activity

Outdoor games/activities

This includes: archery; athletics; baseball; basketball; bowls; cricket; golf; hockey; lacrosse; road running/cross country; jogging; netball; rugby; soccer; target/clay pigeon shooting; tennis; tug-of-war; volleyball.

Indoor games/activities

This includes: aerobics/step aerobics; badminton; basketball; billiards/snooker; bowls; boxing; circuit training/keep fit; cricket; curling; folk dancing; fencing; gymnastics; hockey; ice-skating; judo; karate; other martial arts; movement/dance; netball; squash; swimming; table tennis; target shooting; trampoline; 5-a-side soccer; multi-gym/weight training for fitness; competitive weight lifting; volleyball; yoga.

Outdoor pursuits

This includes: BMX; canoeing; car rallying; caving; cycling; fishing/angling; game shooting; gliding; hand gliding; horse riding/jumping; lifesaving/surf-lifesaving; motocross/scrambling; mountaineering; orienteering; rambling/hill and fell walking; roller blading/in-line skating; walking (over 2 miles); rowing; skateboarding; skiing; sub aqua; surfing; wind surfing; sailing/yachting.