

Senedd Cymru / Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Ymchwiliad i'r achosion o COVID-19 ac effaith y feirws ar ddiwylliant, y diwydiannau creadigol, treftadaeth, cyfathrebu a chwaraeon / Inquiry into the COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on culture, creative industries, heritage, communications and sport

CWLC COV26

Ymateb gan British Dressage Wales/ Response from British Dressage Wales



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To Mr Brian Davies Acting CEO Sports Wales,

Reference: Sendd Cymru's Culture, Welsh Language & Communications Committee – Inquiry 11.6.20

I have this evening had the latest Sport Wales Update forwarded to me by Ben Waterhouse, Chief Operating Officer for British Dressage (BD), in my role as Chairman of British Dressage Wales, responsible for Dressage within Wales on behalf of British Dressage.

I have been asked to forward to you some brief thoughts/feed back to the above Committee via yourselves, from the members of British Dressage Wales, to reflect on the issues that they are facing due to this current Covid19 lockdown in Wales. I would also suggest that our problems are the same as anyone else who is a competitive horse rider.

First and foremost the members fully understand and support the general steps that have been taken during the past weeks in order to protect people in Wales from Covid19, and have learnt to deal with the problems they and their horses have had to face as a result.

The concern that the members now have after the last relaxation of lockdown has been caused by the decision to only permit a five mile restriction on travel to activities such as training. Many of the members do not have facilities where they keep their horses, which mean that to train and exercise them they have to travel to a venue which has an outdoor arena; we cannot yet use indoor arenas despite the size of these. Also they need to meet up with their coaches at suitable venues, but in nearly all cases this will be outside the 5 mile restriction, although it is local to them.

With regards to the issue of the travel restriction, I would suggest that when transporting a horse from stable to a training venue the horse and rider will travel direct to the venue without stopping, and will not come into contact with any person on their journey, maintaining social distancing. This means whether we travel 3 miles or 30 miles, there is no increase in infection as we travel in a self-isolation bubble. It is interesting that now

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that Horse racing has recommenced, you can transport a horse from Holyhead across to race track in England, but cannot move a horse greater than 5 miles within Wales?

In addition to a query on travel distance with a horse on board, I would also like to raise the issue of how far someone can travel to carry out their job. We have many self-employed trainers who need to travel to yards and venues in order to train other riders, so earning an income. There is confusion about how far they can travel to do their job. Many have been stopped by the Police who have told them they can only travel 5 miles, but this will prevent them from doing their job, and earning an income. This is having a negative effect on the health of trainers due to worry about their finances and future.

As well as the importance to riders of being able to access venues for training, the venues are very keen to start opening gates to fee paying riders, to enable them to start gaining an income after so long without any income. Many of these venues have also out laid on equipment to ensure they meet the BD bio security conditions, required for them to be a recognised BD Training and Competitive venue, at a time when they see their colleagues in England accepting clients due to there being no travel restrictions.

Our own BD rules for this pandemic prevent the rider having any one else present apart from a member of their family, which complies with the current Welsh Government rules. As a sport we also have a very strict set of rules for how venues and coaches will operate, and throughout a training session there will be strict self-distancing and bio security.

Like all other sports, our members are keen to return to competitive competitions, whilst at the same time accepting there has to be strict bio security to ensure the safety of those who are attending. Dressage is fortunate that it does tend to be an individual sport, which requires very few people to be in attendance to organise competitive competitions, which helps to ensure social distancing. Again, BD have set out a very strict set of instructions on how future competitions will be run during this pandemic, which I am very confident will not increase the spread of the virus during a competition.

In essence, I would ask that strong representations are made to the Welsh Government that they relook at the travel advice given to people with horses, to allow them to travel greater distances when taking a horse to a training venue. If necessary including restrictions like, not stopping; other than an emergency; on their journey between Yard and Venue.

Whilst asking for clearer guidance from the Welsh Government on travel, I would ask that we can have clarification on how far you can travel to carry out your job, so that our coaches can feel safe when travelling to give lessons to their clients, which is a worry for many.



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I would also make representations that the Welsh Government considers permitting Equine Competitions at a local level to recommence. Again due to low numbers attending other than the riders and horses, the chances of infection are negligible. Again BD has a very strict set of conditions to manage the risk and ensure good biosecurity at events.

Whilst I fully understand the need for the Welsh Government to move at its own speed on this issue, as part of a UK wide organisation, the disparity of conditions and restrictions, makes it very difficult to coordinate activities and competitions across the UK for British Dressage, and it would be very helpful to have some alinement between Wales and the rest of the UK in this areas of concern.

Once again, members of BD Wales support the measures being taken, but seek some clarification of the restrictions in place in Wales, particularly around the travel rules. We would also welcome the opportunity of being able to start up the local competitive calendar with strict bio security conditions, to start moving us in line with the rest of the UK.

