

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 COV34

Ymateb gan Mackintosh LTC/ Response from Mackintosh LTC

Dear Consultation Committee,

Impact on Tennis

What has been the immediate impact of Covid-19 on the sector?

Tennis courts have been closed across Wales since the 24th March 2020. Members of tennis clubs across Wales are unable to access the physical and mental benefits of playing the sport. Tennis clubs are unable to generate any income from membership fees. Self-employed tennis coaches are unable to generate any income due to tennis clubs closed.

How effectively has the support provided by the Welsh Government, the UK Government and arms-length bodies addressed the sector's needs?

The National Governing Bodies (NGBs) have provided tennis members/players with some ideas to practice at home, but a large number of people/families are restricted by a lack of space and/or equipment. The Welsh Government has offered an emergency fund for sports clubs struggling to exist following Covid-19 - unfortunately this only applies to clubs in desperate financial situations & doesn't support clubs who can 'get-by' at this time. The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) have supported clubs by refunding club registration fees, and offering a hardship fund (interest free loan) to clubs struggling to exist following Covid-19. The UK Government and LTA have provided financial support to self-employed coaches through Self-Employment Grant scheme, and Coaches Grant scheme - however, this amount is significantly less than coaches would usually earn. The UK Government Self-Employment Grant scheme is calculated based on average profits from the last 3 years - whilst tennis coaches work all-year round, the vast majority of income is generated from March-August, therefore the Grant Scheme provides an unfair calculation for seasonal workers.

What will the likely long-term impacts of Covid-19 be on the sector, and what support is needed to deal with those?

In short, tennis clubs will be unable to maintain facilities due to financial impact of lost membership fees. In turn, this will lead to a loss of members and players taking-up the game, and then less work available for self-employed tennis coaches. Tennis Clubs will require financial support to be able to maintain their facilities, and self-employed tennis coaches will also require financial support in the short-term to keep them working in this sector. Which is important in the longer term for promoting healthy and active lifestyles across Wales, developing children's physical literacy, and many other mental and physical advantages.

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What lessons can be learnt from how the Welsh Government, the UK Government, arms-length bodies and the sector have dealt with Covid-19?

There has been very little consistency in the approach the Welsh Government and UK Government have dealt with Covid-19. Particularly, with regard to playing the sport of tennis. The UK Government approved tennis to be played in England from w/c 11th May & the Scottish Government approved tennis in Scotland from 29th May. In Wales, despite support from Tennis Wales and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) the Welsh Government aren't allowing tennis activities in Wales to resume because tennis courts come under the umbrella of 'Outdoor Sports Courts', which under Welsh Government legislation are to remain closed. The key lesson is there needs to be more specificity with creating legislation in the future. The other key learning is that there needs to be flexibility to change the legislation within the 3-week review period.

How might the sector evolve after Covid-19, and how can the Welsh Government support such innovation to deal with future challenges?

In the short term, tennis clubs and full-time tennis coaches across Wales will require financial support from the Welsh Government to support loss of income. I feel that being the only country in Europe not allowing tennis to be played is affecting the mental health of a number of people in the tennis community in Wales - which will require mental health support from the Welsh Government. Following Covid-19 there is a greater demand to create more online tennis coaching content to support more home learning, which could be supported by the Welsh Government to educate the sector how to create high quality content, and how to generate income from using this approach. Maintaining excellent hygiene levels is going to be a further high priority following Covid-19 - financial support to purchase hygiene products would be helpful to allow tennis to be delivered safely in clubs, schools, and other events.

If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards,

Rhys Morgan

Head Coach

Mackintosh LTC