

P-05-1027 Allow Welsh domestic football clubs to play friendlies and allow supporters to attend matches, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 06.10.20

First of all regarding the document, it doesn't address everything I am trying to fight for.

You say that it imposes a risk, but England have been allowing supporters into lower league games since the start of the season. What I hope you understand is, that Cymru Leagues clubs do not attract thousands of fans, the Cymru Premier usually attracts 200-400 fans max (with the exception of Caernarfon Town) whereas the Cymru North/South attract anywhere between 50-300. This is around how many spectators England currently allow into lower non-league games.

It would be easy to socially distance in football grounds in Wales, so why can't we try? Football is a release for many people, like an extended family. If you don't follow football then you won't understand how much it truly helps people both mentally and physically. People can go to football and even if it's just for 90 minutes they can forget all their troubles and can just have a good time with friends, As a government, you are denying people that opportunity, an opportunity for a release. An opportunity for people to just feel a sense of normality and happiness, for NINETY MINUTES A WEEK during these tough and scary times.

Clubs are also dying due to a lack of income and sponsorship, and this isn't helped by the Football Association of Wales, who I have reportedly seen are STILL taking registration fees from clubs, despite the fact they know that they aren't playing. Three examples of clubs that have gone bust are Rhyl, STM Sports and Plas Madoc. Rhyl - formerly one of the biggest teams in the Welsh pyramid. 2x Welsh Premier League champions, 2x Cymru Alliance champions, 4x Welsh Cup winners, 2x League Cup winners and former Champions League participants, gone after COVID-19 was the final nail in the coffin. STM Sports - finished sixth in the Cymru South last season and beat JD Cymru Premier sides Newtown and Aberystwyth. Relegated to the third tier due to licensing. Clubs are dropping like flies, and these three won't be the last if something isn't done.

At the start of the email I said that it doesn't address everything. Why can't tier 2 and below play? I am media officer at Cymru North side Penrhynoch FC. We asked the Football Association of Wales if we could play Aberystwyth Town in a friendly about a month ago, a match both ourselves and Aberystwyth wanted to happen. The request was denied, but weeks later Aberystwyth hosted a friendly against MARKET DRAYTON TOWN from England. So us (Penrhynoch FC), based FIFTEEN MINUTES away from Aberystwyth Town FC had a friendly denied, but Market Drayton Town based in Shropshire, two and a half hours away from Aberystwyth, were allowed to come down and play. I'm sorry, but how does that make any sense whatsoever? We have been given a provisional start date of October 19th for friendlies, but how can we be sure yourselves or the FAW won't change that? It's working in England so why can't we try it here? It's beyond ridiculous now.

So does it address the issues I have raised? No it doesn't if I'm honest.

Please, just consider my points. Not only are you damaging clubs, you're affecting people mentally and physically as well. For some people, football is one of the few aspects of happiness in people's lives, and you're taking it away from them. You are KILLING the Welsh football pyramid.