

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Inquiry into the Welsh Premier League

Response from Jeff Michael

Standards Developed Over 20 Years

My feeling is that there has been an improvement but it is difficult to say by how much. There has not been progress made by WPL Clubs who have qualified for European Competition, they are not yet good enough to progress past the early qualifying rounds.

Competition Format – Different Models

I am not sure about summer football, for me it would not be the same because of harder-playing-surfaces (nor do I like artificial surfaces). Also it is the 'Holiday Period'

I would prefer a move back to a more traditional league. I don't think a mid-season-split-league benefits the clubs or spectators. Nor do I like the teams going into a 'play-off' for European Qualification.

The number of Teams in the WPL could be capped at twelve but additional fixtures provided by reviving an 'Invitation Premier Cup' type competition. In order for the WPL standard to improve at a faster rate, I would say that they need to be playing teams who maybe at a one or two step higher level. The format of the competition could be organised around a 'Group Stage' involving all WPL Clubs (perhaps seeded by previous season league position) together with Non-Football-League Clubs from different associations such as England.

I think these games would be just as attractive (maybe more-so) to spectators than playing against little known opposition from the likes of Lithuania for eg. It also benefits all WPL clubs, to a lesser or greater degree (and maybe some clubs from the next level down could also 'qualify' for this competition.) There would also be no conflict with European Qualification because that would remain with the existing format. If this was approved by Eufa, sponsorship would need to be sought to provide the necessary incentive to enter the competition.

W.P.L. Player Development.

Perhaps more focus should be put on Youth Development and hence the future standard of the WPL.

Would the addition of a 'WPL Team' (picked from the WPL Academies and possibly others such as Macwhirter League) give 'added-attraction' for both players and spectators and perhaps improve

standards. Maybe fixtures could be arranged with Associations such as Colleges for eg or perhaps other 'Leagues/Academies' including from other Countries.

FAW Plan

The Welsh Ground Improvement strategy is obviously crucial to the overall standards of Welsh Football but equal emphasis must be put on both 'playing-surfaces' and general 'club infrastructures and stadia'.