

Communities and Culture Committee

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Inquiry into Major Sporting Events in Wales

Major sporting events can have a stimulating and lasting effect on communities, stimulating demand for sport and unearthing talent. They can facilitate engagement with deprived communities as well as those who are better off. There is much evidence to support this both actual and anecdotal.

Many of the barriers are socio economic thus the success of the aftermath of major event is dependent upon a post event strategy being formulated along with sufficient funding ring fenced to take it forward. This reflects how countries see sport as a valued activity in society and the ambition or lack of it which prevails.

I cannot detect a high priority in Wales for sport across all of the spectrum rather there is a focus on those sports which reflect the socio economic history of the nation which in my view encourages a backwards looking strategy. Wales needs to embrace a cross section of sports and show that it has widespread ambitions to excel in all areas, as happens more in Scotland and England.

I cannot detect a real thirst for hosting wide spectrum of events; further the lack of real top class facilities makes it difficult to attract such events in any case. I believe attitude toward sport is a prime indicator of how any country regards itself, in my view sport should sit alongside all other activities which are branded as those where lifelong learning is a high level target.

Show an ambition for facility provision which makes this possible and which indicates an invite to come and compete across a wide spectrum. I have no idea but would comment that I do see a coming together of the WAG, SCW and Local Authorities in working towards a joined up strategy for the future. This is step forward.

I think the Ryder Cup is seen as a private venture which coincidentally happens to be in Wales. In Scotland for example Glasgow City council has been very proactive and supportive of sport as whole and as a result have attracted many high profile sporting events to that city. By 2014 both Glasgow and Edinburgh will have enjoyed hosting a Commonwealth Games.

They are also very supportive of so called minority sports such as Badminton which incidentally has a playing population of over 1 million in the UK. Cardiff by comparison is one of very few LAs on Wales which has no support scheme at all for aspiring young sportspeople. Very disappointing for Wales capital city. Endless opportunities on a GB / worldwide basis, all that is needed is the will and ambition.

Welsh Badminton for example since it became an Olympic sport enjoys a GB relationship which has definitely taken us forwards. I can only comment on Welsh Badminton which is poorly funded by comparison with England and Scotland. This may be a function of the WAG purse but it can also be seen as a lack of interest and ambition on the world stage.

10

I would say that Wales needs to make an honest statement about its attitude towards sport, both in participation and excellence. If the answer is commitment, then real investment has to be agreed and given to the various authorities so that progress can be made. Wales is a dynamic brand and in many sports punches above its weight, often on a shoestring budget. It has a quaint notion that success is cyclical and whilst this may have been true in the past the world has changed as have young people. The tools now needed to attract young persons into sport and retain them are sophisticated. None of this can happen without investment.