

Communities and Culture Committee

Inquiry into Major Sporting events in Wales

Response from Football Association of Wales (FAW)

Overview

Founded in 1876, the FAW is the third oldest football association in the world, and has functioned as the national governing body for the sport of association football in Wales continually since that date. The FAW is a member of FIFA (affiliated since 1910) and UEFA (affiliated since 1954) and is one of the five associations (together with FIFA, The FA, SFA and IFA) that make up the International Football Association Board, the guardians of the "Laws of the Game", that apply to the game worldwide. The FAW's patron is Her Majesty the Queen.

As national governing body for the sport of football in Wales, the FAW is responsible for the administration, regulation, development and promotion of the game at all levels in Wales, from grass roots level (district league level, youth and women's competitions) up to the professional and/or semi-professional elite (Welsh Premier League and the FAW Welsh Cup). The FAW also runs the Welsh national representative teams, of which there are eight: the Men's senior team and age-group teams (under-21, under-19, and under-17), the women's senior team and age-group teams (under-19 and under-17), and the semi-professional team. These teams compete in UEFA and FIFA competitions, including the UEFA European Championships and the FIFA World Cup.

Submission

The FAW would like to make the following submission in answer to the letter from the Chair of the Communities and Cultural Committee dated November 2009.

The answers to the consultation questions using the notation in the letter are as follows:

1. The FAW believe that major sporting events can induce lasting positive change in communities. One has only to remember the affect in Britain after England's success in the World Cup in 1966 and the success of many other major events that have taken place in the Country since. These events have brought benefits not only to the communities and cities that hosted those events but to the Country in general. For the period of the event and for a long time after, major economical benefits are derived by the local communities and the Country which have hosted these events - increased numbers of workers, visitors and spectators at the event and as a long term marketing vehicle to attract greater numbers of tourists to the Country. Large scale events provide inspiration that encourages increased participation in sports, especially those currently inactive, and hence this extra physical activity can be a major benefit to our children and to young adults. Sport is also a major vehicle in breaking down barriers across communities with different ethnic and religious backgrounds in providing facilities and the occasions where people can work and play together.

2. In the organisation of large scale events, appropriate legacy & sustainability planning needs to be put in place, at the heart of the organisation, to ensure the positive contribution has a long lasting impact. There are certain examples, such as the Summer Olympic Games, where such plans were not put in place to detrimental effect. But with appropriate planning any new physical builds, workforce experience and skills, community inspiration to participate in sport and the marketing opportunity for the country can be directly translated into long term benefits.

However, competition to stage large scale events in fierce and in order to maximise the possibility of Wales attracting major events the Welsh Assembly Government must look very seriously at the infrastructure in Wales which sadly is lacking in a number of major areas. Wales has only one international airport and Cardiff International has only limited scheduled flights utilising this facility i.e. KLM. Apart from Amsterdam there are no other hubs linking for international flights and no direct flights to Heathrow. The road structure between the airport and the major cities and M4 is also inadequate, in the sense that it is a single carriage way and not a dual carriage-way. This is not attractive to large amounts of spectators arriving/departing for major events. The rail network has also experienced difficulties with major events taking place at the Millennium Stadium, especially when the event finishes after the last train services has departed. The number of quality hotels in Wales i.e. 4 or 5 star is few in number and this also can be a barrier against attracting worldwide events to the principality especially when major sponsors etc. cannot be accommodated properly. To overcome these difficulties WAG needs to start a process of funding to bring Wales up to the standard of other major European Countries.

3. Using our experience within the FAW together with its sister Association, the Scottish FA, we approached WAG and the Scottish Government to explore the possibility of bidding to host the UEFA European Championship in 2016 (this would be the biggest sporting event ever to have taken place in Wales). The lack of commitment by government in supporting the bid and also to provide financial support was very disappointing. If WAG is serious about bringing world class events to our Country then it has to be prepared to provide the maximum contribution both financial and in the development of infrastructure together with providing support in the areas of people and event planning.

4. When you see the benefits that the small Countries, and can we cite Switzerland and Austria, who hosted the UEFA European Championship in June 2008 for a period of 5½ weeks and the hundreds of thousands of spectators that visited the Country during that period bringing huge financial benefits to the cities as well as the country in general, WAG needs to take a far more proactive stance in

not only encouraging governing bodies to bring major events to Wales but also in providing the support in the areas of the bid process both with manpower and with finance.

5. WAG should look at implementing an across department planning process together with the Governing Body to involve all the various aspects involved in attracting major sport events to our Country. This requires not only the sport, but as previously identified, the infrastructure - roads, hotels, airports, railway, police, all need to be involved and this requires government to play a very the important role in coordinating the procedures necessary to make successful bids.

6. See answer to 5 above.

7. Following the very successful bid by Wales to host the Ryder Cup in 2010, the first Cricket Ashes Test to be held in Cardiff this last summer and certainly the feel good factor that the success of that Ashes Test match brought to Cardiff and South Wales especially cannot be under-estimated. There are lessons that can be learnt from these major events to attract other major events to Wales. The whole community needs to be supportive of the event and to provide a face to the visitor that is both welcoming and supportive.

WAG should use its powers to bring together the major sporting governing bodies in Wales who are likely to be able to attract major events on a regular basis to share ideas and the success of the WRU in attracting the Rugby World Cup, the FAW in bringing the FA Cup to Cardiff over a period of years together with our own internationals. The success of the cricket and golf are examples of how WAG working together with GB's can be successful in attracting major sporting events. Increased resources and the formation of a cross department planning process would assist in successfully attracting major sports events to the Country.

The FAW in its development programme with its sister company, the Welsh Football Trust assist WAG in achieving many of its aims for youth in Wales. Funding of these initiatives is critical to the success of national sports. For the majority of the major sports TV income is critical to this funding. The possibility that the "listed events" will change in the next few years is extremely worrying to the governing bodies as this will have a very detrimental affect on a major funding stream and will place governing bodies in the invidious position of cancelling development programs and under age international matches as income decreases. WAG needs therefore to think seriously about the implementation that has been recommended with regard to "listed events" especially those appertaining to Wales as we are already suffering compared to our neighbour England especially at grass roots level. WAG needs to be proactive in supporting the governing bodies to persuade Parliament to make sure there is a free and open market with regard to the televising of sport and not to proceed with the recommendation with regard to "listed events".