

Communities and Culture Committee

Inquiry into Major Sporting events in Wales

Response from The Welsh Sports Association

The Welsh Sports Association (WSA) was established in 1972 as an independent body to support and represent the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport and physical recreation in Wales. It acts in the national and international interests of all Welsh NGBs from archery to yachting (64) and is actively involved with its governing body members in promoting a range of initiatives and good practice in areas such as equality and diversity, child protection and risk management.

WSA is a limited Company with ten elected Directors. Views on this consultation have been sort from the Directors all of whom are involved with NGBs

The WSA believes that the Welsh Assembly Government should have a clear, transparent and consistent approach to Major Events in Wales. Currently there is some support from WAG for sporting events in Wales via the Major Events unit; however this appears to be "ad hoc" with no clear guidelines or criteria as to which events are supported and it seems to have inadequate financial resources. There is clear evidence that major events can drive economic growth and can generate a positive impact and legacy especially if the legacy is addressed in the planning phase.

Recommendations

Major Events should be classified and a study undertaken to identify from which events substantial economic benefits could be generated for Wales through for example increased visitors including tourists, spectators and participants as well as those that will attract international media coverage.

Potential Classification criteria should address:

Will the event bring a significant number of spectators/participants to Wales?

Will the event bring significant international media cover to Wales?

Will the event provide an economic return on investment through additional visitor spending?

Will the event leave a sustainable legacy for Wales? If so, what?

Will the event have an economic impact on the "local" sporting environment, or economy?

There needs to be a clear easily understood and available policy about the priority (Classified) events that WAG might be prepared to support:

When is there a need for a feasibility study?

What are the overarching aims?

Why does WAG want to invest in events?

What are the timelines /lead in needed for high level investment e.g. Commonwealth Games 12 -15 years lead in with approx £ 500, million investment?

There should be information in the policy for both really top major events e.g. Commonwealth Games, Rugby world cup, European football cup, Ashes test matches etc and also for World and European events for other "minority" sports that may possibly be hosted in Wales for a relatively small budget? Funding would be awarded according to classification and using a "sliding" scale. Where feasible events should be geographically spread - the economic impact on a "local area" could be considerable.

WAG should liaise with UK Sport if they do not currently, how will WAG /SCW influence decisions important to Wales otherwise? [UK Sport put £3.3 million in to events last year and confirmed support for 2010 events on their website shows none for Wales.]

There needs to be clear guidance on how and when UK Sport major events might work together with WAG and SCW (it should be noted that UK Sport will not consider any application unless they have been informed prior to the actual bid being made)

WAG needs to consider using SCW knowledge of the sports particularly their event programming and the WSA expertise as to what options are possible. Many Welsh NGBs do not have the resources to underwrite events and therefore do not put themselves forward for fear of little /no support, financial or otherwise. However they are often best placed to identify related activities e.g. children's events, coaching seminars etc that would deliver added value to an event and potentially increased interest, income and legacy.

There needs to be a pro active WAG events team who work on behalf of sport linked to a range of public bodies including SCW and WSA and private sector partners. The team would develop a portfolio of World and European international and regional events that delivers clear and lasting impact for Wales.

Develop a 12 - 15 years Events Calendar that can be used as the basis to encourage and assist Welsh NGBs and Sports Bodies, such as the Commonwealth Games Council for Wales, to identify and bid for events.