

CULTURE COMMITTEE CC 02-03 (p6)

Date: 22nd January 2003

Time: 9.00am-12.30pm

Venue: National Assembly for Wales

Welsh Assembly Government Position Paper on Participation in Sport and Physical Activity – for consideration as part of the Culture Committee Review of Sport – January 2003.

Definition

From the *Council of Europe*:

"All forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and well-being, forming social relationships, or obtaining results in competition at all levels"

Introduction

As the Minister has stated to Committee, the Welsh Assembly Government is working towards a first WAG strategy for Sport, Physical Activity and Fitness. This work will be informed by the Culture Committee's Review of Sport and by important developments on roughly parallel tracks in terms of timing such as the DCMS/Strategy Unit Review of Sport and the Quinquennial Review of the Sports Council for Wales.

This paper therefore (and as specifically requested by Committee) will set out the current context and activity to date while making reference to the cross cutting initiatives underway across various Ministerial portfolios. It will not seek to anticipate or pre-empt the Welsh Assembly Government sports strategy itself.

The Committee should also be aware that the Welsh Assembly Government is also undertaking work on an Events Strategy for Wales that will focus largely though not exclusively on sporting events, and the Welsh Tourist Board are working on a Sports Tourism Strategy. Both the above will be published in 2003.

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Why Sport is Important & Key Issues

Sport can make a contribution (although not necessarily providing the solution) across a wide range of Assembly objectives. In no particular order:

Economy: *sport is a contributor to our economic development*

Health: *sport is an essential component of our well being*

Culture: *sport is an important element in how we define ourselves*

Society: *sport is a key constituent in the fabric of our communities*

Environment: *sport is an active part of our unique landscapes*

Wales on the World Stage: *sport is putting Wales on the international*

map

- Total government spend on sport in the UK is estimated to be about £2bn per annum, most of which (85%) is delivered through local authorities.
- Sport and Physical Activity in Wales at a level that delivers a health benefit (ie 5 x 30' per week) is:

WALES TOTAL 28% MALES 36% FEMALES 19%

ENGLAND TOTAL 31% MALES 37% FEMALES 25%

AUSTRALIA TOTAL 57% MALES 58% FEMALES 56%

This is one of the great challenges for us in Wales.

- There are a number of organisations that are responsible for delivering sport in Wales. These include the Welsh Assembly Government; Local Authorities, Sports Council for Wales, Governing Bodies of Sport, Sports Clubs, Schools, Colleges and Universities, Community Clubs.

- In terms of gender issues, men are still more likely to participate in sport than women, with rates of participation of 53% compared to 41% in 1997/98. The Plan for Wales sets a goal, within the overall increase of participation, of halving the gap between men and women's participation by the year 2005.

National Assembly for Wales/ Welsh Assembly Government

Listed below are some areas in sport that the Assembly has been involved with since 1999:

- Established the Healthy and Active Lifestyle Taskforce whose action plan is now subject to consultation and representatives have addressed the Culture Committee as part of the review;
- Provided financial assistance towards the Special Olympic Games held in Cardiff;
- Established the Football Forum that reported last year and was followed by a Ministerial announcement that £1.3m of additional WAG funds would support football development over the next 3 years;
- Established the Wales Outdoor Activities Awareness Forum that reported last year followed by the launch of a safety leaflet for outdoor activity in Wales;
- Played a crucial role in winning the 2010 Ryder Cup bid followed by significant long term investment by the WAG to realise the economic and sporting benefits including £250K per annum via the Sports Council for Wales for golf development;
- Provided financial assistance to Millennium Stadium plc towards staging the FA Cup final and associated events;
- Sets strategic priorities in Plan for Wales for participation in sport, especially by women and girls and young people.
- Launched the Culture Strategy which identifies several objectives involving sport, such as increasing the number of people taking part in sport;
- The Sports Council has provided financial support to the Commonwealth Games Council for Wales towards the team competing at the Manchester Games;
- Sports Council and Welsh Assembly Government have implemented the PE and School Sport Task Action Plan for Wales with £5m of additional funding announced recently by the Education Minister;
- Provided financial support towards Ynys Mon County Borough Council conducting a feasibility study in connection with submitting a bid to host the Island Games 2009.
- The Welsh Assembly Government in partnership with the WLGA and the Local Authorities are developing a free swimming initiative for which there are very high hopes in terms of increased participation for target groups. A working party is currently preparing detailed criteria and will report soon.

Welsh Assembly Government Priorities for the Sports Council for Wales

1: In the current financial year 2002-03

The Sports Council's grant in aid for 2002/2003 is £9.4m (£7.958m on a cash basis). Of the 76 governing bodies of sport in Wales recognised by the Sports Council, 58 are supported financially and 83 funded posts will account for about 52% of the budget. In its role as lottery distributor, the Sports Council will distribute this financial year over £11m to a range of projects throughout Wales.

The Sports Council's mission is:

- increase participation, to encourage participation in sport both in terms of numbers of people and their frequency of activity;
- raising standards- to raise standards of performance and excellence in sport
- improving facilities
- providing technical information and advice and general understanding about sport and physical recreation.

Women in Sport

The Welsh Assembly Government has directed that this area of development should continue to be given additional emphasis in all aspects of the Sports Council's programmes. There are several initiatives in place, which are aimed at increasing participation. The most notable new initiative is:

Girls First

This scheme offers up to £1,000 to secondary schools to help provide additional extra curricular opportunities for girls. Around 80% of all secondary schools in Wales have participated in the programme offering a range of over 30 different after school activities for girls. The Welsh Assembly Government has committed £350K to this programme this year.

Golf Development

An additional £250K has been provided this year. The Committee has received a presentation on this work.

Sportsmatch

An additional £150K making a total of £450K this year ensures that very considerable scope exists for creating public/private partnerships that benefit sport.

Playing for Wales

An additional £250K has been made available this year to minimise the cost implications for international competitors, particularly those who are faced with the greatest travelling burdens to train and play for Wales.

2: Over the next three financial years of the budget planning round.

In addition to the ongoing priorities listed for the current year there are two major additional priorities for the next period.

Football Development

As previously mentioned an additional £1.3m, making an overall total of almost £2m will be committed by the Welsh Assembly Government to football development in Wales over the next three years. The FAW Trust has made a presentation to the Committee regarding their action plan for implementing the recommendations of the Football Forum. This investment will make a very significant contribution to participation in sport, especially by women and girls.

Coaching

Subject to agreement with the Sports Council for Wales over a detailed delivery plan that addresses factors such as maximising participation rates, developing women and girls sport and so on, the Minister hopes to make a significant announcement in due course.

Conclusion

The Welsh Assembly Government has made a significant contribution to enhancing opportunities for participation in sport. The Sports Strategy will seek to make a candid assessment of what has been achieved but also of the significant challenges that lie ahead if Wales is to aim to emulate and match some of the benchmark countries such as Australia and Finland.

The result of the Lottery Review may of course have a bearing on ways in which Wales be able to fund opportunities for sports participation in future years and that is a process that we hope to influence but cannot control. The recently created Culture Fund however does provide some additional flexibility allowing Government in the future to respond quickly and effectively to innovative ideas and plans from key partners in the delivery of public expenditure on sport in Wales.

Sports Policy Unit – January 2003