

MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 14 March 2001

Time: 9.00am

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building

Attendance:

Rhodri Glyn Thomas (Plaid Cymru, Carmarthen East and Dinefwr, Chair)

Jenny Randerson (Liberal Democrat, Cardiff Central, Assembly Minister)

Owen John Thomas (Plaid Cymru, South Wales Central)

Rosemary Butler (Labour, Newport West)

Delyth Evans (Labour, Mid & West Wales)

Jonathan Morgan (Conservative, South Wales Central)) – item 1 only

Alison Halford (Labour, Delyn)

Lorraine Barrett (Labour, Cardiff South and Penarth) – item 1 only

Elin Jones (Plaid Cymru, Ceredigion – substituting for Gareth Jones (Plaid Cymru, Conwy)) – item 1 only

Officials

Julia Annand (Committee Clerk)

Stephen Thomas (Deputy Committee Clerk)

Gerry Hallett (Culture, Sport and Welsh Language Division – item 1)

Declarations of Interest: None

Item 1: Presentation from the Sports Council of Wales (SCW)

Paper: CC-5-01(p.1)

Sports Council representatives:

Huw Jones, Chief Executive

Gareth Davies, Chair

The Chair thanked the Sports Council's representatives for appearing before the Committee at very short notice. The Chair of the Sports Council made some introductory remarks before handing over to the Chief Executive. The following key points were made in the presentation:

- The Sports Council do not consider sport in isolation, but as part of the wider Better Wales agenda which includes health, education (P.E.), social inclusion, equality and excellence.
- In terms of sports facilities, there have marked improvements in recent years. In 1972 Wales had 11 sports halls, 25 swimming pools, 104 golf courses and 86 squash courts. In 2001 the picture had changed to 191 sports halls, 143 swimming pools, 182 golf courses, 404 squash courts, 15 athletic tracks, 9 individual tennis centres, 83 artificial pitches, 27 indoor bowls and 2 ice rinks.
- The percentage of the population partaking in sporting activities has risen from 36% in 1980 to 63% in 1996 (although the latter figure falls to 39% if snooker, darts and walking are excluded).
- There is a vast difference in regional sports participation (the Rural North has the highest participation at 69.3%, with the Valleys having the lowest at 44.5%). The differences extend to local authorities, and range from 78.4% in Ceredigion to 34.5% in Caerphilly. There is to some extent also a correlation between levels of participation in sport and mortality rates in local authority areas.
- The Sports Council's social inclusion agenda aims to change attitudes and prejudices which have existed for decades and is built on the principles of sport for all and community development. There are 30 social inclusion projects currently in progress: the challenge for the Sports Council is to attain the increased involvement of the local authorities.
- The Sports Council actively encourages women to participate in sport and is doing all it

can to redress the balance of participation between men and women.

- In terms of disability sport, SCW aims to increase participation and club membership. 22 disability co-ordinators will be appointed by July.
- As for children's participation, the total curricular time devoted to PE in secondary schools fell from 694 hours in 1974 to 512 in 1991-2. ESTYN has expressed concern about the quality of delivery of PE in schools. Extra-curricular activity has however increased in recent years, especially in competitive activities.
- There was significant growth in sports club membership between 1995 and 1997, although club membership amongst boys was dominated by football and rugby.
- The major influences on girls' participation in sport are the family, the school – especially the experience of PE – community sport and the media. The latter continue to give a low priority to the coverage of women's sport.
- The Community Chest Scheme has helped large numbers of new junior participants and new junior teams.
- Mr Jones made the point that parents in the UK tend to treat their children's sporting activities as opportunities for alternative creche sessions. Unlike, say, New Zealand, British parents rarely get involved in these activities.
- Amongst the targets set by the Council (all by the year 2005) are for 70% of 7-11 year olds to partake in extra-curricular sporting activity; for 60% of 11-16 year olds to be involved in extra-curricular sporting activity; for 80% of 15-24 year olds to be playing sport; for 350 Welsh sportsmen and women to achieve British representation and for 150 of those to become British champions.
- These targets are achievable by a bottom-up approach which will involve Dragon Sport, Clwb Cymru, Centres of Local Development and Centres of Regional Excellence.

The following points were made in the question and answer session:

- It is difficult to estimate the current impact of the foot and mouth crisis on sporting activities, although many outdoor centres have closed and the impact in areas such as Gwynedd and Anglesey is significant. SCW are considering issuing guidelines to clubs and centres on whether they should close or remain open, but want more information from the Assembly and MAFF.
- The Chair asked whether the SCW are able to give financial support to pigeon racing clubs, an issue previously debated in this Committee. The Chair of SCW explained that the Council recently met with key players from the pigeon racing fraternity. SCW has sympathy with the demands of the pigeon racing societies, but is unable to fund the activity because it is not recognised as a sport at a UK-level. The pigeon racing society have been given application forms and are welcome to apply for funding, but SCW's representatives were not confident that the application would meet with success.
- The SCW has to be consistent in the way it treats sports. Currently, activities such as pigeon racing, greyhound racing and darts do not fit the criteria to be classified as a sport. If the Assembly felt strongly enough that they should be considered as sports, then money for them would have to be found from elsewhere in the SCW's budget.

- The Welsh share of the monies from the New Opportunities Fund stands at six and a half per cent of the UK total of £750m and will be used to assist sporting projects in deprived areas.
- In reply to a question about how SCW were supporting women's golf, the Chief Executive stated that the structure of the sport presented many opportunities for women, because waiting lists for women were much shorter than the male equivalent. SCW will not fund a golf club unless it can prove that it operates an equal opportunities policy.
- In reply to a question as to why North Wales has not got any major swimming pools, SCW said that the national swimming pool is soon to open in Swansea, but that there was a false perception that North Wales was badly off in terms of national sporting facilities. The North is home to national centres for mountaineering, water sports, canoeing and sailing.
- The SCW helps many community sports clubs through the community chest schemes and small equipment grants, but value for money and the availability of suitable venues are important considerations when awarding grants.
- Better delivery of physical education in schools is a major issue currently being addressed by SCW.
- In respect of football, the SCW does not directly fund the League of Wales but has held discussions with the League about the long-term structural development of football. Football is the sport which SCW give the highest amount of funding to, but the Chief Executive expressed concern about the accountability of funding in this area.
- Wales's bid for the 2009 Ryder Cup provides a shining example of how the nation can pull together for a common goal. The Ryder Cup Committee has delayed the announcement of the winning bid; this will give the parties concerned further time to look at the development of the Celtic Manor course. A strong part of the bid relates to the significant impact the event would have on Wales' economy in terms of tourism and revenue generated.
- SCW are aware of the importance of baseball to communities in Cardiff and Newport and tries to encourage the baseball in Wales to submit development plans to the Council.
- The Minister concluded the session. She agreed that the Ryder Cup provided a good example of how bids for major events can benefit Wales as a whole.
- In respect of funding for pigeon racing, the Minister said the Communities First route was the most likely source of funding for this activity.
- On the foot and mouth outbreak she said that fresh guidelines were likely to be issued to sports clubs later this week.
- With regard to the New Opportunities Fund, nearly £49m was allocated to sport in Wales with a further £3m for outdoor activities. She expected the SCW to be closely involved in the decision-making about funding allocations.
- The Chair thanked SCW' representatives for their informative presentation. He said that time constraints prevented some issues from being aired and he would write to SCW on these matters.

Item 2: Presentation by the Council of Museums Wales (CMW)

Paper: CC-5-01(p.1)

Representatives:

Cllr Robert Francis Davies, Chair

Jane Peirson Jones, Chief Executive

John Marjoram

The Chief Executive gave a presentation, the main points of which are to be found in CC-5-01 (p.1).

The following points were made in the question and answer session:

- The Chair expressed concern at the inconsistency of funding of local museums by local authorities. Cllr Robert Francis Davies said there were indeed examples of good and bad practice amongst local authorities, but that financial support at local level had to take account of local pressures and priorities. He felt that local museums were extremely important to the communities they served and local authorities should be encouraged to collect and preserve material of historical interest. Local authorities need to realise the importance and value of cultural tourism. Glasgow and Hull, for instance, are examples of cities which have become major cultural centres only in recent years and partly because of the efforts made at local authority level. For Glasgow in particular this has brought major benefits to the local economy.
- Cllr Davies asked the Assembly to bring pressure to bear on the National Museum of Wales to tour its exhibitions more and to develop a regional policy of relevance to each local authority. He felt that not enough prominence was given to museums' potential to educate young people.
- Jane Peirson Jones said that a working party was currently considering whether there should be the equivalent of RESOURCE in Wales. Since the establishment of RESOURCE a funding gap has developed between England and Wales, although this has partly been rectified by the additional monies allocated to CMW in the budget settlement for 2002-3. There is also currently a significant information deficit – the annual gathering of statistics in the museums service has not taken place for the last two years.
- CMW had received assurances from the previous Minister that RESOURCE would operate on an England and Wales basis but that has not happened in practice. RESOURCE's current work plan talks only of English regional issues. It appears that

RESOURCE has unilaterally determined an England-only remit. The Chair replied that this was an issue which the Committee would need to return to at an early stage.

- The CMW agreed on the need for greater integration between itself and the Schools Museums' Service. CMW has been developing education policies for the past two years and many local museums have responded positively to the initiatives.
- The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has become a developing influence over how and when new museums are established. CMW's representatives highlighted the need for close liaison between HLF and the cultural sector.
- All of CMW's grants are subject to extensive monitoring and evaluation. 20% of CMW's grant goes towards funding staff and posts in its affiliated museums.
- CMW agreed that there is scope for more joint working between itself, NMGW and the National Library of Wales and room to look at current funding allocations and how money is best spent.
- CMW's representatives stated that facilities in a number of small museums needed to be upgraded to ensure the appropriate levels of security and environmental control so that these museums could house items of national significance and high value.
- In conclusion, the Minister said that a number of significant issues had been raised. She felt that CMW does great work with the limited resources at its disposal. She saw Cymru'n Creu as a vehicle for achieving greater co-operation between the various organisations with an interest in museums' services, and for collecting up-to-date data. She was aware of the need to quickly address the issues surrounding RESOURCE but felt that establishing a Welsh equivalent was not necessarily the answer. She also thought that this Committee would benefit from a presentation by officials of the Audit Commission who are currently considering issues of best value, including the local museums' service.

Item 3: Welsh Language – Position Paper – CC-5-00(p.2)

The Chair introduced this item. He said that this was a factual paper requested by the Committee at its meeting on 7 February in preparation for the forthcoming review of the language. He informed members that he was meeting the Chair of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee next week to ascertain how that Committee could input into this review.

The Chair was concerned at the continuing contraction of traditionally Welsh-speaking communities and by the lack of recent statistics on the number of Welsh speakers in these areas.. He wondered whether these figures were available at a local level and sought to write to the Welsh Language Board about the matter.

Delyth Evans did not agree with the statement contained in the paper that the language had stabilised. She looked forward to receiving the figures in the next census but was disappointed that many of the key statistics would not be available for about a year. She felt that these statistics would be crucial to the Committee's forthcoming review.

Item 4: Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February

Paper: CC-4-01(min)

These were agreed without amendment.

Other business

The Minister stated that she regretted the publicity that resulted from a recent meeting between Cabinet members, AMs and senior officials about the Wales Millennium Centre (WMC). In particular, she felt that making personal comments about individuals involved in the project was counter-productive. She hoped that a statement clarifying the financial position of the WMC would be made in early April.

ACTION POINTS

- The Chair to write to the Sports Council with further questions
- Secretariat to arrange for a Committee discussion on RESOURCE
- Secretariat to arrange for a presentation by the Audit Commission about best value, including the local museums' service
- The Chair to write to the Chair of the WLB about lack of recent statistics on the number of Welsh speakers in traditionally Welsh-speaking communities

Committee Secretariat March 2001

