

Culture Committee CC 15-02 (p.1)

Date: 17 July 2002

Time: 9.00am - 12.15pm

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly for Wales

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SPORTS COUNCIL FOR WALES: CORPORATE PLAN 2003/2004 – 2005/2006

INTRODUCTION

1 The Council's Corporate Plan sets out its work programmes for the next three years in order to deliver the targets and aspirations contained in the Strategy for Welsh Sport, 'Young People First'. It also contains a bid for extra resources in Chapter 7 of the document.

2 The last time the Council appeared before the Committee, a presentation was made on the aims of the Strategy and how these are consistent with the policies of the Assembly. The Chairman and Chief Executive emphasised the important contribution of sport to health, social inclusion and equal opportunities. There was insufficient time at the meeting to discuss the importance of developing high performance and achieving excellence in Welsh sport. On 20 April this year, the Assembly held a plenary debate on elite sport.

3 At the meeting on 17 July, SCW will highlight progress to date and priorities for future funding focusing, in particular, on the need to upgrade the Welsh Institute of Sport (WIS) in order to ensure Wales continues to excel on the UK and world stage, bringing international prestige and profile to the country.

PROGRESS TO DATE

4 The Plan highlights through performance indicators and targets the progress made in:-

4.1 increasing sports participation, particularly women;

4.2 narrowing the gap in participation between high and low participating regions, targeting socially excluded communities;

4.3 creating increased opportunities for children, especially girls;

4.4 implementing the Assembly's PE and School Sport Action Plan;

4.5 chairing the Assembly's Health and Active Lifestyle Task Force and submitting a report jointly to the Health Minister and Culture Minister;

4.6 achieving excellence.

5 Progress will continue to be made within the existing Exchequer and Lottery budgets. However, the Council will not be able to deliver excellence in Welsh sport without additional funding to upgrade WIS.

RECENT SUCCESSES IN WELSH SPORT

6 At the European Indoor Athletic Championships, Wales won gold and silver medals. This performance was better than any other nation in Europe, on a per capita basis. Last year, seven Welsh golfers were ranked in the top 100 in Europe. This was more, per head of population, than any other nation.

7. At the Sydney Paralympic Games, Wales provided 20% of the Great Britain team and won 25% of the medals achieved by British athletes (this from 5% of the population). Wales won the same number of medals, per head of population, as did Australia – the most successful country in the world.

8. In the last four Commonwealth Games, Wales has been the third best country on medals won per head of population.

9. The best singles badminton players in Britain, both male and female, are Welsh. Both have recently been ranked in the world top 10.

10. The boxing World Super Middleweight Champion is Welsh.

11. In squash, Wales recently had two players in the top 10 in the world.

12. Wales has a female cyclist who has won four junior world championships and

has recently won two major professional road races.

13. Last year, Wales won the European Netball Championships.

14. Wales currently has 150 British champions and in many British teams, Wales provides far more representatives than its population proportion (5%).

15. Currently, Wales is performing better than ever before on the international stage in a wide range of sports. Unfortunately, the public and political perception of Welsh sport is often based on the performances of our national football and rugby teams. The lack of success in football and rugby clearly influences the perception of Welsh sport, although there can be no doubt that the recent record of football and rugby is in direct contrast with the success of other sports.

16. It is an irony that the governing bodies of football and rugby in Wales have far more income than all other governing bodies (59) in total, yet the current debate in rugby seems to be finance led. There can be no doubt that, in both sports, there are serious issues related to structure, management, direction and leadership.

FINANCE

17. Wales not only performs well on a per capita basis but also provides excellent value for money in return for public investment. In the UK, performance and excellence programmes are largely dependent on revenue raised via the National Lottery. The Sports Council for Wales has a budget of £1.5m for its revenue performance and excellence programmes. In Scotland, the budget is £8m and, in England, the annual budget is nearly £40m. Wales is placed at a significant financial disadvantage when compared with other countries. Lottery funding is allocated on a per capita basis. Yet the size of national teams and, therefore, the cost involved in supporting them, is exactly the same. A national netball team in Wales is obviously the same size as the national netball team of England and, therefore, costs are exactly the same but the finance available in Wales is less than 5% of that available to England.

FORMULA

18. The formula for success in elite sport is simple in principle:-

Talented competitor + gifted coach + access to facilities + appropriate competition
= success.

The implementation of this principle is sometimes complex and certainly requires significant investment. A key element is national facility provision such as WIS.

FACILITIES

19. In general terms, Wales is well provided for in national facilities for training and competition. For example, the National Watersports Centre at Plas Menai; the National Canoe Centre at Bala; the Millennium Stadium and the Welsh Institute of Sport in Cardiff.

20. In addition, in recent years with the help of Lottery funding, new national facilities have been, or are being, established for cricket at Sophia Gardens; for athletics at the University of Wales Institute Cardiff; for swimming at Swansea University and for cycling in Newport. Other national and regional facilities are currently being planned.

21. WIS is now more than 30 years old and is already in serious need of refurbishment and modernisation. The Assembly will need to address this issue. The Corporate Plan sets out a bid for £12.75m to upgrade the existing facilities and to create dedicated academies for sport. An in-principle paper has been provided to the Minister setting out options. The Institute serves as the national training centre for 16 sports, it also provides the base and headquarters for the Elite Cymru programme and includes a sports science laboratory and sports medicine provision. We already have a very successful Institute and it is very important we maintain and improve its standing throughout the UK. There can be no doubt that WIS is the best used centre of its kind in the United Kingdom and it is fundamentally important we maintain its status.

SUMMARY

22. In sport, to merely maintain current standards is not an option. Today's gold medal winning performance may not be enough to reach a final tomorrow. Improved investment is an absolute necessity. Wales punches above its weight and provides an excellent return on public finance. More investment is required, particularly to ensure that the Welsh Institute of Sport maintains its service and provision for the next generation of talented sports men and women.

Sports Council for Wales