

Sport Wales Scrutiny

Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and
International Relations Committee

November 2023

sportwales
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Introduction:

This information has been provided to assist the scrutiny session of Sport Wales at the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee on 8 November 2023.

Background

The below information is part of our 2022/23 Annual report which is due to be laid imminently, and our Business Plan for 23/24.

THE VISION FOR SPORT IN WALES

'An Active Nation where everyone can have a lifelong enjoyment of sport'

The Vision for Sport in Wales underpins our work as an organisation, the collaborative work of the sport sector, and the involvement of wider stakeholders. The Vision is not just for Sport Wales to work towards, rather it is the collective vehicle for cross-sector engagement in transforming Wales into an active nation.

Active Nation – We want as many people as possible to be inspired to be active through sport.

Everyone – The vision is for everyone. From people who don't see themselves as sporty to those that win medals.

Lifelong – The vision is for life; it responds to the needs of people at different stages of their life.

Enjoyment – The vision focusses on creating a range of positive experiences so everyone can enjoy sport.

The Vision is built on the *5 Ways of Working* in line with the **Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

Long Term – The vision ensures we, alongside our partners plan for the long term, developing opportunities that respond to the needs of all people in a changing society.

Prevention – The vision is about ensuring sport is accessible, fun, and affordable, and leaves no one behind. It also ensures we put resources into preventing problems occurring, or from getting worse.

Integration – The vision unites decision makers and organisations through its ambitions. It is built on the collaborative impact of what we can achieve when we work together.

Collaboration – The vision belongs to and needs the support of everyone in Wales – working, investing, learning, and succeeding together.

Involvement – The vision was built following conversations with individuals from every part of Wales and continues to promote involvement into shaping the future of Wales being an active nation.

The Vision underpins our strategy, and our annual business plan. Throughout this report you will read about the core areas of our work which facilitate our work towards the vision.

We are enormously grateful and very proud of the collaborative effort from the Welsh sport sector in being committed to the vision.

OUR STRATEGY

As part of our role delivering on the vision for Sport in Wales, we work to six strategic intent statements. These organisational statements demonstrate what you can expect to see from the work in which we deliver, and the work that we are part of.

These statements also act as our Wellbeing Objectives, and we utilise them to frame our Wellbeing Future Generations (WBFG) (Act) Wales 2015 public duties reporting. You will find many examples of how we work towards these objectives within the body of the report and, in the section 'Our work as a Public Body.'

Our strategic intent statements are:

#1 BE PERSON CENTRED

The needs and motivations of the individual lead the delivery, whether just starting out, aiming to progress, or striving for excellence on the world stage.

#2 GIVE EVERY YOUNG PERSON A GREAT START

Every young person has the skills, confidence, and motivation to enable them to enjoy and progress through sport; giving them foundations to lead an active, healthy and enriched life.

#3 ENSURE EVERYONE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE ACTIVE THROUGH SPORT

Sport is inclusive and provides a great experience for all.

#4 BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER FOR THE LONG-TERM

There is a collaborative, sustainable and successful sport sector, led by collective insight and learning.

#5 SHOWCASE THE BENEFITS OF SPORT

The impact of sport is evidenced, and sport's reach is fully understood, showcased and celebrated through Wales.

#6 BE A HIGHLY VALUED ORGANISATION

Sport Wales is a respected organisation, striving to overachieve by delivering an exemplary service through valued staff.

Our Business Plan

In line with our term of government remit letter, we have set seven Business Plan priority areas to enable us to deliver on our strategy and the Vision.

In 2023/24, these priorities are:

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

We will aim to create an inclusive culture of belonging within the organisation.

Inclusive Sport System

An inclusive sport system will provide opportunities which are led by need, that are safe, enjoyable and developmental.

Sport Partnerships

We will lead system change and establish a diverse network of five Sport Partnerships in Wales, tackling two long standing issues:

- Ensuring there is the right support and opportunities in place for those who are not regularly physically active - with a clear focus on removing barriers for those who need most help
- Taking steps to meet the high latent demand from those who are active but want to do much more

Health and Well Being

We will demonstrate, increase and maximise the role that sport plays in supporting people's health and wellbeing leading to an inclusive sport system.

We want to see evidence that the role sport plays in contributing to population health outcomes within Wales, is valued and understood through policy areas (education, mental health, public health and equalities).

Education

We will affect education policies that can positively impact on the Vision for Sport in Wales. We will focus on:

- Opportunities for all children in Wales to be active in and around the school day.
- Working with community-focussed schools, capital investment and other education policies that impact on sport

Environmental Sustainability and Decarbonisation

We will implement the Sport Wales Environmental Sustainability Plan.

We recognise that there is a Climate and Nature Emergency and a need to accelerate actions to reduce carbon emissions. We want Sport Wales to positively contribute to the Welsh Government's net zero public sector by 2030 target and to provide leadership and support to the sector to achieve this. This will support sport in Wales to become sustainable and provide lifelong opportunities for everyone.

Investments

We aim to:

- Have an open and transparent investment approach that is driven by the needs of the people of Wales and enables them to be active in sport.
- Maximise the impact the investment makes on addressing the inequalities in Sport and the Vision for Wales
- Have a process for accessing and awarding funding that is streamlined and efficient.

Sport Wales Headlines 2022/23

Our Annual Report is due to be published imminently, however, below are some of the key highlights from that report.

OUR INVESTMENT APPROACH

In order to achieve the Vision for Sport in Wales, and to ensure that public funds are used to create maximum impact among those who need them most, Sport Wales has implemented a bold investment approach. There are two main methods (below):

- ***Data Driven Investment***

In 2020 we implemented the first phase of our new approach to partner investment with the National Governing Body partners whom we hold national-level statistics and performance data for. This data-driven approach to investment allows us to listen to what the people of Wales are telling us they want to do, using data to inform the maximum amount of money we invest into individual partners and placing greater significance on race, gender, disability and deprivation. This approach is a significant change from previous ways of funding, and we continue to support partners through this transition.

- **A principles-driven approach to partner investment**

This year, a project team set about creating a new method to determine the level of investment for partners where survey level data isn't available, which was aligned to our strategy and the new collaborative way of working with partners.

A 'principles-driven' approach will be used to determine investment in our National Partners. We considered a variety of options, and a principles-driven approach was selected following user research, internal and external discussions, and robust testing. Using a principles-driven approach provides clarity on the areas in which we wish to invest, and what is important to our values and business plan, and is aligned to the Vision.

The 3 key principles are:

- Creating an equal, diverse, and inclusive sport sector
- Enhancing Welsh Sport
- Capacity building

The approach will not change the way that we work with partners, nor introduce new responsibilities that would place a burden on those organisations. The investment process will take place without altering the collaborative way of working which we have recently developed, in conjunction with our partners. Our approach, which includes ongoing conversations with partners around what really matters, will not change; partnership working will continue to encourage learning and developing together. What will change is we will have an investment approach that is transparent and distributes investment in a significantly better way to achieve the Vision.

A new approach to community investment

Following the successful partnership with the Centre for Digital Public Services (CDPS) in 2021-22, which through involving potential applicants who had not previously applied, and communities who had used the system, highlighted that applicants for our funding were often put off by our grants management system, work continued into 2022-23 with a 14-week extended Alpha+ phase. This focused on the continued design and evaluation of the user journey, and how it impacts on back-office processes and system requirements in relation to our Be Active Wales Fund.

Following the conclusion of Alpha+ in June 2022, recommendations were made to Sport Wales, which were implemented in the second half of 2022-23. Many of the recommendations were linked to the procurement of a new investment system, which was formalised in October 2022 with the appointment of new supplier, Civic UK. Work has been ongoing since then to develop a new investment system that meets the needs of Sport Wales and applicants alike for the long-term, with the view to launching the new system in early 2023-24.

Changes have also been made to our current internal processes to help lower barriers to groups who are working to reduce inequalities from accessing our funding. The Investment Team are collaborating with applicants prior to an application being made, assisting them in the initial stages of a project to ensure that they meet the funding criteria, or signposting them to relevant partners should they require additional support, via the new Expression of Interest Form that launched in March 2023. This also ties in with the role of ongoing partner research work by Sport Wales to work with local authorities and national governing bodies on the role that they play in community investment. We also invest £8m in capital funding through the below schemes.

Crowdfunder: A match funded approach supporting up to £15,000 to help not-for-profit community clubs make their facilities more environmentally friendly, economically sustainable and provide a better experience for all. Funding is specifically weighted towards areas of deprivation and inclusivity.

Energy Savings Grant: A new fund this year for up to £25,000 for not-for-profit community clubs to access support to decrease their energy bills and increase their contribution to the decarbonisation agenda. This fund supports things like solar panels, heat pumps and insulation.

Partner Capital Fund: A fund supporting up to £300,000 for National Governing Bodies, National Partners and Local Authorities to improve the sport infrastructure in Wales. This fund provides for the strategic priorities of our partners across community and performance sport.

ATP/Court Collaboration: A fund that brings together two sets of partners. Hockey Wales/WRU and FAW to support collaborative ATP and 3G pitch investments, and Basketball Wales/Wales Netball and Tennis Wales on collaborative court based investments.

Digital Apprentice Recruitment Campaign

This year, we recruited two Digital Apprentices to work as part of our Digital & Service Design team and worked in partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University to secure places for the apprentices on their Software Engineering degree course.

Prior to the recruitment process, we considered how we could maximise the reach of the adverts and increase the opportunity to attract a diverse range of candidates. As a result of this work, we made some key changes to our usual recruitment process, as follows:

Guaranteeing interviews to candidates with diverse backgrounds and experiences who meet the essential requirements of the role

Hold three drop-in sessions so that potential candidates could informally meet some of the team and learn more about the role.

The weekly drop-in sessions were well attended and gave us a real opportunity to reiterate the inclusive culture that we have at Sport Wales in a more informal session. All sessions were really engaging, and there was a clear sense of excitement amongst the attendees.

The advert closed with a record high number of applications for a Sport Wales role (143). The standard of application for a role of this nature was incredibly high and analysis of the demographic of candidates identified that they were much more diverse than we would ordinarily see for a typical role. Further detail can be found below:

- 16% from ethnically diverse backgrounds
- 8% with a disability
- 13% LGBTQ+
- 8% whose gender identity is different to the sex assumed at birth.
- 32% with Welsh language capabilities.

This has ultimately been a very successful recruitment campaign and there have been a number of key learnings that could shape future campaigns, as well as some organisational learning. Key learnings were captured along the way such as:

- Expanding our EDI networks across the organisation really helped us push the advert for these roles out to a wide, diverse pool of potential applicants.
- Being explicit about the importance of EDI (particularly guaranteeing interviews for diverse candidates) in the job advert had a really positive impact.
- The drop-in sessions were a great way for potential candidates to see our culture and values in action and get a feel for what it's like to work for Sport Wales.

A spotlight on: Ramadan Sport

Our Ramadan Sport Project is an initiative aimed at promoting physical activity during Ramadan and fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of this observance within the Muslim community. This project was funded by the Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan funding and builds on the expectations of the Welsh Government's Remit letter to prioritise diversity, inclusion and equality throughout the sector.

In **collaboration** with Foundation 4 Sports Coaching, we engaged with and **involved** the Muslim Community in Cardiff to gain insights and ensure that the project was culturally appropriate and respectful of the practices of the Muslim community. We met regularly with Foundation 4 Sports Coaching and two training events for Sport Wales employees helped us to refine our approach and better support participants during Ramadan.

Throughout the project, unforeseen challenges prompted us to ask meaningful questions to challenge ourselves and discover new ways of working. We intend to share these learnings with the sector in the coming weeks.

Moving forward, we aim to create a lasting legacy for Ramadan for the **long-term** at Sport Wales by ensuring a safe and inclusive space for our Muslim community year-round. We hope the project's impact helps us identify areas for further improvement and explore opportunities to expand similar projects to other communities and observances. We remain committed to prioritising **collaboration**, inclusivity, and **involvement**. We have gained valuable insights from this project and are committed to using them to inform our future work. We are proud of our progress and look forward to continuing to promote physical activity and well-being for all.

A spotlight on: Birmingham 2022 – more than medals

People aren't born Commonwealth athletes; they are made by the communities, people, and clubs they meet along the way.

Every athlete has been on their own journey to get to Birmingham 2022 – for example they might have taken up their sport late, come from a rural area, or juggled jobs and family with training.

In the run-up to the Commonwealth Games, we **collaborated** with Team Wales, National Governing Bodies, athletes, coaches, and support staff to launch a campaign highlighting the stories of selected athletes. The narrative aimed to dispel many myths associated with performing on a world stage, instead telling real-life stories that supplemented our principles that underpinned athlete development activity centred on a more inclusive sporting system.

Showcasing real stories, stories that aren't typically told remains a priority for us and will serve as a useful supporting mechanism in breaking down many of the persistent inequities in the athlete development space.

A spotlight on: Actif North Wales

The first 'live' Sport partnership in North Wales has appointed a central team to manage this governance and lead strategic delivery across the region this year. The team includes a Regional Director, Partnership Manager and Business Support officer. They are in turn supported by a skills based Partnership Board with representation from key stakeholders in North Wales, and an Independent Chair.

Rebranded as "Actif North Wales", the partnership have developed a new strategy through engagement across the region, with a heightened focus for partner sport development teams to tackle inequalities across North Wales, and grow new relationships with commissioned partners. This includes a marketing and communications strategy to strengthen stakeholder engagement and explore new commercial opportunities.

We look forward to the establishment of all five regions, reflecting a diverse and thriving network of partnerships over the coming year.

Active Leisure Scheme, 60 Plus

The Active Leisure scheme, 60+, was further developed this year following an independent evaluation making recommendations for the 2022-24 Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales Action Plan period. The aim of the scheme is to provide a national leisure offer for over 60s to encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices; a targeted approach to reducing health inequalities and social isolation.

In 2022, the introduction of a new reporting platform manifested a change in the way data was captured across all local authorities with benefits of capturing specific information, which it is hoped will help authorities to understand which engagement and activities have been successful. There has also been a significant increase in engagement across local authority areas in coordinating other initiatives such as The National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS), Free Swimming Initiative (FSI), Social Prescribing and Age Well networks as well as other local 60+ provision to provide an **integrated** menu of opportunities for this age group.

Active Education Beyond the School Day

Following the elections to the Senedd in 2021, the Welsh Government's [programme for government](#) promised to realise the commitment of creating community-focused schools and explore reform of the school day. We worked with a range of partners including Welsh Government's Community-Focussed Schools Team, Local Authority Education Leads (ADEW Members), Headteachers and Local Authority Sports Development Teams to realise a project looking at the opening of facilities and delivering activities beyond the school day. The project found that the individual offers needed to be unique to the school and community and consultation with pupils and the community is key to ensuring the offer meets their needs. In terms of funding, sustainability must be considered and planned for from the outset and integrated into budgets, as well as revenue funding for staffing or coaching costs needing to be factored into budgets, as well as revenue funding for staffing or coaching costs needing to be factored in.

A full evaluation can be found on our website <https://www.sport.wales/research-and-insight/active-education-beyond-the-school-day/programme-evaluation/>

Development and Launch of the Environmental Sustainability Plan by 2030

We are proud that through our Remit Letter we are able to support the Welsh Government's commitment to achieving a zero-carbon economy by working to become carbon neutral by 2030. Indeed, in response to the Climate and Nature Emergencies, Sport Wales has identified environmental sustainability as a business plan priority. To develop our plans to contribute to the Welsh Government ambition of a net zero public sector by 2030, Sport Wales commissioned the expertise of Carbon Trust to assist in understanding our carbon emissions baseline and to develop a forward plan to reduce emissions. Following a series of workshops with key stakeholders, a draft Environmental Sustainability Plan was developed. The Plan focuses our decarbonisation and biodiversity actions around five key themes: -

- Our People
- Our Partners
- Our Procurement
- Our Places
- Our Processes

A key theme of the Plan is the **collaboration** opportunities to work with other organisations (Welsh Government Sponsored Bodies, partners within the Sport, Environment and Climate Coalition, Lottery Distributors, National Governing Bodies and other National Partners).

The Plan has been published on the Sport Wales [website in an accessible format](#). Given the pace of change in this field, Sport Wales anticipates that the Plan will be regularly reviewed to ensure that the latest developments are captured in the actions.