

Cross-Party Group Minutes

Meeting Minutes:

Cross Party Group Title:	Wales International
Date of Meeting:	18 February 2025
Location:	Room C2.03, Second floor, Senedd Cymru, Cardiff CF10 5AL, Ty Hywel entrance

In attendance:

Name:	Title:
Heledd Fychan MS	Chair (Member of the Senedd)
Brooke Webb	Support Staff (Heledd Fychan MS)
Abigail Doyle	Project Officer, British Council Wales
Amanda Morgan	Project Manager, International Links Global
Andrew Cornish	Principal of Coleg Sir Gar / Coleg Ceredigion Colegau Cymru
Anne Morgan	Head of International Partnerships, Cardiff University
Bill Burson	Head of Partnerships, Universities Wales/ Global Wales
Carol Bell	Non-Executive Director, Football Association Wales
Carolyn Hitt	Head of Radio Wales & Sport, BBC Wales
Catherine Lewis	Deputy CEO, NPTC Group
Catherine Paskell	Artistic Director, Dirty Protest Theatre

Claire Williams	Policy Officer, Colegau Cymru
David Warren	Head of International Relations, Welsh Govt.
Dean Pymble	Campaign Manager for Wales, The Red Card Wales
Eleanor Bevan	Schools and Youth Programme Manager, Taith
Elena Schmitz	Head of Arts Wales, British Council
Eluned Hâf	Head of Wales Arts International (WAI)/Arts Council of Wales
Fadhili Maghiya	CEO, Sub-Sahara Advisory Panel
Gary Lewis	Sports Director, Urdd Gobaith Cymru
Gavin Price	Alliance Leader - UK/Europe, Sports Diplomacy Alliance
Grant Pointer	CEO, Boys and Girls Club of Wales
Gwilym Harry-Roberts	Affairs & Policy Manager, National Museum Wales
Hayley Richard	Head of Programme Development & Policy, WCIA
Helen Antoniazzi	Head of Public Affairs & Sustainability, Football Association Wales
Ian Gwyn Hughes	Head of Public Relations, Football Association Wales
Ioan Bellin	Senedd Support Staff for Delyth Jewell
Jane Richardson	Chief Executive, Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales
Kath Morgan	Coleg y Cymoedd
Kieron Rees	Assistant Director, Global Wales

Laura Dukes	Cardiff University
Mali Thomas	Director of Communications & International Relations, Urdd Gobaith Cymru
Matthew Williams	Head of Policy and Communications Welsh Sports Association
Morgan Rhys	Senedd commission staff, translator
Nia Davies	Executive Producer, BBC Interactive
Poppy Riley	Welsh Sports Association
Rhiannon Sheen de Jesus	Youth Voice & Sport System Manager, Street Games Wales
Robert Baynham	Active Wellbeing Project Manager, Colegau Cymru
Rob Humphreys	Chair, British Council Wales Advisory Group
Ruben Chapela-Orr	Bangor University, International Links
Ruth Cocks	Director, British Council Wales
Sarah Jones	Director, Focus Wales
Simon Lu	Participation Officer, Football Association Wales
Steffan Roberts	Deputy Director, Culture, Sport and Tourism, Welsh Govt.
Thomas Davies-Lyons	Education Manager, British Council Wales
Zelie Flach	European Officer, Wales Arts International/Arts Council of Wales

Apologies:

Name:	Title:
Ali Abdi	Community Gateway Partnerships Manager, Cardiff University
Brian Davies	CEO, Sports Wales
Elin Llŷr	Public Affairs Manager, ITV Cymru Wales

Summary of Meeting:

Chair's Welcome

A brief introduction of the panel and a run-through of the agenda was provided. The panel included Ian Gwyn Hughes, Head of Public Relations at Football Association Wales, Helen Antoniazzi, Head of Public Affairs and Sustainability at Football Association Wales, and Steffan Roberts, Deputy Director, Culture, Sport and Tourism at Welsh Government.

The topic of the Women's Euros tournament was introduced. It was emphasised that the success of the Wales Women's Team is of great importance to Wales, it is a historic moment and will contribute to giving Wales the international profile that the nation deserves.

Talk with Football Association Wales

Both speakers from FAW introduced themselves, their roles and the work that they are currently doing to support the Wales Women's Team at the Euros this year.

It was noted that Wales has come a long way in sport over the previous 10 years. The 2022 Qatar World Cup heavily contributed to bringing people in Wales together to support the Wales Men's Team. It was noted that this makes a huge difference to the players knowing that everyone at home has come together to support their success. As an example, during the Qatar World Cup, screens in the stadium allowed the players to see fans back in Wales reacting to each game which helped to boost confidence.

It was considered what this may look like for the Euros 2025 and what this could create for women's football going forward.

It was further emphasised that the impact on young girls seeing the Women's Team on television is huge as it breaks down stereotypes on women and girls in sport and can help to encourage girls to play sports. It was noted that women who play sports often go on to lead.

FAW hope to make football and sport more widely a more inclusive space for women and girls. The plan is to invest more into football facilities, so that they are more accessible to women and girls.

FAW heavily value the importance of diversity and inclusivity, as well as sustainability in their work. The tournaments are about the people of Wales from all backgrounds and communities coming together and feeling a part of these events.

The discussion moved on to point out that there are lots of exciting opportunities for Wales coming up in football such as:

- Hosting the under 19's Euros in North Wales next year.
- Wales having placed a bid to host the Women's Champion's League.
- Cardiff may host the opening match and the opening ceremony for the Men's Euros 2028 finals.

It was also mentioned that the impact of the BBC showing the Wales matches is huge, as more people are aware of the players and teams.

Talk with Welsh Government

Congratulations were expressed to the Wales Women's Team for their success in qualifying for the Euros 2025. It is a moment of pride for Wales and an excellent opportunity to support women in sport.

Welsh Government confirmed that they would be releasing a programme framework for the women's participation in the Euros and that the Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership will be releasing a written statement later in the day regarding Welsh Government's plans.

It was noted that the Qatar World Cup was a unique opportunity for Wales. A report on the tournament was published with a section on lessons learnt. It noted that timescales were challenging due to the limited amount of time to plan and that communications for the tournament and bringing stakeholders together have been improved. Issues around human rights in the country were also acknowledged.

The new framework will address the lessons learnt from the 2022 Qatar World Cup, with the aim to support the Women's Team. A steering group has been put in place with various stakeholders and partners to discuss plans and ways to support the Euros 2025. Marketing support and funding is being put in place.

The hope is to promote Wales as a nation, share Welsh values, promote women's sport, and to encourage more young girls (and boys) to play sport.

Floor opened to discussion

The Chair asked whether the Euros 2025 will influence wider participation in international sporting events for Wales (not just in football) and whether Welsh Government has a

strategy in place to harness the positive impact from these big moments of Wales qualifying for international sporting events in the long-term.

In response, it was clarified that there needs to be a balance between being proactive and reactive regarding sporting events and having a long-term vision; it is difficult to determine what Wales will qualify for and when information will become available and to plan timescales accordingly. Welsh Government aim to plan and make arrangements in advance as early as possible.

It was noted that there is a lot of support for Wales from various Welsh organisations and a lot of willingness to promote the success of the Wales Teams during international events. In this context, it was raised whether there is a call to action from Welsh Government to these organisations in how they can support the teams and get involved.

In response, it was highlighted that organisations will be encouraged to support the objectives behind Welsh Government's plans for the tournament (such as promoting Welsh values, women's and girl's sport, etc.).

The Principal and Deputy Chief Executive of NTPC Colleges commented that their sector is keen to support the plans of Welsh Government and the Women's Team at the Euros. It was also noted that there are several high-level sporting events they would be willing to support and there was emphasis on raising awareness and encouraging further participation in sports for women and girls.

The representative from the Sports Diplomacy Alliance highlighted that other nations, e.g. the Netherlands and France, some of the most successful countries in implementing sports diplomacy in Europe, could be examples to Wales. He emphasised that there could be benefits from partnering with the Netherlands due to their successful promotion of women's sport. He further mentioned there could be benefit from partnering with France due to their past success in the promotion of culture at sporting events.

It was further noted that it would be worth planning back from Europe 2028 due to the number of high-level sporting events which will occur. Reference was made to Australia, one of the most prominent sports diplomacy nations, hosting the Rugby World Cups in 2027 and 2029 and their plans to promote women's sport.

There is also a UNESCO conference happening in Geneva to coincide with the Women's Euros 2025. The key themes will be women in sport and leadership and, crucially for Wales, they will be focussing on sports para-diplomacy at substate level. It was noted that UNESCO would be keen to have Welsh representation at this conference.

The Chair of the British Council Wales Advisory Committee asked whether one of the lessons learnt from the Qatar World Cup is to start earlier, in order to reach a lasting impact. He then asked which countries Wales should be looking to as an example of creating a lasting impact on their international sporting profile.

In response, it was agreed that planning should occur earlier and, regarding exemplars for Wales, FAW clarified that Belgium and the Netherlands are countries for Wales to look towards in terms of their abilities to promote sports diplomacy effectively. It was

also mentioned that countries such as Latvia and Estonia, other smaller nations, are looking to Wales as an example of how to increase their profile internationally in sports.

The Head of Wales Arts International asked who the target audience should be regarding promoting Wales participation in the Euros 2025. She further asked how someone like Laura McAllister, a key figure in sports governance (and others working in a similar space), could be involved in promoting this campaign.

In response, it was emphasised that the key audience should be promoting Wales on the world stage, as well as people in Wales, particularly younger women and girls, with the aim to inspire the next generation to create a continuing and lasting impact. It was further noted that Laura McAllister was an ambassador for the 2022 Qatar World Cup and that the Welsh Government plan to engage with her in the coming months regarding the Euros 2025.

Comments from the chat included:

- The Youth Voice & Sport System Manager at Street Games Wales highlighted that they would be keen to join the Welsh Government's stakeholder steering group to explore how young people from underrepresented communities could be engaged in this space and to discuss how to create a legacy by offering sustainable and accessible opportunities.
- The link to the values statement for the Qatar World Cup was shared as an example of Team Wales working collaboratively: **Values statement: World Cup in Qatar - Welsh Centre for International Affairs**

Summary, actions and close

The chair summarised the main points discussed from the meeting which included the points on forward-planning for international sporting events, as well as an eagerness from partners and other organisations to get involved in promoting and supporting the Welsh Government's plans for these tournaments.

Actions included:

- Once the written statement from the Welsh Government has been published, the Cross-Party Group secretariat will circulate this to all participants.

The meeting ended at 13:00.