

P-06-1561 Close the gender gap in Welsh women's football fund a national equality plan – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 15 January 2026

Dear Members of the Petitions Committee,

I am submitting this response to Petition P-06-1561 following discussions with my co-petitioner, Osas Osamagbe Izevbigie, regarding our joint petition on the development and support of women's and girls' football in Wales.

These conversations have allowed us to clarify our shared concerns and ensure that the issues highlighted in the petition—particularly the structural gaps in the female player pathway, the absence of Women's U21 and U23 national teams, the need for a national player support scheme, and the requirement for a funded, time-bound equality plan—are accurately and comprehensively communicated to the Committee.

We continue to actively engage with relevant stakeholders to advance these issues and will be meeting with Jane Hutt MS tomorrow and Kanishka Narayan MP next month. We hope this demonstrates our ongoing commitment to ensuring meaningful action is taken.

This submission reflects our combined views and aims to provide a detailed, constructive response to the Football Association of Wales' previous submission, with the goal of supporting the Committee in seeking clear commitments, timelines, and accountability from both the FAW and the Welsh Government.

Yours sincerely,

Carmen Kelly

Dear Members of the Petitions Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Football Association of Wales' response to Petition P-06-1561.

While we welcome the FAW's recognition of the importance of women's and girls' football and acknowledge progress in participation, elite performance, and visibility, their response does not adequately address the central concerns of the petition.

The petition highlights a persistent structural gap in the female player pathway—specifically, the absence of Women's U21 and U23 national teams and the resulting loss of players after U19. This issue is not resolved by participation growth, tournament success, or media coverage, and it is not meaningfully addressed in the FAW response.

The FAW refers to "exploratory work" on additional age-group teams, but provides no commitment, timeline, funding plan, or accountability mechanism for Women's U21 or U23

national teams. These pathways exist in the men's game, directly contradicting the claim that investment now mirrors men's football.

The petition also calls for a national player support scheme to address the financial, welfare, and transition pressures faced by female players at the academy level—pre- and post-U19. The FAW response makes no mention of such a scheme. This omission is significant, as financial hardship is a leading cause of player drop-out.

Currently, talented players are lost from the pathway simply because they cannot afford to continue. Costs related to travel, training, equipment, education, lost earnings, and relocation disproportionately affect female players, many of whom balance football with work or study without comparable financial support. Without a national player support scheme, equality of opportunity is unattainable.

While the FAW highlights promotional success around major tournaments, this does not guarantee consistent media coverage across all levels. The petition seeks structural commitments and policy guarantees, not event-led visibility.

Finally, the petition calls for a funded, measurable five-year national equality plan with published targets and accountability. The FAW instead references a 10-year strategy that is unpublished and lacks measurable benchmarks, timelines, or equality indicators. As such, it cannot be evaluated against the petition's aims.

In summary, the FAW submission largely describes achievements and ambitions but does not respond directly to the petition's specific asks:

- The creation of Women's U21 and U23 national teams
- The introduction of a national player support scheme for players facing financial hardship
- A structured solution to pre- and post-U19 drop-off
- Guaranteed equality in media promotion
- A funded, time-bound national equality plan with measurable outcomes

The central unresolved question is:

"Will the FAW commit to establishing Women's U21 and U23 national teams by a specific date, and what funding will ensure these teams operate on a basis equivalent to the men's pathway? If a commitment cannot be made, please explain why parity is not currently achievable."

We also suggest the Committee consider asking the FAW:

- How does the FAW justify claiming mirrored investment with the men's game when equivalent post-U19 pathways do not exist for women?
- Will the FAW introduce a national player support scheme, and how will it support talented players unable to continue due to financial hardship?
- What measurable equality targets, timelines, and reporting mechanisms will ensure accountability in the proposed strategy?

- What guarantees will ensure equal media promotion across all levels of the women's and girls' pathway, not only during major tournaments?

The petition remains valid and unresolved. We respectfully ask the Committee to continue its consideration and seek clear commitments, timelines, and accountability from both the FAW and the Welsh Government.

Yours sincerely,

Carmen Kelly