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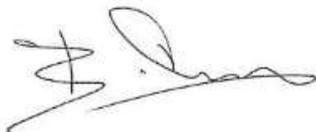
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13 February 2026

Dear Members of the Communications, Culture, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee.

We attach a document regarding Sport Wales' work with our partners and stakeholders to look ahead at policy recommendations in 2026 and beyond. We hope that the committee finds this document useful and we are happy to supply any further information that members or the committee clerks find useful.

Sincerely,



Brian Davies  
CEO



Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE  
Chair



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## How sport can help Wales thrive:

### Recommendations for 2026 and beyond

#### How sport can help Wales thrive

The four key recommendations from Sport Wales are interlinked and deliver on the ambition of the sport sector in Wales to unleash the power of sport for the benefit of everyone. These policies can unlock the potential of sport to contribute society wide benefits. As the four Chief Medical Officers of the UK said, **“If physical activity were a drug, we would refer to it as a miracle cure, due to the great many illnesses it can prevent and help treat.”**<sup>11</sup> Investing the right resource to unlock sport’s full potential. The daily active. Creating the right environments for young people. The beacon of ambition. New National Centre - from grassroots to the world stage. A preventative agenda for sport. Driving multi-sector solutions.

The recommendations start with unlocking the full potential of sport **by investing the right level of resource**, comparable to other nations in Europe. The focus of that investment is to recognise the collaborative role sport can play in a **preventative agenda**, contributing to the nation’s health and wellbeing as a cross-policy solution. Targeting future generations through a **daily active offer improving children and young people’s health, education and prosperity**. Finally, with the ambition for the home of sport in Wales, from grassroots to Wales on the world stage signalled in an **ambitious new National Centre**.

#### Key recommendation:

For a thriving sport sector, delivering lifelong benefits for everyone, Wales needs an increase in sport funding until comparable with those of similar countries.

#### Why this recommendation?

The power of sport to drive social and economic value is a proven concept. It is seen across the entire policy spectrum in Wales. The opportunity to ensure the people of Wales are healthier, wealthier and more prosperous exists by adequately funding sport to its full potential.

The recent report by the Senedd’s Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee<sup>12</sup> recommended an increase in funding for sport to ensure it reaches more comparable international levels, something that the Welsh

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<sup>11</sup> [UK Chief Medical Officers’ Physical Activity Guidelines \(PDF\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Welsh Government Response to Senedd Committee Report: A Decade of Cuts \(PDF\)](#)

Government have supported in principle<sup>13</sup>, and that Sport Wales has used as the basis of this recommendation.

The impact of funding sport has been well established. A UK wide report in 2024 demonstrated that in Wales, the direct gross value added (GVA) contribution through sport amounts to £1.9 billion pounds. Including the effects in the upstream value chain (the indirect impact of sport on wider economic industries), this increases to £2.9 billion pounds.

This economic value is underpinned by 38,345 FTE individuals employed directly in sport, a figure which rises to 58,997 when roles that are not directly sport-related but rely on sport related activity are included.

Furthermore, a Social Return on Investment study in 2023 highlighted that for every £1 invested in sport there was a £4.44 social return on that investment through improved health outcomes, public wellbeing, social capital and volunteering outputs.<sup>14</sup> The study found that even at 2021-22 funding levels around 113,000 cases of ill-health were prevented annually due to sport.

### **Potential increase levels**

**Baseline** - Based on a current population level of 3.11m<sup>15</sup>, for Wales to reach parity in culture funding with the UK, there would need to be approximately an additional £20m invested annually in sport.

**Medium** - For Wales to be ranked within the middle of the assessed European nations, an additional £208m annually would be required.

**Top quartile** - Whilst a top quartile funding picture would mean approximately between £438m-£553m in annual support.

### **Key benefits**

- Unleash the benefits of sport for everyone, as a proven multiplier effect in maximising the contribution to the environmental, health, social and economic prosperity of Wales
- More funding for all communities across Wales with under-served communities being prioritised
- Creating the foundations for the visibility and success of Wales on the world stage. Utilising sport as Wales' most powerful asset for international reputation
- All young people are supported to integrate sport and physical activity into their daily routines, delivering lifelong health and wellbeing benefits

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<sup>13</sup> [Welsh Government Response to Senedd Committee Report: A Decade of Cuts \(PDF\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Sport Wales – Social Return on Investment of Sport in Wales](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Statistics Wales Demography Newsletter – March 2025](#)

## **Key recommendation:**

Wales needs to introduce a ‘preventative health and well-being’ category of spend in future budgets, moving towards a longer-term budgeting view to help build and protect population health. This would help recognise and properly fund sport and unleash its societal benefits for everyone.

## **Why this recommendation?**

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act requires all public bodies to be focused on a prevention first agenda. Sport and physical activity have the potential to be the most effective preventative health tool in Wales. However, this will only be realised if the full potential of sport is maximised across health services -

“If physical activity were a drug, we would refer to it as a miracle cure, due to the great many illnesses it can prevent and help treat.”<sup>16</sup>

There is a significant national health challenge:

### **Mental health**

Since 2016-17 population’s general health has decreased over time and the number of people “reporting a mental health condition as a long-term illness” has increased to 12% in 2022-23. A 2025 Public Health Wales (PHW) survey showed 36% of people reported a decline in their mental health over the past three years<sup>17</sup>. In 2021-22, the category with the largest NHS expenditure by budget category was mental health problems which accounted for 10.9% (£962 million) of all NHS expenditure in Wales.

Whilst this mental health crisis continues to impact Wales, sport and physical activity remain a powerful, and underutilised tool. Findings for 2022-23, found “better mental wellbeing” among those who participated in sport at least three times a week.

### **Physical health**

- **Overweight:** 13.4% of children in Wales are overweight
- **Obese:** 11.4% of children in Wales are obese

Whilst we know that physical activity is only one aspect of tackling the issues of obesity, the current challenge in Wales does demand sport plays an active contribution to a collective response. By 2050 PHW estimate the cost of treating obesity alone will rise to £465m with a broader cost to society by 2050 estimated at £2.4bn.

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<sup>16</sup> [Academy of Medical Royal Colleges – Exercise: The Miracle Cure \(PDF\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Public Health Wales – Survey on Physical and Mental Health Decline](#)

We know that sport is already making a significant contribution to Wales through the nation's Social Return on Investment Study.<sup>18</sup>

- £621m in annual health savings due to reduced instances of preventative illnesses through sport
- 113,000 cases of ill-health prevention through sport
- Impacts across Stroke, Type 2 diabetes, Breast cancer, Colon cancer, Hip Fractures and Chronic Heart Disease
- These impacts are delivered through both physical and mental health, and the mental health impact is significant across issues such as subjective wellbeing/positive outcomes for mental health and dementia

### **Key benefits**

- A significant, positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the Welsh population – no other intervention has the potential to be the nation's most effective preventative health tool
- A low-cost solution, capable of supporting all communities across Wales and protecting the scarce resources in the health service
- Tackle the impact of obesity, especially for young people, and reduce the future burden on health budgets
- Tackle health inequalities and improve people's physical and mental health
- Making the prevention of ill health everyone's business, by ensuring all budgets have a preventative category
- Creates stronger links between health and sport ensuring that people are equipped to avoid illness in the first place, are better prepared for surgery when that is required, and recover more quickly post-surgery

### **Key recommendation:**

Wales needs a whole school approach to young people's engagement in physical activity in, and around, the school day. This can be achieved through committing adequate resource to a 'Daily Active Offer', supporting the health and wellbeing of future generations.

### **Why this recommendation?**

The latest School Sport Survey<sup>19</sup> figures noted that only 39% of school age children are active three or more times a week. Furthermore, within a school environment the study captured that on average schools were providing only 93 minutes of curriculum based Physical Education a week - well below the recommended requirements. However, demand for more sport amongst children and young people is at a staggering 93% - that

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<sup>18</sup> [Sport Wales – Social Return on Investment of Sport in Wales](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Sport Wales – School Sport Survey 2022 \(PDF\)](#)

is 292,000 children in Wales seeking more opportunities to be active. We therefore know that our future generations have a desire to increase their activity levels, but the existing infrastructure and environment in and around the school day is not supporting that to take place.

### **The Daily Active**

The Daily Active offer is a cross-policy, multi-agency initiative to promote a whole-school approach to physical activity which will aim to shape how we can drive forward a revised and refreshed approach for schools, to improve opportunities for physical activity in and around the school day. Daily Active is structured around eight domains that create movement opportunities across and beyond the school day.

It is also a proposal that has significant support, backed by Sport Wales and Public Health Wales as national organisations responsible for sport and physical activity. Additionally, the Children's Commissioner's 2022-23 annual report recommended "The Daily Active Programme should commence without further delay."<sup>20</sup>

### **Key benefits**

Resourced correctly (at £3m per annum) the key benefits for pupils:

- Improved mental and physical health
- Improved resilience, confidence and social skills
- Improved school attendance and educational attainment
- Promotes equality and activity
- Teachers are better equipped to deliver the Curriculum for Wales
- Healthier School Environments
- Schools are better connected to the wider community, including local health and physical activity providers

### **Key recommendation:**

Wales needs a new National Centre for sport. A fit for the future National Centre will significantly enhance support for the general public, athletes, coaches, sports leaders, and national governing bodies of sport to realise their sporting ambitions, from grassroots to world stage.

### **Why this recommendation?**

The current Sport Wales National Centre has been a focal point for Welsh sport for over 50 years. It is the home of Sport Wales and many National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) and is the base of the Sport Wales Institute - where we provide support for our most talented athletes.

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<sup>20</sup> [Welsh Government Response to the Annual Report of the Children's Commissioner for Wales 2022-2023 \(PDF\)](#)

However, following extensive consultation, to go on supporting people in the future continuing to modify the facility is no longer a viable option. A review of comparable facilities across the UK nations, Ireland and further afield has identified Wales as a poor relation.

### **New National Centre**

The vision is to create a new centre that sets the benchmark for sports facilities in Wales - one that meets the needs of our stakeholders, and is fully inclusive in its design, development and operation, **“To be an environmentally sustainable beacon for Welsh sport, connecting individuals and organisations together in a sporting hub designed to foster a culture of excellence, innovation, learning, development and well-being.”**

The new Centre will continue to be the home/training/competition base for many of our Welsh NGBs, Sport Wales, and the Sport Wales Institute with significantly enhanced facilities, including the ability to host more national and international sport events in a purpose-built 3,000 seat indoor arena – an arena that’s primary use is sports events. An investment of circa £150m spread over 5 years will deliver significant benefits to Wales.

### **Key benefits**

Alongside the sporting benefits a new National Centre will deliver, there will also be a range of significant social and economic benefits:

- £180m social and economic benefit quantified in the business case
- Environmentally sustainable building
- Enhanced profile of Welsh sport internationally through increased sports events
- Wales hosting larger national and international events
- Fully inclusive facility with a key focus to promote para sports
- World leading athlete services for those competing on the world stage
- Purpose built training and competition facilities for athletes, coaches and members of the public