

**National Assembly for Wales**

**Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee**

**CELG(4) PS 16**

**Inquiry into participation levels in sport in Wales**

**Response from : Minister for Economy, Science and Transport**

I would like to thank the Committee for launching this inquiry into participation levels in sport in Wales and I am very pleased to be able to provide written evidence as part of the inquiry. It's been a remarkable year for Welsh sport which included Cardiff City's promotion to the Premier League and Swansea retaining its place, 2013 Rugby 6 Nations Championship winners and Welsh athletes bringing home a record haul of medals from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This outstanding year of sport has given the nation a significant boost and helps to inspire people of all ages to get involved and take part in sport.

The Committee has raised a number of areas for examination, the majority of which fall into the Minister for Culture and Sport's portfolio. This evidence therefore focuses only on the area of the inquiry that relates to my portfolio.

**The impact of the Olympic and Paralympic legacy, the Ryder Cup and other high profile Welsh sporting events and achievements on participation levels in Wales.**

*Event Wales – the Major Events Strategy for Wales 2010-2020* was launched in September 2010 and aims to build on the success of 'Team Wales' in delivering major international events such as the 2009 Ashes Test, 2010 Ryder Cup and pre-games training camps and football matches staged as part of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The vision is for Wales to be recognised as a consistently outstanding destination for major events with a mission to develop a balanced and sustainable portfolio of events which enhances Wales' international reputation and the wellbeing of its people and communities. In 2013/14 the Welsh Government is supporting 39 events across Wales – 20 sporting and 19 cultural.

There is no doubt that Major Events capture the imagination of people around the world and research has shown that they can provide significant economic benefits and improve the international reputation and profile of the host nation. There is also a growing recognition that major events have the power to inspire and engage diverse individuals and communities and to thereby enhance social, environmental and cultural wellbeing.

As illustrated by the examples in this submission, major events can provide a high profile platform to communicate positive messages and give people real life experiences that encourage healthier lifestyles and participation in sport. Mass participation sporting events can help to raise public awareness of the importance of regular exercise and can boost club and governing body membership numbers. For example, the Cardiff Half Marathon with support from the MEU in recent years, has grown to become the biggest mass participation sports event of any kind in Wales and one of the largest road races in the UK. Since 2008, the CHM has achieved a rapid growth in the number of race participants - from around 8,000 to 18,000 in 2012. The complementary aim is to increase the number of participants for the 'mass event' to 25,000, the number of spectators to 60,000 and to engage at least 800 volunteers by 2015. In doing so, the event will continue to build its position as a key Major and Signature Event for Wales with potential for further significant growth and development (including job creation opportunities) over the next few years.

Successful major events can also engage communities through local voluntary action, through participation as an event volunteer and through the live spectator experience in particular.

### **London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games**

The success of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games has helped to raise the profile of sport across Wales. Post London 2012, Sport Wales announced that the number of people playing sport in Wales has increased dramatically since

the Games. Swimming and boxing have seen rises of more than 30% in the six months after the Games, 30 new canoeing clubs had been set up to cope with the surge in demand and many other Olympic sports have reported significant increases in participation figures. But the challenge for us all is to ensure that we use large scale sporting events as a catalyst to help encourage people of all ages, gender and social groups to volunteer or take part in sport in such a way that is long term and sustainable.

The Olympic and Paralympic Games saw a huge demand from the Welsh public in applying to be official volunteers or London 2012 Games Makers. Some 3,500 people were interviewed in Wales. In addition, Cardiff Council recruited over 300 Host Council Ambassadors, representing Cardiff and Wales by welcoming visiting spectators and teams to the City for the 11 Olympic Football matches at the Millennium Stadium and 24 teams from all 5 continents that based themselves in Wales for Pre Games Training. This volunteering database is a live legacy example of the London 2012 Games and is being utilised for current and future major event volunteering opportunities hosted in and around the city.

Gemau Cymru is the flagship London 2012 sports legacy project in Wales. A Major Events Unit initiative supported by Sport Wales, the Urdd and the Governing Body Chief Executive Officer forum, Gemau Cymru is a national, bilingual Olympic-style inclusive school age multi sport competition which was launched in July 2011. Last year the event included 13 sports and attracted over 1,300 athletes from across Wales taking part in competitions in venues across Cardiff. The event was featured in a 30 minute programme broadcast by S4C and coverage on Channel 4 news, ITV news, BBC Wales, Radio Cymru, 5 Live, Prynawn da and Heno. 83 volunteers were trained and deployed in delivering the event which is unique in its public, private and third sector partnership. Gemau Cymru contributes significantly to the breadth and depth of the Wales wide sports competition programme for children of school age across a wide range of sports. The Major Events Unit and the Sports Policy Branch are working jointly to maximise the benefits of Gemau Cymru to promote and develop its long term impact and sustainability.

## **Ryder Cup**

Golf Development Wales was established as a result of Wales' successful Ryder Cup bid. It is the development arm of the Golf Union of Wales and is a strategic partnership between the Golf Union of Wales, the Golf Foundation and Sport Wales. The Ryder Cup Legacy Fund was created to ensure that staging the Ryder Cup had an impact on the nation, not just for the event but for many years to come. A £2m commitment from the Welsh Assembly Government, at the time, provided a first class opportunity to boost the development of the game in Wales. In total 40 projects were supported at 38 facilities across Wales. The year after the Ryder Cup about 33,000 people took part in Golf Development Wales schemes and junior membership in clubs increased, particularly amongst junior girls.

## **Major Events**

Certain sporting events are able to combine high profile elite sports competition with a mass participation event element (eg Tour of Britain Cycling Road Race, Cardiff Half Marathon and Ironman). The elite competition element delivers in terms of raising Wales' UK and international profile, while the mass participation element allows the event to become more financially sustainable and delivers in terms of tourism and economic impact in addition to the many social benefits including sports participation. Mass participation cycling events for example attract new audiences, volunteers and participants to the sport and compliment other Welsh Government strategies including tourism, sustainable transport and in improving the health of the population. Police estimated spectator numbers of 90,000 at the Welsh stage of the 2012 Tour of Britain when people lined the route from Welshpool to Caerphilly. Welsh Cycling uses the event to enhance the profile of cycling in Wales to help promote its schools programmes with various activities taking place along the route and in order to increase opportunities for wider and greater participation. The event requires the services of hundreds of local volunteers, race marshalls and officials and provides an exclusive chance for amateur cyclists to ride part of the stage ahead of the professionals.

Media coverage of major events also provide opportunities to communicate positive public messages and encourage participation. In 2012, the Tour of Britain road

cycling race was broadcast live on ITV4 in the UK with 460,000 viewers for the Welsh stage. Eight 60-minute evening highlight programmes told the story of the event attracting an average reach of 526,000 viewers per show. All major UK broadcasters (BBC, ITV, Sky News and Sky Sports) covered the event as well as BBC radio networks and all major broadsheet newspapers while the Tour of Britain website attracted almost 7 million page views. This level of media coverage will inspire and engage many people.

Wales will host the 2014 International Paralympic Committee Athletics European Championships in Swansea which will build on the momentum of the London 2012 Paralympic Games. In partnership with Sport Wales and the Major Events Unit, Disability Sport Wales is using the event to tackle barriers to inclusion in sport for disabled children and adults, promote sporting opportunities and the promotion of wider benefits in terms of more tolerant, inclusive and cohesive communities..

By working closely with key partners and stakeholders we aim to focus investment in events that can deliver economic returns and create jobs for Wales but can also deliver on social and particularly sports development outcomes linked to volunteering and increased participation and helping Wales to become a more active nation.

**Edwina Hart CStJ, MBE**

**Minister for Economy, Science and Transport**