

Dawn Bowden AS/MS  
Dirprwy Weinidog y Celfyddydau a Chwaraeon, a'r Prif Chwip  
Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1170  
Ein cyf/Our ref DB/10324/21  
Jack Sargeant MS  
Chair - Petitions committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff Bay  
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26 August 2021

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter regarding a petition for an independent review on the Football Association of Wales (FAW) tier 1 and tier 2 process in the Welsh Women's Leagues.

The restructure of the women's game is a matter for the FAW as the National Governing Body for football in Wales. Given that the FAW is an independent stand-alone body and is not funded by the Welsh Government or our sponsored body Sport Wales, it is not within our remit to have an independent review.

Whilst the Welsh Government works with all Sporting National Bodies in Wales to ensure our ambition is met for inclusive access to sport in Wales, we are unable to get involved in the governance of an independent body, but we are able to offer advice and guidance if needed. With that in mind, I have met with the FAW since the announcement of the restructure to get a better understanding of their plans and if any decisions will impact female participation within the sport.

In that meeting with the FAW, we discussed the process of the restructure, and how they came to determine which clubs would take their place in these new leagues, the FAW oversaw an open application process that involved two stages.

The first stage was an initial licence award where clubs provided evidence to show that they met the minimum criteria for each level; The second stage saw those successful clubs present their development plans to a panel made up of representatives from of the FAW, FAW Trust and an independent panellist from FIFA (Sue Ronan who is a technical expert, former international manager and head of women's football at FAI), who assessed clubs across seven key areas. Three of these were 'core' (attracting double marks) - Sporting (factoring in previous performance in the League), Financial Sustainability and Human Resources. During this process all clubs did not raise any concerns to the FAW.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Additionally the FAW set up an internal working group who met multiple times across the duration of the review and involved FAW and FAW Trust staff from across the following departments: Domestic, International, Football Development, Coach Education and Compliance. The FAW also worked closely with UEFA to look at best practice models from across Europe to help inform their decision making process. Externally, the FAW met with a number of clubs from various levels of the domestic game in Wales, and created an online player survey that was completed by 419 female players who currently play women's football in Wales or play in an U16s team. The survey provided key insight that helped shape the new structure.

I fully support the FAW's ambition and focus on developing and improving the women's game in Wales. However, when we met I made it clear my expectations are that the FAW should communicate more effectively in future, and should discuss the matter further with those clubs who feel that they have been adversely affected by the restructure, to discuss concerns and ensure that support is put in place.

The FAW has given me a commitment that it will do everything it can to support the clubs and players affected by the changes, and to engage more closely and proactively with Members of the Senedd and the Welsh Government in future. I have also asked officials to continue to have dialogue with the FAW to update me going forward. Following my meeting with the FAW I released a written statement on this matter which has been published on the Welsh Government website [here](#).

I hope this answers your questions but I would be happy to provide you with any further information if required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dawn Bowden', written in a cursive style.

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