

**Evidence paper for the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage for the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee’s inquiry into the Welsh Premier League.**

I am very pleased to be able to give evidence to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee’s inquiry into the Welsh Football Premier League.

Football is an immensely popular game in Wales, watched and played by large numbers of people. It provides healthy exercise and enjoyment and can create a sense of national and community pride and prestige. Investing in sport can have a particularly positive impact on young people in many ways such as promoting good health, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour and helping them to develop a range of social skills which will help them in later life. Our Programme for Government policies demonstrate that we are committed to ensuring young people are able to access a range of sporting opportunities and that we continue to nurture talent to deliver sustained success in sport from grassroots to elite level.

In order to encourage grass roots participation in a range of sports, Sport Wales is supporting National Governing Bodies of Sport across Wales by investing over £6m this year. This includes over £800k which is allocated to the Welsh Football Trust. This funding is used to support coach education, increasing rates of participation and to nurture our more talented young players.

The detailed funding provided to support grassroots football over the last five years is:

Sport Wales Funding to Support Football: Exchequer Funding Only

		Data	
Sport	SCW Year (Award Date)	Count of Total Payments (All)	Sum of Total Payments (Paid)
FOOTBALL	2007/08	45	884281.48
	2008/09	55	947040.82
	2009/10	55	840492.74
	2010/11	37	1086119.7
	2011/12	4	965850
<b>Total</b>		<b>196</b>	<b>4723784.74</b>

SCW Year (Award Date)	Sport	Budget	Count of Total Payments (All)	Sum of Total Payments (Paid)
2007/08	FOOTBALL	Coaching Plan	1	52200
		NGB Development Support	1	738000
		Regional Grants	7	24031.98
		Sportsmatch	36	70049.5
	Total		45	884,281.48
2008/09	FOOTBALL	Coaching Plan	1	35500
		NGB Development Support	1	746514
		Regional Grants	29	60021.37
		Sportsmatch	24	105005.45
	Total		55	947,040.82
2009/10	FOOTBALL	Coaching Plan	1	25000
		NGB Development Support	1	735998
		Regeneration Challenge	1	5000
		Regional Grants	3	3048
		Sportsmatch	49	71446.74
	Total		55	840,492.74
2010/11	FOOTBALL	Coaching Plan	1	80000
		NGB Development Support	1	935000
		Regeneration Challenge	1	5000
		Regional Grants	2	34601
		Sportsmatch	32	31518.7
	Total		37	1,086,119.70
2010/11 Total				
2011/12	FOOTBALL	Coaching Plan	1	80000
		NGB Development Support	2	885000
		Sportsmatch	1	850
	Total		4	965,850
Grand Total			196	£4,723,784.74

This investment in football has supported the work of the Welsh Football Trust to:

- Support major increases in participation with over 8,000 additional players registered with the FAW over the last two years, over 1,000 of these are from BME communities and 750 are those with disabilities. There are now over 100,000 men and boys and over 6,000 women and girls registered as players with teams and these numbers are increasing each year.

- Help in recruiting over 6,800 extra qualified coaches over the last four years.
- Enable the Welsh Football Trust to implement a club accreditation programme which has helped to increase standards within junior football clubs and which has encouraged coaches to gain the necessary qualifications.
- Provide regional grants to support local football projects.
- Support the improved performance of the National under 16 squad when entering the Victory Shield.

The Welsh Premier League and the professional game in Wales do not receive any financial support from the Welsh Government.

The original targets involving our men's and women's international football teams contained within the Climbing Higher strategy (2005) were revised following the review of Elite Sport conducted in 2009. Sport Wales' Elite Sports Strategy published in 2010 recognised that although the performance levels of the national teams are of national significance, international success will be generated by FAW programmes and the professional football clubs that operate without any direct support from Sport Wales. The new targets set out in the Sport Wales Elite Sport strategy support the FAW's aspirations to improve Wales' position in the FIFA world rankings and UEFA continental rankings and to improve Wales' performances in World Cups and in European Championships at senior and age-group levels.

**Huw Lewis AM**  
**Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage**

**May 2012**

[Note: The Victory Shield is a competition for the under-16 teams involving the four home nations.]