

## Agenda Supplement – Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 4 – Tŷ Hywel

Meeting date: 30 March 2023

Meeting time: 09.30 – 13.30

For further information contact:

Lleu Williams

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

[SeneddCulture@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddCulture@senedd.wales)

## Hybrid – Papers to note: Allegations surrounding the Welsh Rugby Union

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Please note the documents below are in addition to those published in the main Agenda and Reports pack for this Meeting

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### 5.1 Allegations surrounding the Welsh Rugby Union

(Pages 1 – 22)

Attached Documents:

- Response from the Welsh Rugby Union regarding the Allegations surrounding the Welsh Rugby Union – 10 February 2023
- Letter to Sport Wales regarding the Allegations surrounding the Welsh Rugby Union – 17 February 2023
- Response from the Sport Wales Committee regarding the Allegations surrounding the Welsh Rugby Union – 2 March 2023
  - Annex 1: Sport Summit Agenda
  - Annex 2: Sport Summit Attendees
- Response from Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip regarding the Allegations surrounding the Welsh Rugby Union – 3 March 2023
  - Annex 1: Correspondence from Tonia Antoniazzi MP to the Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip – 9 May 2022



- Annex 2: Response from the Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip to Tonia Antoniazzi MP – 24 May 2022

Delyth Jewell MS, Chair  
Senedd Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations  
Committee

10 February 2023

Dear Delyth,

Thank you again for the opportunity to present to the Senedd Committee recently. Whilst this period has been extremely challenging for us, I hope you can appreciate that our intention is to accept and learn from the challenges we face, and to change the way that we work day to day, as well as renewing our governance, community and operational structures.

The Chair and I have been humbled by what we have heard, and the task we know we have ahead. In tackling some of the issues raised, we have received a great deal of challenge and advice from the Welsh Government and Sport Wales and you will know that progress has been made in appointing an independent Chair and outlining the terms of references of the external Taskforce.

We hope that further information can be published shortly and will keep the Committee up to date with details. We have also committed, of course, to return to the Committee to provide an update on progress in the interim and to provide specific information with regard to women's rugby and employment matters, which we include below.

I look forward to having more time to outline steps we have taken to invest in and develop rugby for women and girls across Wales over the last few years, and the progress made within the organisation to build a more inclusive and supportive staff environment.

## Women's Rugby

We made commitments to openness and transparency at the Committee, and I include as an attachment the recommendations made by the Women's Performance Mid-Term Review.

### Women's Performance Mid-Term Review

In 2021 we commissioned an independent review to consider what action was required to improve the provision for elite female players and address problems that had arisen within our international structures.

The review made very challenging reading for us as the WRU and described a committed squad of high-performance athletes frustrated by the support they were receiving, with failures in strategic and operational management, and not enough care, resource and encouragement for our international players to perform at their best.

The review report also made clear that we as a union had not ensured that our female players felt fully welcomed, valued and an equal part of our game.

The recognition of these serious failures as an organisation led to rapid changes, and of the 40 recommendations that were made as part of the review, most have been implemented in full, with further action required in other areas.

We have been heartened by the immediate positive outcomes, with the team achieving third place in the 2022 6 Nations tournament, but there is more to be done to build a professional, well-supported high-performance environment.

Whilst changes to management, investment in resources and new professional contracts have led to positive change, we recognise that considerably more needs to be done to ensure that women players at all levels receive the support they need to flourish and that we need to continue to change the way our organisation works day to day to be more inclusive.

I can only apologise again for the challenging environment and the personal impact it has had on the women involved.

You may also know that we have recently implemented changes in the community game following a review across all levels of the women's game and a widespread consultation process involving more than 1700 players, coaches, parents, stakeholders and collaborated with experts in varying fields including medical, physiological sport development, and other sectors.

The review looked at a range of areas to further support the growth of the female game in Wales and ensure that there is equitable and sustainable rugby provision for women and girls.



# THIS IS OUR GAME. THIS IS WELSH RUGBY. DYMA'N GÊM NI. DYMA RYGBI CYMREIG.

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The review covered broad aspects of the game, including season and competition structure, formats of the game and measures that could be put in place to help Welsh rugby structures to adapt to improve the female player pathway and support player development. It also covered issues such as training schedules, facilities and changing rooms, representation, attitudes and support from within the wider rugby community.

Key recommendations of the review were that the playing pathways girls and women were adapted and progressed, with changes to competition structures and further development of the community-based Female Hubs and further changes to the senior domestic competition.

We are delighted that the women's game in Wales has recently grown significantly, with an increase of more than 50% in regular female players since community rugby restarted in 2020. There are now 37 Female Hubs all over Wales, with 5000 women and girls registered, and with teams from under 7s to under 18s and senior women.

We have invested in the women and girls' game at all levels and have reviewed our playing opportunities and competitive pathways to adapt to the needs of our young people as we develop, grow, and protect the game in Wales. We have grown the number of Female Hubs, reviewed the playing framework for girls and our Hub Officers provided a diverse range of competitions, events and festivals for girls across Wales.

Our objective is to engage 10,000 women and girls in regular rugby activities by 2026, while enhancing the opportunities for girls within the pathway across all ages. I look forward to outlining in more detail our plans for growing the number of women and girls across rugby and building a union that we can all be proud of.

## **Employment and Staff Welfare**

You also asked us to specifically respond with regard to employment settlements and grievances in relation to the allegations of poor behaviours described in the recent programme. The Committee are right to highlight that we should not wait until the Taskforce completes its work before we make changes, specifically to ensure that our staff feel safe, supported and valued, and that we tackle incidents and behaviours in a robust and consistent matter.

I have previously written to you to outline how we have invested in new procedures and enhanced and restructured our human resources team, with a particular focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The HR Team has sought external expertise to provide advice and support in reviewing all of our people policies in 2022, which includes our EDI, whistleblowing and grievance policies, to ensure these are as robust as possible. This period of challenge has made us doubly committed to develop an every day working culture that is professional, inclusive and welcoming.



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DYMA'N GÊM NI. **DYMA RYGBI CYMREIG.**

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The WRU employs some 224 staff directly, whilst there are 430 in the wider WRU Group, which includes Principality Stadium staff.

Whilst the Committee asked us about non-disclosure agreements specifically, we will often use these as part of commercial agreements. Settlement or compromise agreements are used from time to time when ending employment for a variety of reasons. In providing the relevant information and as requested by the Committee we have considered settlement agreements in relation to allegations of sexism, racism and homophobia.

The WRU Group has entered into a settlement agreement on four occasions in the last five years in relation to a grievance that had been raised in relation to these issues. Two or three of the four settlement agreements relate to the issues that might come under the remit of the Taskforce review. I am sure you will understand that for a number of reasons, I cannot provide any further detail of the specific cases but we would of course be happy for those who have entered into settlement agreements to participate in the Taskforce review if they so wished.

The WRU Group has been in receipt of six grievances in the last five years that relate to either sexist, racist or homophobic behaviour. With regard to procedures that have been concluded, three members of staff have been subject to disciplinary action following allegations of sexist, racist or homophobic behaviour.

Changing culture takes time, but we are determined to do it, and in addition to the work of the Taskforce, we are looking again at immediate things that we can do and have done to support our staff.

Please do let me know if you require any further information. I can confirm that we have no amendments to make with regard to the published transcript of the Committee proceedings.

I will copy this letter to the Deputy Minister for her information, and I look forward to continuing our dialogue.

Yours sincerely,



**Nigel Walker**  
**Interim Chief Executive Officer**

Baroness Grey-Thompson  
Chair  
Brian Davies  
Acting Chief Executive Officer  
Sport Wales

17 February 2023

### **Allegations surrounding the Welsh Rugby Union**

Dear Tanni and Brian

Thank you for attending the Committee's meeting on 14 February 2023. The Committee, as ever, is grateful to you for your time to discuss this important issue. At the end of the meeting I advised that I would write to you to follow up on some matters raised during the meeting. These are outlined below.

#### **Inclusive sport system summit**

During the meeting, you noted that Sport Wales held a summit in December 2022 about promoting inclusive sport. The Committee would be grateful if you could provide a list of the organisations who attended that summit, as well as the agenda for it.

#### **Allegations of inappropriate behaviour in other sports**

The Committee would welcome an outline of the number of complaints or reports related to alleged misogyny, sexism, racism or homophobia received by Sport Wales involving other national governing bodies from the previous five years. This should include any assessments made by Sport Wales of any pattern to these allegations, and any action taken by Sport Wales.

#### **Intervention powers**

During the meeting, the role and power of Sport Wales to intervene in such instances was discussed extensively. The Committee would be grateful if you could outline in what circumstances Sport Wales would restrict the funding it provides to national governing bodies. Could you please outline what conditions are attached to the funding Sport Wales provides to national governing bodies?

I would be grateful if you could provide a response by 12.00 on Friday 3 March 2023.

Yours sincerely



Delyth Jewell MS  
Committee Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

**Sport Wales National Centre**

Canolfan Genedlaethol Chwaraeon Cymru

Sophia Gardens | Gerddi Sophia

Cardiff | Caerdydd

CF11 9SW

0300 3003123

[www.sport.wales](http://www.sport.wales) | [www.chwaraeon.cymru](http://www.chwaraeon.cymru)

Acting CEO | Prif Weithredwr dros dro: Brian Davies  
Chair | Cadeirydd: Baroness, Y Farwnes Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE, DL

Delyth Jewell MS  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

Dear Chair,

Thank you for your letter dated 17<sup>th</sup> February, as well as the opportunity earlier in that week for Sport Wales to appear before the committee to discuss these important issues. I am grateful to be able to provide a response to the committee's follow up questions, as well as to reaffirm some points made in our initial evidence.

To reiterate some of the evidence we previously provided, Sport Wales is not a regulator; however, we have robust monitoring arrangements. These include the capability framework, the self-assessment protocols, and the ability to financially audit and instigate governance reviews. We also monitor our partner networks delivery against the funding requirements as an ongoing practice through each partner's relationship manager. Where concerns do get raised, we may act as an intermediary, signposting individuals to the relevant contacts for resolution, or offering to facilitate solutions through mediation.

In terms of the specific questions raised in your letter I am happy to attach a list of organisations who attended the Sport Summit referenced at the committee. I would ask the committee to note that organisations would have, in many instances, had multiple representatives in attendance. I am also happy to have attached the summit overview agenda for the committee's information.

In relation to requests for any complaints we have received in the past 5 years, there have been two formal complaints received by Sport Wales. As confirmed within our evidence to the committee, Sport Wales is not a regulator for National Governing Bodies (NGB) and does not have regulatory powers. In these instances however we did offer to mediate as a way of supporting compromise and reconciliation on the issues that had been raised.

Given it is not the role of Sport Wales to act as a regulator it is therefore possible, and indeed likely, there have been other issues in the sport sector, but that individuals or groups would not bring these directly to Sport Wales given our limited role in responding to direct complaints. There would be other avenues more appropriate for the individual specific complaints.

We do work with all of our partner network on their governance to support the focus on equality within an organisation, and as also noted in our committee appearance, will deal with any matters we are made aware of on a case-by-case basis.

It should also be noted that, whilst not formal complaints, Sport Wales is periodically tagged into individual complaints on social media that are directed at National Governing Bodies and other sport organisations. For the most part these require no follow up but on occasion we will make the relevant personnel aware of issues that have been picked up.

Further to the above, I can also confirm that we are working proactively on issues of equality in our broader sector leadership role. This includes for example the joint Home Councils Tackling Racism and Race Inequality in Sport (TRARIIS) Review, and the subsequent recommendations and actions that emerged from this. Details of that can be found here <https://www.uk sport.gov.uk/news/2021/06/23/tackling-racism-and-racial-inequality-in-sport-review>

Other activities include the collaborative approach to developing the UK Sports Council Guidance for Transgender Inclusion in Domestic Sport, or our ongoing partnership with the International Working Group (IWG) on Women & Sport.

Finally, the circumstances in which Sport Wales wouldn't fund an NGB would include (i) clear and obvious fraud; (ii) misuse of public funding; (iii) insolvency and (iv) repeated failure to meet funding requirements / conditions. There have been instances where funding has been withheld in the past, indeed notice has been given to the WRU that future improvements in relation to governance would be required to ensure public funding is forthcoming. Sport Wales recognise that in most instances an NGB is dependent on public funding and is committed to helping partners improve. In line with our evidence, we would reiterate that we are also conscious of the need to work with our partner network and support their improvements in a way that helps the wider sport succeed. This may mean that short of withdrawing funding Sport Wales may amend the way we financially support partners e.g., monthly payment on receipt of expenditure or quarterly payments with specific conditions of grant added in to reflect emerging concerns.

The conditions placed on partners would universally apply to the above expectations of use of public money. Each grant is also subject to the Sport Wales terms and conditions of grant, which can be accessed here. [Sport Wales Terms and Conditions of Grant | Sport Wales](#). However, there will also be bespoke conditions specific to individual partners in line with the size, scope and reach of their sport and where Sport Wales and the NGB in question can best collaborate to make a difference.

Yours Sincerely,



Brian Davies  
Acting Chief Executive  
Sport Wales



Baroness Grey-Thompson  
Chair  
Sport Wales

## 8 December

### The day at a glance

#### Morning:

**9.30am – Guests to arrive**

**10.15am - Welcome address - Dawn Bowden MS, Deputy Minister.**

**10.35am - Panel discussion** with Manon Rees O'Brien (Actif North Wales), Alastair Dixon (Canoe Wales), Claire Lane (Streetgames), Owen Lewis (Sport Wales), Jac Chapman (Young Ambassador).

This session will provide an opportunity to think about who might be best placed to understand the needs of the public, who might be best placed to deliver on that need, and who might be best placed to facilitate the delivery. The panel will explore the question of if the current thinking and ideas that any one partner is best placed to do all those things. The session will consider how the sector might better work collaboratively with different organisations playing the role they are best placed to play, and how focussing on doing fewer things better, in order to work collaboratively, could contribute to an inclusive sport system.

12.05pm - Workshops Guests will be invited to one of three workshops or a networking opportunity

**Lunch:** 12.40-1.30pm

#### Afternoon:

**1.40pm - Keynote – Per Tøiern, Sport Norway**

This keynote will provide an opportunity to understand how sport in Norway has developed and how everyone involved is contributing to the Vision of Joy of Sports for All

**2.50pm - 2nd workshop** Guests will be invited to one of three workshops or a networking opportunity

**3.35pm - 3rd workshop** Guests will be invited to one of three workshops or a networking opportunity

#### **4.15 - Closing remarks – Sport Wales Chair, Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson**

Workshops are:

##### **4) Who is best placed to drive change?**

Lisa O’Keefe Secretary General IWG for Women In Sport

This workshop will feature a short presentation and Q&A session from the floor with the new Secretary General of the International Working Group (IWG) for Women in Sport. The session will outline the priorities for the 4-year UK hosting period of the group as a catalyst for a discussion exploring who is best placed to drive change against the priorities on equality, diversity and inclusion. What is the role of organisation and individuals in the system and where can they make the biggest impact? How can national and regional organisations lead the case for change.

##### **5) Who is best placed to understand need?**

Jo Goodwin, Head of User Centred Design - CDPS  
Justin Coleman, Levelling the Playing Field

This workshop aims to help guests explore how to create an Inclusive Sport System by understanding people’s needs. How good are we at understanding need? What do we need to do to engage well? How do we understand people’s need and respond to these? Most importantly, who is best placed to understand need? This workshop will share case study examples to help provide a focus to answer some of these questions and share examples of where some organisations are putting the user at the heart of their approach.

##### **6) Who is best placed to deliver against need, once understood?**

Chris Davies, Parkrun  
Andy Newman, Dragon Athletic  
Gary Lewis Urdd

It aims to help guests explore how to maximise opportunities within an Inclusive Sport System, by understanding the consumption of sport in the current climate. How have alternative offers within sport been able to meet demand, and cater for unmet needs, or adapted based on understanding the needs of people? This roundtable discussion will look at how alternative approaches to engaging participants can build important partnerships. Topics for discussion will include examining membership opportunities, consumer trends, new deliverers of sport and how they actively use insight and horizon scanning to meet people’s needs and create exciting and in demand offerings.

Organisation Name
Sported
Cricket Wales
Women's Equality Network Wales
Actif North Wales
Wales Netball
Sport Wales
The Outdoor Partnership
Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team Wales
Boys' & Girls' Clubs of Wales
SportWorks
Wales Golf
Sport Wales
Senedd Cymru
Swansea City Foundation
FAW Youth Council
Street Football Wales
Llamau
StreetGames
Welsh Sports Association
Welsh Cycling
Cardiff Met University
Welsh Government
Tennis Wales
Caerphilly County Borough Council
Swim Wales
Welsh Institute of Performance Science
Welsh Rowing
Crowdfunder UK
RYA Cymru Wales
Office Of The Future Generations Commissioner For Wales
Pembrokeshire Leisure
Cardiff City FC Community Foundation
Disability Sport Wales
MonLife, MCC
Youth Sport Trust
FAW
Mental Health Foundation
Cymru Football Foundation
Ospreys Rugby
Show Racism the Red Card Wales
Cardiff And Vale Health Board
Welsh Orienteering Association
Active Merthyr
Welsh Boxing
Badminton Wales
Welsh Triathlon
ColegauCymru

Ceredigion County Council
BowlsWales
Newport Live
Cardiff City FC Foundation
Aneurin Leisure Trust
Swansea Bay Orienteering Club & Welsh Orienteering Association
HM Prison service
Swansea Council
Commonwealth Games Wales
Snowsport Wales
Welsh Athletics
Disability Sport Wales
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
Squash Wales
Black Swimming Association
Swansea University
Welsh Institute of Physical Activit, Health and Sport
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
Carmarthenshire County Council
Canoe Wales
Basketball Wales
International Working Group on Women And Sport
The Ability People
Welsh Gymnastics
Table Tennis Wales
AKD Solutions
Dragon Athletic Gymnasium
Parkrun
Urdd Gobaith Cymru
UDOIT Dance Foundation



Ein cyf/Our ref: DB/0064/23

Delyth Jewell MS  
Chair  
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee  
[SeneddCulture@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddCulture@senedd.wales)

3 March 2023

Dear Delyth,

Thank you for your letter of 3 February following my evidence session regarding the Welsh Rugby Union. In your letter you ask several follow-up questions.

**Could you explain how the Welsh Government interacts with Sport Wales to raise concerns and address matters of concern in a national governing body which is subject to such toxic allegations?**

As with other Welsh Government Sponsored Bodies in my portfolio, the working relationship between the Welsh Government and Sport Wales is managed according to the principles set out in the Framework Document. This includes formal bi-annual meetings with the Chair and Chief Executive of Sport Wales, and formal Quarterly Monitoring Meetings between my officials and the Sport Wales Executive Team. There are also more regular informal discussions on a weekly basis.

Issues of the nature raised in the BBC Wales Investigates programme are seldom, if ever, raised directly with me or my officials, as they are usually resolved between the NGB (National Governing Body) and complainants themselves. To be clear, Sport Wales did not raise any concerns relating to the WRU or the issues raised directly in the BBC Investigation with either myself or my officials.

If an issue requires escalation, then I, or my, officials will raise it directly with Sport Wales and the NGB themselves, where appropriate, depending on the nature of the issues raised. This is the course of action I have taken since the BBC Wales Investigates programme on 23 January in convening a group and working alongside the WRU and Sport Wales to initiate the external investigation now being chaired by Dame Anne Rafferty.

Of the matters highlighted in the BBC documentary, I was aware of allegations involving Ms Wathan (though not by name and without any details) that was subject to an ongoing employment tribunal. I was also aware of the comments made by the outgoing WRU Board member, Amanda Blanc, that were reported in the press and in the public domain. I was not

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

[Gohebiaeth.Dawn.Bowden@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Dawn.Bowden@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Dawn.Bowden@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Dawn.Bowden@gov.wales)

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.

aware of the other allegations highlighted in the documentary and no other formal allegations or complaints were made to the Welsh Government, other than unspecific and unnamed allegations raised by Tonia Antoniazzi MP with me directly and her comments made in the UK Parliament.

**Are you able to outline any power you may have to restrict funding, including any Welsh Government sponsorship, to a national governing body where you have serious concerns about activity that has alleged to have happened, especially when those concerns have also been raised in formal correspondence with you?**

There is an expectation that organisations in receipt of Welsh Government funding through Sport Wales will meet the principles of its Capability Framework. The Capability Framework is built around key governance areas and focuses on the importance of behaviours, ethics and integrity within an organisation. Organisations which do not comply with the Framework may have their funding withdrawn or curtailed by Sport Wales. A link to the Capability Framework is available [here](#).

Following an assessment against the Sport Wales Capability Framework that had highlighted areas for improvement at the WRU last year, I was aware that the WRU had been prompted to undertake a review of its governance last summer which was aimed at addressing important issues, such as the composition of its Board. I have not had sight of this assessment or the governance review but these did not identify the scale of the issues covered by the BBC Investigation. I am aware that a recent audit by Deloitte into Sport Wales's partner compliance methods, including its Capability Framework, received 'significant assurance' rating, but I will be discussing with Sport Wales how further additions or improvements could be explored in ensuring the process and oversight is as robust as possible.

**Could you provide us with a breakdown, in chronological order, of when issues were raised with you and when, and any actions taken including all meetings with the WRU? We would be grateful if this could include information relating to the meeting when your official was allowed to read a copy of the Review into Women's Rugby for twenty minutes, and what actions resulted from this.**

It is important to reiterate again that the BBC Wales Investigates programme on 23 January was the first time I, or my officials, were aware of the extent and the detail of the issues raised and the named individual involved. I was aware of matters that were in the public domain (as outlined above, the ongoing Wathan case and the Amanda Blanc comments) but I was unaware of any detailed allegations, other than unspecific and unnamed allegations raised by Tonia Antoniazzi MP with me and in the public domain.

The table in Appendix A sets out the information you request, including several matters relating to the women's game and governance at the WRU which were already in the public domain. The Committee is already aware of the meetings I have had with the WRU since 23 January.

For completeness, there were two additional emails sent by Tonia Antoniazzi MP to my constituency address on the same subject that were of part of our ongoing informal discussions at the time.

The Committee should note that, alongside these formal meetings, there were other informal discussions between the WRU and myself / officials when attending events (e.g. Women's World Cup in New Zealand) about the development of the women's game, investment in its development, transgender policy, and governance (independent chair, Board composition etc.).

The Committee should also note that during the time that these matters were in the public domain:

- I had only one formal communication on the issue, which was from Tonia Antoniazzi MP in May 2022.
- I had no tabled oral questions, written questions or correspondence on the issues from any Members of the Senedd
- No statements on the issues were requested of me by any Member of the Senedd during Business Questions
- No oral questions on the issues were tabled for the First Minister
- No MPs (other than the one from Tonia Antoniazzi) wrote to me about the issues
- No rugby clubs, rugby regions or members of the public wrote to me about the issues
- No questions were raised of me or the WRU by the Senedd CCWLSIR, nor, to my knowledge, were there any discussions in the CCWLSIR about all the issues that were in the public domain prior to the BBC investigates programme on 23 January 2023.

**We would welcome copies of the correspondence you received from Tonia Antoniazzi MP in relation to this matter, and any formal response issued. Could you also outline what advice was provided to you by officials when you received this correspondence?**

A copy of the e-mail I received from Tonia Antoniazzi MP is attached as an Appendix B to this letter, along with my response.

The advice from my officials set out the key points in the e-mail, which were concerns about a culture of sexism within the organisation and archaic governance structures which prevented accountability of the NGB. The advice also noted that no specific allegations had been made in the correspondence, and that a sex discrimination case was ongoing through an employment tribunal and due to be heard in autumn 2022.

Finally, for the record, I would like to add a point of clarification to one of my answers given in the evidence session. Having reviewed the transcript, I realise that did not fully answer the question you asked.

At paragraph 274, you asked "...could you confirm Minister, did you have any contact with Amanda Blanc before her resignation about these issues?" In the following paragraph I answered "No".

It was correct to say that I did not speak to Amanda Blanc about any of these issues, but in the interests of completeness, I would like to add a point of further clarification. Following a conversation with Tonia Antoniazzi MP, I did attempt to speak with Ms Blanc in April 2022, but failed to reach her. I left a message explaining the limitations of any discussion with her unless her contact was made formal. She responded with a message to advise that she did not wish to take up the offer of a conversation. I had no further contact with her.

Yours sincerely



**Dawn Bowden AS/MS**

Dirprwy Weinidog y Celfyddydau a Chwaraeon, a'r Prif Chwip  
Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and **Page 15**

DATE	ISSUE
25/11/2021	Amanda Blanc announced her decision to resign from the Board of the WRU, and as Chair of the Professional Rugby Board. No reasons were given for her resignation.
16/12/2021	I met with the former Chief Executive of the WRU, the WRU Community Director, WRU Performance Director and captain of the Women's National Team to discuss Women's rugby in Wales, the report into match-day experience following the 2021 Autumn Internationals and the proposed CLBILS loan
02/02/2022	I met with the former Chief Executive of the WRU to discuss the match-day experience ahead of the 2022 Six Nations, the proposed CLBILS loan and travel issues relating to fixtures in South Africa.
03/03/2022	Tonia Antoniazzi MP raised the WRU's report into the women's game during the St David's Day debate in the House of Commons, and called for its publication.
24/03/2022	<p>The Daily Mail published an article referring to allegations of sexism and misogyny, and to an ongoing Employment Tribunal. The story is picked up the following day by the Western Mail.</p> <p><a href="https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/sportsnews/article-10645119/Welsh-Rugby-Union-turmoil-rape-joke-Hitler-jibe-amid-claims-misogyny-sexism.html">https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/sportsnews/article-10645119/Welsh-Rugby-Union-turmoil-rape-joke-Hitler-jibe-amid-claims-misogyny-sexism.html</a></p>
29/03/2022	I met with Tonia Antoniazzi to discuss a range of issues relating to the loan we had agreed with the WRU, the progress in the women's game/report and improvements still needed and the recently published transgender guidance from the sports councils across the UK and the potential issues rugby faced with it.
30/03/2022	I met with the former Chief Executive of the WRU to discuss the CLBILS loan, the women's game/report, the consultation on mixed rugby and a review of the match-day experience following the conclusion of the 2022 Six Nations.
17/04/2022	<p>The former Chief Executive of the WRU responded to the allegations raised in the Daily Mail article.</p> <p><a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/rugby-union/61126215">https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/rugby-union/61126215</a></p>
29/04/2022	My official was handed a paper copy of the report into the women's game for around 20 minutes whilst attending a meeting with the former Chief Executive at the Principality Stadium. His summary of the report, whilst acknowledging he did not have sufficient time to read the report in full, was that the primary focus of the report and its recommendations was on the management and the playing side of women's rugby and did not relate to cultural issues more generally at the WRU.

09/05/2022	I received formal correspondence from Tonia Antoniazzi MP, which raised in general terms, her concerns about deep-rooted sexism and misogyny at the WRU, and an outdated governance model which was hindering accountability. Two emails raising the same issue were sent to my constituency address and were not responded to as I was responding in full to the formal correspondence.
28/05/2022	I responded to Tonia Antoniazzi MP by letter notifying her I hadn't received specific details of any cases and that stated that any individual or groups wishing to raise complaints or concerns should follow the organisation's complaints or whistleblowing processes in the first instance, before deciding whether or not to escalate matters further.
15/06/2022	Amanda Blanc expanded on her decision to resign from the Board of the WRU and as Chair of the Professional Rugby Board, saying that she was not being listened to and that the governance of the WRU needed modernisation.
13/12/2022	The BBC reports that the WRU and its former general manager of women's rugby, Charlotte Wathan, have reached an "amicable resolution" regarding claims of sexual discrimination, leading to the employment tribunal case being withdrawn.
11/01/2023	I met with the former Chief Executive and recently elected Chair of the WRU for a wide-ranging discussion which covered governance and the review, funding, matchday experience, WRU Transgender policy, Sport Wales Investment model, Investment in women's rugby, and Business Rates revaluation.

## Letter from Tonia Antoniazzi MP



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## Response to Tonia Antoniazzi MP's Letter



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Dear Dawn,

I am writing to you formally, in your capacity as the Minister for Sport to raise grave concerns I have about the Welsh Rugby Union. There is a deep seated culture of sexism within the WRU which I am afraid will soon become public and that will paint the Welsh Government and those that fund the WRU such as the sponsors and Sport Wales in a negative light. I am concerned that the WRU are not held to account for their behaviour and for their actions as their governance system is archaic and this has resulted in problems within the institution not being dealt with properly and transparently. We have seen this in the review of women's rugby which was completed last year. This document has not been published and there has not been an apology to women who have played and that are playing currently for the way in which they have failed to be the custodians of the game that they had set out to do when they took over the management of the women's game.

My concerns are reflected in the resignation of Amanda Blanc from the WRU Executive Board, after only seeing out 2 of her 6 year tenure. Amanda is the current CEO of Aviva and one of the United Kingdom's high achieving women. Concerns also have been raised anonymously in the media, you may have seen the report in the Daily Mail in March regarding a sex discrimination case which is to be brought in front of a judge in the early autumn. These are only two of a number of cases that have been brought to my attention. I have been unable to speak to and contact the other women myself, but I am very aware of someone in the media having built a comprehensive list of women who are all prepared to go public. From within the WRU, I have spoken to 3 people who have shared my concerns and more concerningly confirmed what I already knew about the organisation.

This is not just a case of one or two people having a spat with the WRU, this is a huge problem on the scale of racism in Yorkshire cricket. I am asking you to speak to these individuals in confidence in order to collaborate the concerns I have raised in this email. As an ambassador of a local girls hub, I have a duty as their MP to ensure that the mistakes of the past and present do not hinder the future careers of women and girls in rugby, and that they are safe to work in the world of rugby and play the sport that they love.

I look forward to hearing from you soon,

Best wishes  
Tonia

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

Ein cyf/Our ref DB/00277/22  
Tonia Antoniazzi MP  
Member of Parliament for Gower

tonia.antoniazzi.mp@parliament.uk

24 May 2022

Dear Tonia

Thank you for your correspondence dated 9 May 2022 raising a number of concerns regarding the Welsh Rugby Union.

There have been recent positive developments in the women's game in Wales to address longstanding issues. However, I am very clear that this is only the beginning of the journey. The WRU still has much to do and I expect them to continue to build on this progress leading to this year's World Cup and beyond. It will be an area I will continue to press for improvements in my discussions with the Chief Executive, and others.

My understanding is the foundation for many of these recent changes we have seen in the women's game have been driven by the review undertaken last year. Whilst I have not seen the report directly, I recognise the concerns raised about the report not being made public and I have engaged with the WRU to understand their approach. It is my understanding that it was always intended to be an internal report to allow consultees and the authors the freedom to be candid in their views of the issues and the changes needed in the women's game. A public-facing report may not have reached the same conclusions and to release the report now may betray the confidences of those involved. However, in moving the game forward, it is critical that the WRU demonstrates that the approach it is taking is being developed with players and stakeholders and that their actions reflect that partnership working.

Whilst I am unable to comment on an ongoing employment tribunal, we should be very clear that any individual or groups wishing to raise complaints or concerns should follow the organisation's complaints or whistleblowing processes in the first instance, before deciding whether or not to escalate matters further.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

[Gohebiaeth.Dawn.Bowden@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Dawn.Bowden@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Dawn.Bowden@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Dawn.Bowden@gov.wales)

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.

I have not received any direct representations on any such concerns you highlight.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dawn Bowden'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping tail.

**Dawn Bowden AS/MS**

Dirprwy Weinidog y Celfyddydau a Chwaraeon, a'r Prif Chwip  
Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip