

November 2024

Annwyl Cadeirydd,

We write, following our appearance at the Committee on Wednesday 9 October. Please see the answers to your questions below.

- **Welsh Government funding of Sport Wales has reduced by 9% in real terms since 2014-15. How have the requirements placed on Sport Wales by the Welsh Government changed over this time?**

The quoted real terms cut for Sport Wales at 9%, includes both Capital and Revenue income. This total expenditure figure masks the true impact on sport's ability to make a difference. In fact, revenue funding has been cut by 40% since 2010 and such a significant decrease in revenue investment of course means that the sector is less likely to be able to achieve the requirements made of it.

Whilst we welcome the very recent capital investment from Welsh Government, there is a need for consistent and ideally increasing amounts of matching revenue investment into sport as well, ensuring that not only are our facilities throughout Wales fit for purpose but also impactful and sustainable. Our latest remit letter has been a term of Government letter which is welcome because it identifies what is set out for us for the five years of this current Senedd; however the remit has not been amended to meet the decrease in funding we faced in this last financial year, and given that cut was significant, that has presented difficult decisions and increasing challenge.

We are grateful to the sector for its ability to work in an agile way and collegiately as we tried to ensure that only the smallest cut of funding was passed on to our partners.

- **How has the Welsh Government's approach to using sport as a public health measure changed in the last decade?**

There have been several good examples over the past decade where sport has been used either as a rehabilitative measure, or as a method of social prescribing. However, sport's potential ability to be a significant preventative health measure is not always realised. For example, within the Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales programme, though many of the priorities reference sport and physical activity, there is little done to ensure that the delivery of the priorities is joined up with the delivery in the sector. In the healthy environments section of the plan, the outcomes expected include 'an increase in people achieving the Chief Medical Officer's physical activity guidelines and significantly reduced sedentary behaviours across all ages'.

While we would highly commend this joined up approach from Government, looking across different portfolio areas to deliver better overall population health, it is unclear how the inputs of the plan such as 'increased investment into high quality play facilities which

are targeted at areas of high deprivation' are being aligned to the outcomes – when we know that since the pandemic inequalities gaps have continued to widen and though the picture improved slightly for adults' activity in the latest National Survey for Wales (2022-23), there is still only around 36% of adults in Wales who are active three or more times a week. In turn, this is one of the Future Generations' indicators, and it would be reassuring to see a joined up approach to policy which took account of the ambition and the actors which have the ability to make a difference in this space.

Before and during the pandemic the Wales Physical Activity Partnership (WPAP) between ourselves, Natural Resources Wales and Public Health Wales was referenced in a number of Government plans, and the partnership allowed us to work closely with those other bodies which could make a difference across policy areas. Sadly, due to the pandemic, a lot of the work which took place could not continue and though we look to work closely with these bodies, there is perhaps not the same agreed emphasis placed on the importance of our partnership.

We have good links with the health department in Welsh Government and work closely with them on delivering the 60+ Active Leisure Scheme, which has seen great progress on increasing activity in this age group within local authority leisure provision.

In terms of social prescribing, physical activity is often talked about as an important opportunity to get people more active and to support their mental health. The National Exercise Referral scheme is also pointed to as a success as a case in point.

During reshuffles this year, we were interested to note that twice, sport and culture were the responsibility of a full portfolio holder, which seems to denote a suitable level of importance given the presence at Cabinet. More recently, physical activity now sits with a Minister under the brief of health and separate to the Minister for Culture (which includes sport), neither with a seat at Cabinet.

In terms of the link between health and sport, under the Fifth Senedd, Sport sat within the health, social care and sport committee membership; though the Government's portfolios did not align, this gave an interesting perspective on portfolio alignment. We know that during this Senedd, the Welsh Government believes in sport as a preventative health tool, as this was referenced in their budget evidence for the last three years.

- **The Arts Council has called for culture and the arts to be made a statutory responsibility. What might be the impact of sport being made a statutory responsibility, for either the Welsh Government or local authorities?**

There are many requirements on local authorities already and we know that many of them face challenges in delivering against their existing obligations due to funding pressures and rising costs. Consequently, sport and physical activity is an area of policy where decisions to make cuts are often easier to take because of the lack of statutory status.

We know that sport and physical activity makes a huge difference to people's lives and reductions in opportunities for them to exercise or participate in suitable activities can have a huge detrimental effect on their mental and physical wellbeing. Therefore, any action which requires the Welsh Government and/or local government to think differently about sport and physical activity instead of it being a 'nice to have' would be beneficial to people across Wales.

- **To what extent has the Welsh Government used the importance placed on physical activity during the pandemic to drive an increase in sports participation?**

Unfortunately, the clear message that physical activity was the most important thing to do once a day during the early part of the pandemic, whilst very welcome, was also confused by the changes and variations in rules in participation across the UK. It would be helpful to see a similar strength of message about the importance of physical activity and the benefits on people's physical and mental health being a focus for Government policy post pandemic, as well as a focus on providing the resource for developing such opportunities for people to be more physically active.

- **A breakdown of the annual funding provided to national governing bodies.**

Please see 2024/25 funding at Annex 1.

Finally, Carolyn Thomas MS asked us to share our Social Return on Investment (SROI) statistics.

The work that was undertaken by the Sport Industry Research Centre (SIRC) at Sheffield Hallam University highlighted the wide reaching and significant impact that sport has annually on the health and well-being of the nation. In total [the SROI report](#) identified a conservative value of £5.98bn in social impacts generated through sport. This included an estimated £621m net saving to the health service in Wales through the prevention of an estimated 113,000 cases of ill-health. For every £1 invested in sport there was a £4.44 return, demonstrating the value of sport and the real concern any reduction in funding can have in reducing those impacts. This was the false economy of cutting sport that was referenced to the Committee.

Further to the publication of this SROI report, we also felt it was important to reshare the recently published [Economy Value report](#). This new insight has built on the evidence of the social return of sport with the quantifiable economic impact. The report, again produced by SIRC and is a collaboration between all the Home Sport Councils in the UK, UK Sport and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport at the UK Government. You will note that again the impact sport has nationally is substantive.

The study has showcased the massive contribution that sport makes to the UK economy, both directly via sport and in supporting wider industries such as construction, tourism

and hospitality services. The data shows that sport in Wales delivers £1.9bn in direct GVA alone whilst underpinning 38,345 direct jobs. When considering the impact on other sectors and indirect impacts, those figures rise to a staggering £2.9bn and 58,997 FTE roles.

Brian Davies OBE and Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson  
Sport Wales

