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Tuesday, 28 May 2025

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

Dear Delyth,

We write on behalf of our members, as representatives of Crys16, the Scarlets Supporters Trust. The Trust is a voluntary organisation established in 2006 to act as a voice for Scarlets supporters.

The Trust has 944 members and represents them through engagement with the club, the WRU and other key stakeholders. We are independent of the club; however, we do have observer status on the board of the Scarlets, attending board meetings as non-voting participants.

We wish to express our serious concern at the recent actions of the Welsh Rugby Union, which have imperilled the future of the club, with the consequent impact on its staff, supporters and the wider economy more generally.

The withdrawal of the Professional Rugby Agreement offer to the Scarlets and the reported intention to pursue a future with 3 professional teams in Wales, on unequal funding, was unexpected and unnecessary.

We're certain that you're aware of the huge sporting and cultural impact the Scarlets has had nationally and globally, and it remains one of the preeminent rugby brands anywhere in the world.

Despite hailing from a small town, the impact of the club has been disproportionate to its population and, indeed, the club has provided a regional as well as national impact culturally and economically, long before the advent of regional professional rugby, being a positive influence for Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and beyond.

The club has a positive impact on the local community through the work of the Scarlets Community Foundation, which delivers an array of programmes for children and the wider community throughout the year and interacts with tens of thousands of people annually, through their programmes. The Scarlets are an international ambassador for the Welsh language through their branding and heritage. It's a vital national resource that should be protected at all costs.



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The Trust welcomes the recent cross-party statement from local MPs, who met with senior Welsh Rugby Union officials on 23 May 2025. We hope this letter will assist them with these efforts and encourage the Senedd to also pursue this matter further.

Welsh Rugby Union's actions

Whilst we do not intend to reiterate the developments that have led to this situation, we do wish to raise some specific concerns about the Welsh Rugby Union's recent conduct in relation to these negotiations.

The Trust has endeavoured to engage with the Union throughout the negotiation process for the Professional Rugby Agreement (PRA), however this engagement has been piecemeal and inconsistent. When Abi Tierney started her role as CEO in January 2024, she promised these meetings would be held on a quarterly basis. However, there has only been one meeting between June 2024 and the current day.

Indeed, at a meeting of the Joint Supporters Group, an organisation representing the four professional clubs' supporters, on 30 April 2025, the WRU's Chief Executive, Abi Tierney, reiterated her commitment to maintaining four equally funded clubs in Wales.

The use of the media throughout these negotiations has been of concern to the Trust and the decision to release this news through the media late on the evening of 17 May, whilst many of the club's players and employees were known to be in South Africa, is highly questionable. This was following a 48-hour ultimatum issued on 8 May to sign the agreement, despite assurances still being sought by the club and with most of the players and staff in South Africa.

The actions of the Union must also be considered in the context of recent significant criticism relating to its conduct of negotiations relating to professional contracts in the women's game, which led to criticism from the Senedd's Sport Committee¹. In scrutiny before this Committee, the WRU committed to address these issues in the future, however the Trust would suggest that it is repeating past failings and not learning lessons on how to pursue negotiations.

The prospect that the Welsh Rugby Union could proceed with a solution that excludes the Scarlets or the Ospreys from its future is nonsensical to the Trust, given that the two are demonstrably the most successful clubs of the professional era, based on a wide range of criteria.

The administration of Cardiff Rugby has created a climate of financial uncertainty at a critical point in negotiating the new PRA and now the Union has chosen to exclude the two West Walian clubs. We do not consider this to be a reasonable course of action, given the financial

¹ Senedd, [Sport Committee: Allegations surrounding the Welsh Rugby Union](#), 28 November 2024



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difficulties facing Cardiff, as well as the lack of success of Dragons Rugby, despite 6 years of WRU ownership between 2017 and 2023.

Economic impact

As of January 2024, Carmarthenshire County Council has estimated that the club's local economic impact includes the direct employment of 161 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, plus 246 casual match or events staff². It's estimated that the club purchases from approximately 87 suppliers, many of whom are based in the local area.

Indeed, Carmarthenshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Resources described the club as "a huge part of the sporting, social and economic fabric of Carmarthenshire" and its presence in the community and as a tenant of Parc y Scarlets acts as "a catalyst for a considerable level of economic and social activity"³.

Indeed, projections from an independent report as far back as 2012 indicated that the presence of the club played a "pivotal role as an economic stimulus for the region", with a "direct contribution of £16.1m per annum into the local economy, which is set to grow to £32m a year by 2016"⁴. It's likely that this figure is at the very least comparable if not greater, now.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the club was one of only a handful of professional rugby clubs in the United Kingdom that recorded a profit in 2019-20⁵. With a fair funding deal, it has been demonstrated that the club can continue to be a resilient business, whilst maintaining competitiveness on the field.

All the evidence available indicates that the loss of the club from the local economy would be hugely damaging not only to the town of Llanelli, but to Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and beyond. The impact on suppliers and employees based throughout the region would be catastrophic. The loss of the club should also be considered as part of the wider economic context of the region, which has included the loss of Oakwood theme park, another major attraction for West Wales.

Next steps

The Trust would like to engage with you to help lobby the Welsh Rugby Union to alter its current course of action and protect a vital community and economic resource.

² Carmarthenshire County Council, [Cabinet Meeting](#), 29 July 2024

³ Carmarthenshire County Council, [Council approves restructure of Scarlets loan](#), 11 September 2024

⁴ Welsh Rugby Union, [Scarlets key to economic success in West Wales](#), 23 May 2012

⁵ BBC Sport, [Scarlets expect big losses after £35k profit in last financial year](#), 19 June 2021



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Following the cross-party statement from local MPs, who are pursuing this matter with the Welsh Rugby Union, we would encourage MSs to also join this effort. We believe that your Committee could play a vital role in scrutinising the Welsh Rugby Union's actions in this matter, given your previous interest and work in this area.

If the Committee is minded to pursue this work, the Trust is happy to assist by providing further information, as well as the perspective of affected supporters.

We look forward to working with you on this matter and anticipate your reply with interest.

Regards,
Crys16