

16 February 2026

## **WRU Board meeting to discuss the future of rugby in Wales**

For the attention of the Chair

I will try to be brief but think it is important to scrutinise the current actions of the WRU board to ensure that the right decision is made for the future of Welsh Rugby.

My expertise? Long time rugby fan (Neath, Pontypridd, Celtic Warrior and Ospreys).

As a regional/pro rugby fan me and many others could see this situation happening a mile off and have been warning and predicting this situation since before Covid.

This has happened for many reasons but predominantly the lack or misdirection of investment while the National side has been very successful.

Since the formation of the regions in 2003 the pro sides won numerous championships and had a good fan base and the Wales National team had unprecedented success, winning many six nations titles, grand slams, World Cup semi finals and achieving number 1 position in the World, my main generic question is 'how was this achieved and why can't this be replicated again with what we have currently got in place? If it is down to money then how do we make them product better and get more fans and how can the Welsh government support with the pathway/schools etc i.e helping with 4g pitches or training facilities?

### **Question on Future Structure**

If 3 teams are deemed to be the best way going forward then what data is this based on and why doesn't this go out to a proper tender process to achieve this. E.g number of clubs, players and supporters within an area, historic performance, facilities and infrastructure etc etc

What is frustrating people is that the WRU have publicly stated that we need to forget the past and present and reimagine a new future. Ospreys did this over 20 years ago by merging two successful historic clubs and rebranding as a new entity which has become famous and known across the rugby world. The others teams at the time did not do this and remained as Cardiff, Newport and Llanelli and alienated lots of fans - which to this day do not attend regional rugby. These are the

reimagined teams that the WRU will keep because of history.

The issue with merging sides and rebranding now, I believe will turn more fans away and the current stay away fans will still not buy into this.

### **Question on integrity**

I believe, and a lot think this way, that the way the board has conducted itself by 'selling' Cardiff to Y11 has been done underhandedly. There is an open letter doing the rounds that has highlighted some constitutional points regarding this conduct. I am happy to share but this was sent to many people including local MP's and Swansea Council.

How can a current owner of a regional side, be guaranteed rugby at another regional side(that the WRU board currently runs) unless future decisions had already been made (by the WRU board) to convince them to give up on their current side entirely?

This to me just solves the WRU problem of 3 teams without them having to make any decisions.

Surely the best interest of Welsh rugby is to sell to the other investors (the Hollywood group) so there's more new money in the game and ask the Ospreys owners Y11 to invest more (which the CEO Lance Bradley indicated at an Ospreys meeting that they were prepared to put another £2million in).

### **My Opinion**

If 3 sides are the way forward then put out a proper tender process with no pre conceived geographical regions (which the WRU have stated West, Cardiff and East) with specific requirements to bid against and do it transparently.

I believe the best solution is to retain 4 pro sides as is and focus on the pathway including schools and grass roots etc and maybe be supported financially by local or national government. On Sunday 16,000 tickets were unsold, probably over £1million of lost revenue plus the travelling, hotel and hospitality losses which maybe even double that.

I would have 2 main sides Ospreys in Swansea and Cardiff in the Capital as the two main higher funded teams (Swansea council has £5million ready to develop a centre of excellence and a new stadium) and the other two teams more development sides which would be less funded, Llanelli in the West and Newport in the east.

I would then incentivise them and provide more money based on KPI's like attendance, international caps, u20's and women's rugby participation and success etc and then reevaluate after 5 years.

This won't happen overnight but would mean we would keep the 4 pro sides and greater success and financial reward in the future would mean that funding could become more equal over time.

I would look at the success of 4 team Ireland (I get there is an economic difference but they were going to drop a team once) versus 2 team Scotland. They have not won anything Internationally for 26 years and they just seem to be happy beating England occasionally.

This is not who Wales are and won't to be.

A quick look at History for our tiny little nation with limited resources and rugby players is that we are only second to England for success in the Five/Six nations and have won just as many games and grand Slams as them.

Our players are world renowned and revered over many time periods and we don't want to lose that with data and stats.

Thank you

Matthew Lacey Rugby (Ospreys fan)