



Cricket Wales AGM – October 2021

CEO Report

- 1 It would be remiss of me to start this report without extending my sincerest congratulations and gratitude to the Executive team and Board of Cricket Wales who, through another challenging and uncertain year, have worked tirelessly to ensure that not only Cricket in Wales has survived, but, moreover, has thrived.
There is not, to my knowledge, any team sport in Wales who has seen its clubs, teams, sections and participant numbers grow against the backdrop of the pandemic. We have increased participation in cricket, by any measure, during the last 12 months – examples of which I will detail further in this report – and we should all be collectively extremely proud of our efforts and the positive outcomes for our sport.
- 2 We formally launched our *Inspiring Generations* strategy, in tandem and partnership with Glamorgan Cricket in April 2021 [Cricket Wales & Glamorgan Launch Inspiring Generations Strategy News | Cricket Wales](#). We also had the privilege of jointly presenting our ambitions and plans to the England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) Board of Directors at Sophia Gardens in September 2021, on which we received excellent feedback and encouragement.
- 3 We have continued our commitment to safeguard our places to play. Cricket Wales has helped Cricket clubs in Wales to secure over £2million, through various government, Sport Wales and ECB grants and loans schemes since the pandemic began. Despite extensive restrictions and lockdowns of some level in the early part of the calendar year, we did not lose any competitive cricket to Welsh Government restrictions, and our league seasons have been completed in as near a normal fashion as possible, with promotions and relegations returning. Congratulations to all who are going up and commiserations to those at the other end of the table.
We also managed to run a full central competition programme, with Swansea CC being crowned Men's Senior Welsh Cup Champions on a wonderfully special and sunny day at Pontarddulais CC in early September.
- Look out for a Women's Welsh Cup being launched in 2022...
We have also, I believe, continued to lead the way, in terms of guidelines production and communication, and in supporting clubs interpret the evolving laws and advice, and players return to the field and facilities with confidence.
- 4 We have also continued to significantly grow our digital following and output. We revealed a new brand and identity for Cricket Wales in January 2021, accompanied by a brand new website. I hope you feel we have engaged, entertained and informed in



equal measure and I would always welcome feedback on our social channels and digital offerings, to ensure we stay relevant to our members and stakeholders

- 5 As part of our wider endeavours to be a 'Digital First' organisation and sport, we have facilitated extensive training for clubs on the Play-Cricket platform. As well as being a helpful tool for match- and scorecard- management for clubs and leagues, the data contained within it will become increasingly critical to Cricket Wales and ECB – it is highly likely that the ECB will fund County Boards, at least in part, based on the participation recorded in the system in future years, therefore the more robust data we can show, and analyse, the better we will be able to support members.
- 6 Matt Thompson and his team formally delivered the first iteration of the new Regional Pathway structure, albeit with some amends and restrictions applied to both off-season training and the summer fixture programme, in light of the continuing challenges imposed by Covid and Welsh Government. In spite of the difficulties, and thanks to our Pathway Leads for their immense commitment, the programme has received some excellent feedback and will continue to evolve as more is known about the depth of talent in each area. Critically, the Regional Pathway team are working hand in glove with the Area Participation teams, to ensure visibility of the programme at club level. It has been particularly pleasing to see the increase in girls' nominations, especially in the West.
- 7 Wales National County also had their most successful season for 25 years, reaching the semi-final in the NCCA 50-over trophy, being defeated by eventual (and perennial!) winners, Berkshire CCC.
The profile of the team was further enhanced by their victory over Glamorgan in the Showcase fixture at Sophia Gardens in July. Captain Sam Pearce, plus Andy Gorvin and Steve Reingold who were all high-profile WNC campaign participants, and shone in that fixture, have all represented Glamorgan 1st X1 this summer.
- 8 Wales' performance in ECB National Programmes continues to grow year on year. Only Yorkshire provided more participants to the national total in 2021 (as a comparison, there are 4x as many cricket clubs in Yorkshire and they have 2x our population). We continue to return up to double ECB's core funding investment into us back to them in national programme performance.
Female participation in All Stars and Dynamos Cricket is now at 30%; higher than the average of County Boards in England.
There is an inordinate amount of work which goes into delivering these programmes, by both CW staff and activators and club volunteers, who should be congratulated on their commitment to continue to grow the number of youngsters having a great first experience of cricket, which, in many cases, starts in our Chance to Shine Programme, delivered by our Community Coaches.



Special congratulations should go to Cardiff Cricket Club, who were the no. 1 club in all of England and Wales for National Programmes participants.

- 9 Women's & Girls' Cricket continues to be the fastest growing area of cricket in Wales. 53% of clubs in Wales now have a female playing offer – this number rises as high as 70% in SE Wales. Our Women's & Girls' Development Officers are all now full-time and the game is reaping the rewards of this additional - and justified – investment to ensure that our game is widely available to all players, regardless of their gender.
- 10 Mojeid (Muji) Ilyas joined our team as full-time Diverse Communities Officer earlier this year; His impact in Cardiff and Newport has been phenomenal and bodes extremely well for our future endeavours and ambitions in this area. I recommend, if you are on Twitter, that you follow his work, @MujiDCO
- 11 Our relationship with Glamorgan is as strong as it has ever been. We work with Glamorgan directly on a number of matters from the Pathway, to community programmes, club engagement in respect of The Hundred, and behind the scenes on matters like marketing and promotions and facility strategy.
We have also been kindly invited to play a part in Glamorgan's centenary celebrations, including the visit of HRH Prince of Wales to Sophia Gardens in July 2021. We were also grateful to Glamorgan for allowing us to share in the success of their Royal London Cup victory, taking the trophy to various recreational cricket clubs and events, including a visit from captain Kiran Carlson to his old club, Cardiff to meet the boys and girls of the junior section and inspire the next generation.
- 12 We remain extremely grateful to the ECB for their commitment to Facility investment in Wales and we look forward to continuing to support clubs strategically in the coming years. Clubs in Wales have been significant beneficiaries of the Sport Wales *Be Active Wales* fund and we look forward to assisting in the roll-out of the new Crowdfunder scheme.
- 13 We continue to support both Officials & Groundskeepers representative organisations to ensure they are able to optimise their operations and education/development. Wales saw a hugely successful roll out of the YCO (Young Cricket Officials) courses this summer, with over 100 young people taking part.
Anna Harris, WACO's Women's & Girls' Lead Officer, also stood in her first International match at Worcester in September 2021 and, in turn, also became, at 22, the youngest ever official to stand in an international match.
Our Coach Development programme, while also heavily impacted by Covid restrictions, has seen over 1000 coaches/activators (re-)trained this year, over 20% of which have been female. If we are to continue our excellent growth in participation, especially in National Programmes and women's and girls' cricket, it is clear that we need to also



continue to expand our workforce to support and continue to inspire our new participants.

ECB will also be further expanding their Volunteer Reward and Recognition Programme with a formal strategy to accompany the investment made into this year's Grassroots Cricket Awards (formerly known as the OSCAs). I would like to especially mention Shana Thomas for her National recognition in the Inspired to Play category for her work at Ynystawe CC.

- 14 Safeguarding remains a critical part of our operation. We were one of the first County Boards to roll out the Safe Hands Management system and help the ECB troubleshoot and develop the system, which will aid and underpin our ambitions to embed safeguarding awareness and compliance across our clubs in the coming years. We are indebted to Ieuan Watkins for his commitment, expertise and energy in this area.
- 15 Les Randall and I are working to continue to raise the profile of disability cricket in Wales. We have continued our progress towards InSport's Silver Accreditation with Disability Sport Wales and are in advanced active discussions with Disability Sport Wales and specifically, strategically-chosen Local Authorities, who will assist us in rolling out the Lord's Taverners Super 1s programme, scheduled to start in Wales in the coming months.
Wales' D40 hardball team also returned some excellent performances this season in a very tough division, including teams with numerous England players. I was delighted to be able to witness our win vs Essex at Lisvane CC in August 2021 first-hand.
- 16 Western Storm played their first ever game in Wales in August 2021.
Glamorgan and Western Storm also took the exceptional step to jointly fund an additional contract, topping up the ECB's direct investment in 2021.
Wales is well represented in both the Storm Academy and main squad; Alex Griffiths also represented the Welsh Fire in the Hundred.
- 17 Lastly, I am grateful to the membership for approving the Governance amendments proposed by the Board at our EGM in May. The England and Wales Cricket Board, through the (County Partnership Agreement) CPA assessments have given us very positive feedback on our structures, commitments to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, our collaborations with Glamorgan and all-round operational performance.
We were also awarded 'full marks' by Sport Wales in our Financial Capability review earlier this year and will be undertaking a similar process on Governance in the coming months. We welcome this scrutiny to continue to stay ahead of the curve in all forms of Governance and good business practice.



Further thanks

I would especially like to thank Rod Jones, who is due to step down as Chair of Cricket Wales at this AGM. His leadership of our Board and organisation, and support of me and my senior team has been excellent, and he has set an extremely solid platform from which we are set to launch our next phase of growth. He will also leave extremely large shoes to fill at CW Board level, but I know the SEWCL will be delighted to still benefit from his experience and commitment to cricket, as well as his club, Monkswood CC.

I look forward to taking our organisation into its next chapter with our Chair Elect, Jennifer Owen Adams, and I thank you proactively for your support of her in her expanded role on our Board and her new team of Directors. Cricket in Wales had had an excellent year, all things considered, and we have even greater potential as a sport in the future, but my team and I can only perform so highly with the encouragement and support from CW's ultimate leadership, for which we are extremely grateful.

My penultimate thanks go to our partners and major funders, Sport Wales, the ECB, Chance to Shine and the Lord's Taverners for their financial support, without which the recreational game in Wales would not grow. We are also grateful to them for their continued flexibility and commitments to us during the uncertainty of the Covid crisis.

I must lastly commend, congratulate and thank all our volunteers, staff, parents and players throughout Wales, for both your support of Cricket Wales and each other over the last year, protecting your own clubs and enabling cricket to continue to flourish.

Despite the difficulties of the last 18 months, I am absolutely convinced of cricket's potential to continue to grow its reach and relevance, to support and connect our communities and to improve lives.

I look forward to continuing to this work and success with you all in the coming months and years.

Leshia Hawkins

Chief Executive Officer, Cricket Wales