

2019 Welsh Government International Strategy

1. Profile

Do you think Wales has a strong overseas profile?

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- **Neither agree or disagree**
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- No answer

What do we need to do to develop our profile and reputation?

We are delighted that International Relations has been recognised at ministerial level and we hope that this will result in improved coordination of efforts to raise the profile of Wales across the world.

Our experience of working with Welsh Government departments has shown that silo working continues to be embedded within the culture of the organisation. This is both interdepartmental and within government agencies. We are also aware that a number of our members have worked closely with various government department and agencies in developing ideas and programmes, but very few of these succeed in obtaining investment despite serious commitment of time and resource. We would like to see far more strategic joint working between departments and government agencies, and further exploitation of existing networks to maximise the opportunities available to us but ultimately a realistic expectation of partners in terms of what can actually be achieved collaboratively.

For example, the Wales Week brand has been developed out of the ambition of a small team determined to bring people together to raise the profile of Wales. Now in its third year, the campaign has become global with Wales Week celebrated in 10 countries. This was achieved with barely any government funding, relying on coordinated efforts and a small amount of sponsorship. We believe that investment in this type of collaborative cross-sector campaign would give a significant return, as the Wales Week campaign perfectly encapsulates the Team Wales approach that has become so successful in recent years particularly within sport.

We also need to invest in research, insight and evidence to underpin our activities so that we can demonstrate learning in terms of what works and what does not.

2. Reputation

What aspects of Welsh life do you think we should focus on to build our reputation around the world – what are our values, ambitions, areas of excellence?

The recent success of the men's team in winning the 6 Nations is just one illustration of how prominently sport sits within the Welsh psyche and cultural identity, and how powerful it can be in shining a spotlight on Wales for the rest of the world. We are also renowned for our ability to host international sporting competition – from the 2017 Champions League Final in Cardiff which attracted over 350 million viewers worldwide, the 2015 Rugby World Cup games which brought in an estimated £316 million in economic impact, to the smaller but highly popular Ironman in Tenby which sold out in 4 months and draws interest from across the world. Events such as these have made a considerable contribution to boosting the country as a tourist destination – we know from evidence that sport features highest within the soft power recognition of Wales as a nation (British Council Cymru 2018).

We believe that the strength of sport should be more widely recognised and appreciated. Wales has a long history of punching above its weight in terms of per capita success in international sporting competitions away from home too – for example, the two most recent Commonwealth Games saw record breaking medal hauls for Welsh athletes. We would caution against complacency in light of our recent sporting success as it must be recognised that performance pathways take many years of nurtured investment and the present trend of reduced investment from both government and Sport Wales threatens future success.

There is a real risk that continued underinvestment in facilities and the considerable reduction in funding for sport in real terms means that this success will not be sustainable. As provision of sport is not a statutory obligation, many local authorities are under pressure to close facilities in a bid to save money. This will inevitably have a detrimental impact on accessibility of places to participate in sport; on the potential of young athletes to achieve their sporting ambitions; and ultimately on the ability of Welsh sport to sustain its strong record of sporting success on the world stage.

3. Prioritisation

What should be the main areas of focus for our international strategy – should we concentrate on export growth, attracting foreign businesses, attracting people, increasing tourism, international development?

We should focus on that which evidence shows would have the highest return in bringing in investment and securing jobs.

The economic impact of major sporting facilities such as the Principality Stadium cannot be underestimated. A recent report by Professor Calvin Jones has estimated that there have been 18,850,000 non-Welsh ticketed visitors to the stadium since it was built 20 years ago. With an offsite regional expenditure of over £1950M and 3650 FTE jobs associated with the stadium, it is imperative that we continue to invest our time and resources in attracting major events to Wales.

Investment in a sports events incubator would help to develop the sorts of events that could either come more visible or at the very least add to our credibility as delivers of a breadth of attractive sporting events.

While we understand that international development is a worthy cause, there are many issues much closer to home that also urgently need our attention. With one in three children living in poverty in Wales and 90,000 children living in extreme poverty, we believe that as a nation we have a primary obligation to improve the lives of those living in our own country – particular when the bite of

austerity has not yet been properly felt by public service deliverers, and given the likely negative impact on funding Welsh communities by Brexit. This is compounded by the increasing financial burden of ill- health by issues such as our aging population, obesity, poor mental health and negative lifestyle choices.

There must be balanced and proportionate investment in those on our doorsteps who are in need and those elsewhere in the world.

4. Communication

Do you think Wales communicates its international agenda effectively?

- Strongly disagree
- **Disagree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- No answer

What more do we need to do to communicate our international agenda – both in Wales and across the world?

We need to work more closely together in aligning our cross- sector communications strategies. The recent “Year of...” marketing campaigns were far too focused – for example, it was impossible for some organisations to buy in to the “Year of the Sea” as they may have had no connection to the coast whatsoever. The return on investment of these campaigns can be thrown into sharp contrast by more generic efforts such as the #TeamWales approach at the Commonwealth Games and the FAW’s #TogetherStronger during the Euros in 2016. Both of these campaigns were run on a shoestring in comparison to the budgets of Major Events and Visit Wales and yet became incredibly powerful in uniting a nation and achieving significant global reach.

We could do much more to exploit the profile sport has provided Wales on the international stage, for example by aligning Ministerial attendance to such events to influence potential markets. We could also take much better advantage of the unique high profile of many international sports stars to open the door – e.g. Ian Rush and Ryan Giggs in Asia.

5. Internationalisation

How do we develop Wales so that we have the right skills, ambition and products for international growth? How do we encourage people to embrace internationalism?

We believe that sport is not only a fantastic vehicle for attracting tourism and inward investment, but also that the intrinsic values within sport – such as teamwork, decision making, leadership, loyalty, ambition, help to develop the skills that are highly valued by employers. The positive attributes of being involved in sport and physical activity are not only beneficial to your physical

health and mental well-being, it can also improve your memory, productivity and resilience to stress, creating an attractive workforce for potential inward investment.

Unfortunately, the status of government department is very much dependent on the size of their budget. Unfortunately, Welsh Government's sports policy's numbers are diminishing, which fundamentally reduces their ability to innovate and develop links across other government departments.

There is also the perception that Visit Wales and the major events unit invest proportionally far more into men's events, with the platform and global reach of women's sports being largely ignored. We need to do far more to engage with the sports of other countries in terms of offering our facilities for training camps for major sporting events – for example, netball is the world's most popular female sport and its world cup will be held in Manchester later this year. As far as we understand, no approaches were made to teams to use Welsh facilities in the run up to this event. The solution to this could be as simple as improved communications between sports, Sport Wales and the various Government departments involved.

That Wales voted to leave the EU when it received a net benefit of significant funding demonstrates that there is much to do in terms of educating people about internationalism. On a more positive note, the post referendum demographical data indicates that younger generations appear to be more in favour of embracing the worldwide community. We believe that sport has huge potential to inspire young people to experience the world beyond our shores – from taking part in school sports tours to supporting teams in international competitions.

We believe that anyone who represents the Welsh flag at an elite stage should not have to do this at significant personal cost. Our members have given us numerous anecdotal accounts where young people on elite pathways have been unable to compete due to costs of travel and accommodation. We believe that this is inherently unfair as it fundamentally reduces the opportunity of young people to achieve their sporting ambitions – particularly those from areas of deprivation. We believe that the Elite Cymru programme should be extended to include team sports so that all athletes representing Wales should be affordable to those who take part.

6. Core markets

Do you think Wales' relationship with EU countries should be our priority in the future?

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- **Neither agree nor disagree**
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- No answer

Where should we focus our activity and engagement overseas (including what is the right balance between the EU and the rest of the world)?

7. Soft power

Do you think Wales uses soft power effectively to influence its relationship with other countries?

- Strongly disagree
- **Disagree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- No answer

How should we develop our soft power influence?

By focusing on that which we do best. The report by the British Council on Wales' soft power was illuminating and reinforced the role that sport plays in raising the profile of Wales in the world. We are therefore very pleased to see that the British Council Cymru has recently published an expression of interest for a further research project that will specifically examine the role sport can play in Wales' international engagement, as we have consistently called for a more strategic approach to harnessing the power of international diplomacy through sport. We would implore Welsh Government to both listen and give careful consideration to the recommendations of this research.

8. Wales for Africa

How should we further develop our Wales for Africa programme

There is of course a role for international development in our activities, and the universal language of sport has the potential to reach communities and improve lives, moving beyond aid and securing positive change for life.

Many sports have strong connections with African countries, such as Welsh Netball and Malawi. We are also aware of club links, such as Clwb Rygbi Cymry Caerdydd and Lesotho Rugby whom the Minister for Sport met in 2018. Many of these activities are happening organically, but it would be great to have some strategic direction and support to raise awareness and inspire others to take part in similar programmes.

We are currently in discussions with United Purpose in terms of the creation of a Sport for development Coalition in Wales and would be keen to meet with officials to maximise the effectiveness of this campaign.

9. Diaspora

Do you think Wales effectively engages with people who live and work abroad?

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree
- **Neither agree nor disagree**
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- No answer

How should we engage with people who live and work abroad?

Wales Week 2019, which has now spread to 10 countries, demonstrates how a simple umbrella message can provide an easy hook for organisations across all sectors to buy in to - the unique power and low cost of social media means that this can be done in an affordable and easy to disseminate way. It has also enabled Welsh diaspora across the world to get involved.

This is in addition to the work of Global Welsh in building an international network of ex-patriots, driving entrepreneurship and bringing together key contacts in industries across the world for the benefit of Wales.

These initiatives should be supported and maximised rather than reinventing any wheels.

10. Success

What, as a result of our international strategy, should we have achieved in 5 years and 10 years' time?

- Ongoing measurement and insight on the impact and legacy of investment so that we can more accurately target those areas that will bring the biggest return.
- Established an events incubator which has developed smaller events with the potential to grow/attract major events
- The development of a strategic plan to align Ministerial meetings with international sporting event sand harness the high profile of our elite athletes to open doors to new opportunities.
- Attracted more high-profile international events to Wales
- Wales Week celebrated in over 100 countries worldwide