

2018–2021 STRATEGY

Sound strategy starts with having the right goal.¹ The best interests of our members are at the heart of all that we do at the Welsh Sports Association, so this ambitious document has been developed in consultation with our members to ensure the continuing success of those that we represent. As part of our commitment to making our activities evidence-based, it draws from dynamic strategy sessions with our experienced Board and builds on the language, insight and feedback received from members and key stakeholders in the form of discussions, meetings, and surveys.

Our members have consistently told us that funding is their key priority, so our ongoing focus must be on ensuring their financial resilience through supporting their capability and capacity to improve their business development skills, thus maximising their opportunities to diversify income. We are doing all that we can to support this and will continue to lobby Welsh Government and Sport Wales to secure the investment required to further our work in this area, to greater enhance the return we are able to provide to our members.

We have already begun this journey through responsively developing our training programmes and support services and our partnership with Acorn Executive Search in identifying Non-Executive Directors with corporate skills for member boards has already borne fruit for many of our members. With the aid of Sport Wales, we have also been able to prepare members for the impact of GDPR, and we look forward to continuing this supportive partnership in supporting the sector's sustainability.

Developing new and consolidating existing partnerships will be fundamental to realising the ambition of our small yet dynamic team, and we are thankful to our partners for their recognition of our aspirations and commitment to helping us achieve them. Future successes will be dependent on continuing to attract expertise and collaboration, so let's harness the mantras of great Welsh sporting slogans and work #TogetherStronger, taking a 'Team Wales' approach so that the sport sector in Wales continues to thrive and help build "a vibrant, active nation".



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Humphrey'.

Helen Humphrey
Chair, WSA

*'...the Welsh sport sector
has consistently delivered much
for which it should be justly proud.'*

¹ Michael Porter 1980

OVERVIEW

The Welsh Sports Association (WSA) is the umbrella trade body that supports and represents the sport sector in Wales, including the National Governing Bodies of sport (NGBs). We understand the 'sport sector' to mean anyone involved in the business of sport and active recreation in Wales.

Over the last three years, the role of the WSA has evolved significantly in response to the changing landscape, and we anticipate that this evolution will continue as we expand our services to meet the needs of our members.

As part of this, in 2017, with the full support of our membership, we took the decision to begin charging an annual membership fee. The investment our members have made in us has enabled the development of a more robust advocacy service which has significantly changed the way in which we are able to co-ordinate the views of our members, thus providing a stronger, collective voice. The delivery of advocacy on behalf of our members is entirely funded by the revenue generated from membership fees and other non-public funding channels to ensure independence. It is important to us that we are a trusted partner to stakeholders and that our integrity is held in high regard when representing our members.

We are committed to continually providing added value for our members, and constantly horizon scanning the business, legislative and policy landscapes so that we can identify opportunities to further their aims. The needs of our members are very much at the core of our work, and we will actively listen to and work closely with them to ensure that our services are designed with their specific requirements in mind.

As important to understanding what it is we do, it is as vital to understand that it is not within our remit to undertake the delivery of sports development in any form. Thus, our purpose and focus are clear:

- *To provide an independent, collective voice for the sector in championing the role that it plays and its return on investment.*
- *To help build capability and ensure the resilience of our members by supporting them to become stronger, more successful and sustainable through providing a wide range of business services.*

We have a track record in taking an agile and flexible approach to the delivery of these support services, such as providing a bilingual online DBS checking service and compliance support, as is required in line with the new GDPR regulations, which affect all businesses across the UK. In responding flexibly to our member needs, we have become the 'go to' organisation for information and guidance on those areas of work which will make the biggest impact on improving business efficiencies and helping our member organisations achieve their own strategic aims.

Using evidence and insight to highlight the unique contribution that sport and active recreation makes to the physical, mental and economic wellbeing of society, we are committed to showing how sport and active recreation can help provide solutions to a wide number of public policy issues and prove its investment value.

'The WSA has a track record in taking an agile and flexible approach to the delivery of support services.'

CONTEXT

For almost half a century, public investment has led to a vibrant Welsh sport sector, with considerable success as a nation used to punching above its weight in terms of podium places and trophy winning. Whilst our members strive to identify other, more diverse, funding streams, this well-intentioned public investment has inevitably led to a dependency culture. With the shadow of austerity ongoing, and a remit from Welsh Government to do more for less, we as a sector welcome the challenge to become more resilient and less reliant on public funding.

Nevertheless, sport has been able to produce the riches of medal-winning success on the global stage from a small fraction of government budgets, whilst our track record of delivering major events offers a stunning view of Wales to the world. Whilst we recognise the need for diversification of income, there is no absolution for government in continuing to invest in sport and active recreation, and we will continue to fight the corner for sports investment from the public purse because of the positive impact on society which goes far beyond improvements in the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the nation.

The added value of sport and active recreation in delivering against wider policy objectives beyond physical wellbeing must be evidenced and reinforced, from improving socially cohesive inclusive communities to supporting the development of skills and employability among our workforce.

Our local authority partners have been long-standing supporters of sport and active recreation and collectively, over time, have made a significant contribution to the health and wellbeing of their residents through sustained investment into leisure facilities and sports development programmes.

With the current climate of diminishing public sector resources, it is essential that we work with our local partners to protect and where possible enhance access to local facilities and programming. In these changing times, the WSA will look to work with a range of local service delivery partners from both the public and private sectors, as well as other non-traditional partners, such as Housing Associations and voluntary agencies all of whom are making important contributions to the wellbeing of local people.

There is a real business case for widening the scope of provision, not just because of the increasing ill-health associated with the ageing demographic and the impact of poverty, but also because increasing our services opens new markets and audiences, both in terms of participation and volunteering opportunities, thus helping to support the organisational sustainability of the sector. Fundamental to this is the sector's preparedness and ability to embrace the increasing consumer reliance on digital technology, both in terms of developing our collective offer and services as well as harvesting the consequential data so that we can have meaningful insight into consumer demand.

The new Vision for sport in Wales focusses on participation, support, delivery and success. The WSA has a pivotal role in supporting our members to deliver success, which in turn should help to increase participation. With the shift in public funding becoming more outcomes-based and with so much change on the sporting horizon, it is imperative that the WSA keeps its fingers on the policy pulse, so that we can equip our members with the information and skills to better inform and position themselves to adapt to the challenges that lie ahead.

‘Sport is able to produce the riches of medal winning success on the global stage from a small fraction of government budgets.’

VISION & MISSION

‘Our Mission is to empower our members to be stronger and more successful contributing towards a society fit for the future.’

We want to help create a future Wales for ourselves and our families, which is prosperous, healthy and confident, so our Vision is for **‘a vibrant, active nation’**.

We will achieve this by:

Leading Advocacy

An independent, collective voice;

Building Capability

Professional support, training and development;

Developing Resilience

Financial and organisational sustainability.

Values:

Instilling positive values and behaviours is fundamental to the successful execution of this strategy. The WSA is adamant that its approach is more than a simple nod to the sector’s governance framework, rather that our values and behaviours are embedded across the whole of our organisation, its culture and the services we deliver.

Our commitment is to:

Excellence

A reliable and accountable team which is focused on continuously improving our ability to deliver for our members.

Empower

A bold and ambitious organisation which takes managed risks for the benefit of our members.

Enterprise

Creatively embracing the opportunities brought about by insight and innovation.

Integrity

An independent and transparent organisation which professionally and ethically represents the needs of our members.

STRATEGY

Strategy is about how we create the future we want to inhabit². While the overarching aim of our strategy is to support our members to achieve long-term sustainability, it also retains some flexibility in recognition of the fluidity of the current sporting landscape. As such, it is designed to be a three-year document in anticipation of the need to review the impact of emerging trends in the shorter term, mirroring the remaining term of government and the priorities of the new sector-wide strategic vision.

This document is supported by annual business plans containing individual key performance indicators and 'tactics' to help us deliver the following strategic objectives:

'Strategy is about how we create the future we want to inhabit.'



1. **Advocating** on behalf of members so that their voices are heard.

2. **Building** capability through relevant and meaningful support services.

3. **Driving** the resilience of the sector so that we are all 'fit for the future'.

Overview:

With diminishing public funding, it is critical that investment in sport and active recreation is protected, and that policy makers and key decision makers recognise the unique value of our sector's mission. In delivering advocacy support services to members we can:

- Raise awareness and understanding within the sector of the wider political landscape and help them contribute effectively to policy developments which may affect their area of work.
- Help ensure that key decision-makers value and appreciate the full economic and social impact of the sector when developing policy.

We will do this through:

- Horizon scanning public policy and providing political monitoring and advice;
- Providing reactive communications including briefings and summaries of key documents;
- Continuing to refine the development of the WSA Advocacy and Policy Group in gathering member views in responding to consultations and policy enquiries;
- Being a 'listening' organisation, allowing sector organisations, whatever their size, an ear that converts into a voice.
- Being an active representative for sport on the Third Sector Partnership Council (TSPC);
- Playing a leading role in the Strategic Safeguarding in Sport Group and promoting the use of our online bilingual DBS system for sport and beyond;
- Providing insight and intelligence to support sector forums which focus on all areas of sports governance and continuing the development of opportunities for best practice sharing through our networks;
- Encouraging greater engagement, from and with, Local Authority partners;
- Continuing to engage in a contact programme with key influencers such as Ministers, government officials and elected representatives to raise awareness of the work of members and their impact on wider public policy areas;
- Issuing, and expanding the audience for, the WSA Weekly Newsletter, providing an overview of the key issues taking place across the sport sector in Wales and beyond;
- Delivering biannual events to bring together members around key issues.

We will know we have achieved this when:

- Members positively engage with the advocacy service, and sector-wide consultations receive a minimum 40% response rate;
- There is greater visibility, reach and recognition of the sector and its positive contribution to public policy objectives;
- We have specific examples to demonstrate where we have influenced decision-making through positive engagement with Government, funding bodies and policy makers.

Overview

We will continue to forge effective new partnerships and utilise our existing relationships to deliver a suite of shared services for our members. In addition to the provision of training, guidance and advice, we can support the sector in striving to continuously improve both on and off the field. In working together, we can become a stronger, more commercially minded and powerful machine for the good of sport. Through a shared approach we can reduce costs and ensure that more money can be invested in front-line sports and active recreation rather than in duplicated or unnecessary administration costs. In doing this we can:

- Leverage economies of scale to enable proportionate savings to our members' front-line costs.
- Engage appropriate partners which match the needs and requirements of the sector can increase the value proposition our members are able to offer their own members.
- Enhance set-up and infrastructure, giving the members a platform to develop their own offering.
- Help streamline work so that it more relevant to designated roles – enabling further efficiencies and releasing more time to focus on developing their sporting activities.
- Change the culture so that sports bodies are seen and see themselves as social businesses, taking a more commercial approach to their operations.

We will do this through:

- Ensuring member organisations can attract high calibre applicants to their boards and supporting groups, so that they have the appropriate business skills in place to achieve their own strategic objectives.
- Scoping the full requirements of each member to add value to their own membership offering and meet the functional objectives of the required infrastructure.
- Increasing use of relevant technology to maximise efficiencies and manage data.
- Using social media analytics to increase the awareness of our services across all communication channels such as the website and social media.

We will know we have achieved this when:

- We can measure the degree to which we have been able to professionalise our boards through attracting new directors with wider skills, knowledge and experience;
- We have increased the numbers of partnerships and services available to members;
- We deliver consistently high levels of member and stakeholder satisfaction scores in stakeholder surveys;
- Web analytics demonstrate improved member experience and usage of our website;
- The commercial reach of our services is broadened to engage with new and potentially non-traditional audiences, with the objective of reinvesting any profit into membership services.

Overview

Despite the continued success of investment in sport, its unintended consequence is a reliance on public funding. Many sporting organisations are working hard to try to reduce this reliance and become more resilient, however, our members support the urgent need for greater levels of assistance in this area as well as the requirement for robust evidence to underpin and inform our activities in the future. In building the business case for sport we will help reinforce the return on investment and the economic and social impact of the sector. In developing sector resilience, we can:

- Support member organisations to make informed strategic decisions by being able to measure and demonstrate their outcomes.
- Help members gain access to investment from a variety of new income-generating initiatives as well continuing to work with a cross-portfolio of government departments and their networks to support the wider public good.
- Demonstrate to potential funders the wider reciprocal benefits of partnership working.

We will do this through:

- Living up to our principles of reducing reliance on public funding and diversifying our own income sources.
- Continuing to make the case for increased investment in sector resilience.
- Leading by example in ensuring our activities are evidence-based and reflective of best practice.
- Increasing our membership to reflect the breadth of the sports and active recreation sector in Wales.
- Employing appropriate staff with the relevant skills to open new channels and utilise existing relationships.
- Identifying and supporting the use of robust measurement platforms by our members so that they can accurately demonstrate their impact against public policy objectives.
- Helping make sure there is relevant quality research and insight to support the sector's case for investment, and help the sector develop its services according to evidence by exploring collaborative research opportunities and insight provision with leading academic institutions.

- Using a trading arm of our business for commercial gain, so that we can reinvest in member services.

We will know we have achieved this when:

- The WSA work continues to reduce its reliance on Sport Wales grant in aid as a percentage of turnover;
- There is investment in a resilience programme for the sector to become more sustainable;
- Our membership has increased by 30%;
- We have delivered membership value of an average of at least £5K per member;
- The WSA and all its members have access to a measurement reporting facility;
- There is a national insight repository for relevant academic research affecting sport and active recreation in Wales;
- There is wider acceptance of the value of in-kind investment and social impact;
- Our trading arm 'Vibrant Nation' is profitable and capable of reinvesting into member services

CONCLUSION

*‘When “I” becomes
“we”, even illness
becomes wellness.’*

Wales may be a small country, but it is a nation whose heart beats to the rhythm of a sporting drum. It is why we continue to punch well above our weight on the world stage and why our community programmes continue to grow in terms of membership and participation. Sport is the soul of our nation, the very essence of our cultural identity.

At a time when services are under pressure, our ambition is to set the bar even higher. To emulate and even exceed the past successes of our athletes and community partners. To achieve this, we must work #TogetherStronger, taking a ‘Team Wales’ approach. Only then will we collectively maximise the opportunities and efficiencies available to us.

Collaboration is the key. It is fundamental to achieving the impact that sport and active recreation delivers to our communities across Wales – “When ‘I’ becomes ‘we’, even illness becomes wellness’.

Our aspiration of “**a vibrant, active nation**” requires a sector which is robust, resilient and innovative, which collectively finds shared, creative and practical solutions to the challenges that we face both now and in the future.



TOGETHER

EVERYONE

ACHIEVES

MORE