

28 April 2023

Dear

ATISN 17350 – Dawn Bowden meetings with WRU and FAW

Thank you for your request which I received on 30 March 2023. You asked for:

- the diary cases for all conversations and meetings that Dawn Bowden has had with WRU please, and
- the diary cases for all conversations and meetings that Dawn Bowden has had with FAW please?

Our response

The requested diary cases are attached in the Annexes below. For reference I have included tables with links to each item.

FAW meetings:

Annex 1	Grassroots Football	3 February 2022
Annex 2	FAW's Reform of the Women's Game	24 June 2021

WRU meetings:

Annex 3	Match day experience, Funding and Regional South African Fixtures	2 February 2022
Annex 4	Loan, Women's game, mixed rugby consultation and Match day experience	30 March 2022
Annex 5	Catch-up meeting with Steve Phillips	11 January 2023

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely

Annex 1: Diary Case briefing of meeting between Deputy Minister Dawn Bowden and Noel Mooney, CEO of FAW

DIARY CASE



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PREAMBLE

Who is the Minister meeting?	Noel Mooney, Chief Executive of the Football Association of Wales (FAW)
Who requested the meeting?	Noel Mooney
Primary purpose	A meeting to discuss grassroots football and present a short presentation on the Grassroots Facilities Fund.
Is there an agreed agenda?	Short presentation on the Grassroots Facilities Fund and Grassroots football
Which officials are supporting the Minister?	Jason Thomas and Steff Roberts – Sport Policy
Where is the meeting?	Teams
Other practical considerations	N/A

DIARY CASE BRIEFING

Purpose

Noel Mooney, Chief Executive of the Football Association of Wales (FAW) has requested a meeting to discuss grassroots football and present a short presentation on the Grassroots Facilities Fund.

Current position and issues to note

- We are investing a further £4.5m of capital funding this year, to support a range of projects for enhancing football, swimming etc. Facilities across Wales that will enable increased participation across a wide range of sports. This funding will be delivered through Sport Wales and brings our total capital investment in sport this year to more than £13.2m with projects supported in every part of Wales.
- The FAW will receive £1.3m of the capital funding for this year.
- The draft Budget for 2022-23, published on 21 December, includes a further capital investment in sporting facilities of £24m over the next three years and will be delivered by Sport Wales.

Points to make

- Investing in sporting facilities (elite and grassroots) is a significant element in our Programme for Government, highlighting the important link between increasing participation and the health and wellbeing of our nation.
- Our priorities for sport are to promote equal access to sports, to support young and talented athletes and grassroots clubs, to invest in our world-class sports facilities, and to invest in new facilities.
- Last Week, I announced that the Welsh Government is investing an additional £4.5m capital funding this year with £1.3m being provided to FAW, to support a range of projects for enhancing sports facilities across Wales and there will be a further £24m over the next three years. This will be delivered by Sport Wales.
- The Welsh Government recognises the importance of sport and physical activity to support the improvement of our health and well-being, particularly as part of our recovery from the pandemic.
- We remain supportive of a potential bid subject to the detail of the costs to the Welsh public purse and the ROI – my officials will continue to work with you and the other FA's and government partners on the detail to inform Ministerial discussions.

- Winnability remains another key issue, grateful for feedback on your meets with UEFA in that context
- We recognise the benefits to Wales of hosting the event but also the benefits to FAW/Welsh football and would expect the FAW to contribute to delivery costs but await the outcome of wider discussions on this.
- In terms of bid costs , we made our position clear in terms of the world cup bid, we would not fund, and do not see any reason to change that position now.

Background information

Grassroots Facilities Fund - Background

During 2021, the UK Government has been announcing its intention to invest £230 million during the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2025, towards improving and increasing grassroots football facilities across the UK. This has included an initial £25 million in respect of the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 (Phase 1 funding period).

The funding forms part of the UK Government's levelling-up agenda and will be prioritised for left-behind communities and used to help address health inequalities and encourage children and young people to get more active by enabling more people to access high-quality facilities that can be used for football and other sports. Whilst Wales's share of the £205m has yet to be confirmed, the UK Government has now confirmed that Wales will receive £1.3m in respect of Phase 1 funding. The first Panel meeting to allocate £1.3m funding is scheduled for 18 February.

FAW's "Our Wales" Strategy

The FAW recently launched its 'Our Wales' strategy covering the period to 2026, which includes a number of participation targets as we continue to develop football within Wales. A key strategy objective is 'Inspirational and fit-for-future facilities'. We have big ambitions to transform grassroots football and facilities on club, parks, and education sites, and in announcing this intention, we recognise that delivering better facilities will be one of the biggest challenges facing the future of football in Wales.

World Cup 2030/Euros 28/32 bid

As the Minister is aware the decision has been taken that a bid for the 2030 World cup is not winnable, mainly because of the breakdown in the relationship between UEFA (European Footballs governing body) and FIFA (the world governing body) who own the rights to the World Cup and are unlikely to award 2030 to Europe as a result of the relationship breakdown (antipathy to England is also a factor).

Therefore the decision has been taken to switch the focus to a bid for the Euros which are owned and awarded by UEFA who have asked for expressions of interest by 23 March for both 2028 and 2032. The intention remains for it to be a 5 nation, UK and I, bid and the 5 FA's hope to announce the intention to bid next week in the hope to scare off other potential bids – only Italy has formally declared its interest to date although Turkey and Russia are said to be considering. The FA's appear to have had positive signals from UEFA re a bid and Noel Mooney and the FAW President held meetings with UEFA this week where the issue was discussed and they were given positive signals. You may want to ask Noel to expand on those discussions.

Despite the FA's desire to announce a bid ASAP only the English FA could do so without Government support and the 5 Government partners have made clear that whilst we understand the tactical benefits of an early announcement we cannot commit to a bid without more detailed work on the costs and benefits. That work is ongoing, for example, the embryonic high end (with inflation and contingency) cost for Wales to host 6 matches in the Principality is £97m of which £20m + would be from WG/Cardiff Council (Council are supportive of a bid – the leader will write to you). However this is based on UK G picking up all police costs, 75% of host city costs and 50% of Stadia upgrade costs – this has not been confirmed.

The working assumption is that the 5 FA's would also contribute to delivery costs, in FAW's case £4.7m of the £97m but this would be offset by income from UEFA. However FAW are totally opposed to having to make any contribution and indeed are now asking for WG/Cardiff Council to contribute 50% of their bid costs, something we rejected for the World Cup bid.

All 5 government partners accept the merits of a bid but believe the FA's, who want the bid and will benefit, should contribute to the costs – discussions are ongoing. There is a general concern re the FA's trying to bounce government partners and not recognising the size of the ask of public funding. There is also a specific concern about the English FA's approach (going to No 10 direct), their leadership and proposed delivery structure which need to be addressed ahead of any bid.

Next steps

Now to end Feb – detailed discussions re costs, and who pays, and benefits.

8 March – meeting of lead Ministers from 5 Nations (MECON attending) and decision re bid

By 22 March – WG decision re bid based on costs/benefits

23 March – expression of Interests submitted to UEFA (or not)

23 March on – response to detailed spec if bid process is required (if UK and I and Italy only bidders- no bid process)

Upcoming Men's International Fixtures

Wales v Austria - FIFA World Cup Play-Off Semi-Final

Thursday 24 March 2022

Wales v TBC Scotland or Ukraine (depending on the result against Austria)

Tuesday 29 March 2022 – (TBC Play-off final or $\frac{3}{4}$ placings)

Upcoming Women's International Fixtures

Pinatar Cup

Wales v Scotland

Wednesday 16 February 2022 - Pinatar Arena, Spain

Wales v TBC (Belgium or Slovakia)

Saturday 19 February 2022 - Pinatar Arena, Spain

Wales v TBC

Saturday 22 February 2022 - Pinatar Arena, Spain

Annex 2: Meeting to discuss FAWs Reform of the Women's Game

DIARY CASE



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PREAMBLE

Who is the Minister meeting?	Lowri Roberts, Head of Women's and Girls' Football, Football Association of Wales Andrew Howard, Head of Competitions, Football Association of Wales
Who requested the meeting?	The Deputy Minister
Primary purpose	To discuss the FAW's reforms of the women's game in Wales.
Is there an agreed agenda?	N/A – this is a single-issue meeting. The FAW will talk to a few slides regarding the domestic restructure, before moving to a general discussion on the proposed changes.
Which officials are supporting the Minister?	Nicky Guy, Paul Kindred
Where is the meeting?	Via Teams
Other practical considerations	N/A

DIARY CASE BRIEFING

Purpose

You have requested this meeting with Lowri Roberts, Head of Women's and Girls' Football at the FAW, to discuss their proposed reforms to the women's game.

Current position and issues to note

You recently wrote to the FAW asking for the rationale behind the proposed changes to the structure of the women's game, which have led to complaints from some of the clubs affected and interest from the media and Members of the Senedd. The letter also asked whether, in light of concerns raised, the FAW will be reviewing either the decisions made or the way in which it will now support clubs affected, including consideration of transitional arrangements that would enable clubs to adapt to the new structure.

The FAW provided a comprehensive reply to the queries raised in the letter. However, the FAW's view is that transitional arrangements for the new structure are not needed; they are treating the 2020-21 season as transitional. It is not clear from the reply whether the clubs affected are aware of this.

Points to make

- Thank you for the recent reply to my letter about the restructure.
- I note what you say about transitional arrangements and the clubs affected having a pathway into Tier 1 after one year. However, the widespread concerns raised as a result of the proposed changes are not going away.
- Do you consider that competitive performance was given sufficient priority in this process? Lack of recognition for success on the field has been one of the main criticisms levelled at the FAW by clubs who have performed strongly and yet been relegated. I am still not clear what your response to this has been.
- There have been calls for the FAW to pause and review this decision, and to think again about the timeline for moving to the new structure. Are you prepared to consider this?
- The FAW should consider what further action it is going to take, to ensure the clubs affected are not unfairly disadvantaged by these changes. What else can you do to ensure this is the case?

Background information

Attached below is a copy of the letter you issued together with the response from the FAW.

Letter to FAW:



Reply from FAW:



Women's Domestic
Re Structure Letter Mi

The FAW has also provided us with a copy of their strategy for women's football, which is attached below.



Annex 3: Match day experience, Funding and Regional South African Fixtures

DIARY CASE



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PREAMBLE

Who is the Minister meeting?	Steve Phillips, CEO, Welsh Rugby Union (WRU)
Who requested the meeting?	Steffan Roberts
Primary purpose	Meeting to discuss the agenda items below.
Is there an agreed agenda?	<u>Agenda</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Match day experience ahead of 6 Nations (inc regs / Covid pass etc)2. Funding - £18m loan and Spectator Sports Fund3. Regional rugby's South Africa fixtures
Which officials are supporting the Minister?	Steffan Roberts and Jason Thomas
Where is the meeting?	Teams
Other practical considerations	N/A

DIARY CASE BRIEFING

Purpose

Meeting with Steve Phillips, CEO of WRU to discuss the match day experience ahead of 6 Nations, Funding - loan and Spectator Sport Fund and the Regional rugby's South African fixtures.

Current position and issues to note

Points to make

Match day experience ahead of 6 Nations

- Thank you for the update on the match day experience.
- I am sure none of us wants to see repeats of the headlines we saw following the Autumn Internationals.
- What plans do you have to carry out a further review following the Six Nations?

Regional rugby's South African fixtures

- I would advise the clubs to check and follow the foreign travel advice at the time of travelling to South Africa.
- We are unable to give any advice on restrictions in South Africa that may be in place before or during the visit that will affect the fixtures.
- It is unlikely that UKG will allow any sporting exemptions should a similar scenario emerge in future with a red country listing occurring urgently.

WRU Loan

- Advice has been received from my team of officials and it's working its way through clearances.
- The legal documents for the loan should be completed this week, and hopefully we will be able to release the funding shortly after that.

Spectator Sports Fund

- We have already announced phase 1 of the funding covering the period to 9 January. I understand we are still waiting for information for some of the eligible fixtures but hope to receive it by the end of this week. Officials will be in touch shortly thereafter with a grant offer letter for all the fixtures that qualify for funding under the terms of the fund.

Annex 4: Loan, Women's game, mixed rugby consultation and Match day experience

DIARY CASE



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PREAMBLE

Who is the Minister meeting?	Steve Phillips, CEO, Welsh Rugby Union (WRU)
Primary purpose	Meeting to discuss the agenda items below.
Is there an agreed agenda?	<u>Agenda</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. WRU Loan2. Women's Game3. Consultation on mixed rugby4. Review of Six Nations - Match day experience
Which officials are supporting the Minister?	Steffan Roberts
Where is the meeting?	Microsoft Teams

DIARY CASE BRIEFING

Purpose

Meeting with Steve Phillips, CEO of WRU to discuss the Loan, Women's game, mixed rugby consultation and Match day experience.

Current position and issues to note

WRU Loan

- Welsh Government has completed all relevant legal documentation with regards to the £18m loan. WRU has received payment and will distribute to the regions.

Women's Game

- Congratulations on awarding professional contracts and wider progress within the women's game. I can see the difference it's already making on the pitch with an excellent away win in Dublin last weekend.
- Please send on my congratulations to the team for the win and the performance against Ireland, and I wish the team the very best for the upcoming games. Wales play Scotland at the Arms Park on Saturday.

Mixed rugby consultation

- I'm glad the WRU has decided to have an additional consultation on mixed rugby teams. I would be grateful for you to share your findings, when appropriate.

Match day experience review of Six Nations

- We received an overview of the issues faced on match days during the Autumn Series. Following the conclusion of the Six Nations, will there be a similar review of the match day experience. What lessons did you take into the Six Nations, what changes were implemented in the stadium and what were the main issues during this tournament?

Annex 5: Catch-up meeting with Steve Phillips

DIARY CASE



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PREAMBLE

Who is the Minister meeting?	Steve Phillips, CEO, WRU Ieuan Evans, Chairman WRU
Who requested the meeting?	Deputy Minister
Primary purpose	Catch-up meeting with Steve Phillips & Ieuan Evans to discuss a range of different topics involving the WRU.
Is there an agreed agenda?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Governance Structure• WRU Loan• Matchday experience• WRU Transgender policy• Sport Wales Investment model• Investment in women's rugby• Business Rates revaluation
Which officials are supporting the Minister?	Neil Welch – Head of Sport Policy
Where is the meeting?	Ty Hywel
Other practical considerations	N/A

DIARY CASE BRIEFING

Purpose

Catch-up meeting with Steve Phillips to discuss a range of different topics involving the WRU.

Current position and issues to note

Governance Structure

When agreeing to refinance the WRU's CLBILS loan last year the structure and diversity of the WRU Board(s) was discussed. A few issues were highlighted, especially around the lack of female representation following the resignation at that time of Amanda Blanc. It was decided at that time NOT to include any conditions of this nature within the loan agreement, but it was agreed that they (WRU) would look at this.

Since this, Rob Butcher stepped down as Chairman following the AGM where the members turned down the proposal from the Board to appoint an independent chair, a motion he strongly supported.

WRU Loan

In March 2022 WG provided a loan to the WRU for the refinancing of the CLBILS loan they had with NatWest. This was onward lent to the regions to assist in their recovery from COVID. The agreement to the refinancing was based on the rationale that that the professional game in Wales was under severe threat due to the levels of repayments required over such a short term (3years) being unaffordable to the regions.

As part of the loan agreement with WG the term was set at 18 years to enable the repayment structure to be affordable for the regions, but there was an expectation that the WRU would look to repay the loan to WG as part of its scheduled corporate refinancing plans in 2024/25 (best endeavours clause).

Officials have been approached to discuss in recent weeks the restructure of the loan as part of meeting the 'best endeavours' clause to repay as part of its corporate refinancing. Discussions are ongoing and advice will follow.

Matchday experience

During the Autumn Series in 2021 there were several incidents that created a media backlash over the negative experience of fans during the games: drunkenness, inappropriate behaviour. The WRU undertook a review which highlighted a few reasons for this; e.g. 8 months of games behind closed doors, each game kicked off later in the afternoon. A number of proposals were put forward (e.g. closing bars at half time) for future games.

Following the 6 Nations in 2022 this was reviewed and generally there was a positive response to some of the changes implemented by WRU in the stadium on matchdays. There was some backlash over the timing of kick off for the game against France (8pm on a Friday evening) and this affected the attendance but in general behaviour was reported to have improved.

The main criticism ahead of the upcoming 6 Nations centre around affordability of tickets, with prices around £130 per ticket quoted.

WRU Transgender policy

The WRU introduced its transgender policy in the autumn, but it has proposed different approaches for the treatment of transwomen and transmen. The former is excluded from participating in women's games but for transmen participation is to be considered on a case-by-case basis following a risk assessment.

There have been discussions with the Deputy Minister for Social Justice and briefings have been provided on this issue. This has also been raised informally with WRU previously - during World Cup in NZ.

Sport Wales Investment model

The recent review of the investment model for funding NGBs has resulted in rugby losing a significant part of the funding it receives from them (£400,000) which is down to £413k.

You have met with Sport Wales to discuss how this has affected a number of sports, including a couple of team sports including football, hockey and rugby. You have met with Sport Wales and set out your expectation that this is reviewed to ensure that there are no adverse effects on participation levels in those affected by this funding change.

Investment in Women's rugby

In 2021 a report was undertaken into the women's game in Wales and a number of recommendations were proposed for implementation.

Since that report the national team players have been offered professional contracts and this has seen an improvement in their performances, including a quarter final appearance at the recent World Cup – which you attended for the game against NZ.

A women's U18s competition kicked off on 8 January with teams from Cardiff, Ospreys, RGC, Dragons and Scarlets competing over 5 rounds.

Business Rates Revaluation

Officials have received a letter from Steve Phillips expressing his concerns regarding the review of the rateable value of all non-domestic properties by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA). Letter attached.



2023 Rating
Revaluation Letter 3 J.

Points to make

Governance Structure

- We discussed the issue of the diversity of the WRU and in particular the lack of female representation on its Board(s) when we were discussing the refinancing of the CLBILS loan last year. Where are the WRU in considering the how to address this and what steps have been taken?
- Rob Butcher stood down after your AGM, and Ieuan has been appointed to replace him, following the rejection of the motion for WRU to appoint an independent chair. What were the main reasons for the members not wanting this?

WRU Loan

- I understand that you (WRU) have approached officials, but it is early days and discussions are ongoing.
- It wouldn't be appropriate to comment until I have a clearer picture of the whole situation

Matchday experience

- It was good to see improvements in the fans; experience last year, do you have any further feedback following the recent Autumn internationals??

WRU Transgender policy

- Sport should be a place where everyone can be themselves, where everyone can take part and where everyone is treated with kindness, dignity and respect. The five UK Sports Councils worked together to develop guidance that was published in September 2021 to support the inclusion of transgender people in sport.
- The Welsh Government believes any decisions on transgender people's participation in any part of society should come from a starting point of inclusion.
- Our position concerning inclusion in sport is clear: LGBTQ+ rights, including trans rights, are human rights. Sport should be for everyone. A place where everyone can take part and where everyone is treated with kindness, dignity and respect.
- Pride Cymru published a statement on 25 July 2022 calling on Welsh Rugby Union "to favour inclusivity for trans women and a case-by-case approach, rather than a blanket exclusion. Trans young women and girls should have the same opportunities as all children and young adults in sports.

Sport Wales Investment Model

- What assessment have you made on the potential impact of the change in funding levels on the community game? Is there anything specific you want to raise today?

Investment in Women's rugby

- So far so good, especially with the national team. I was very pleased to have been able to come to New Zealand to support the team against the NZ, shame about the result but top lose to the tournament winners is no shame.
- I was pleased to see that you have started a regional game at U18s last weekend. How was supported and what are the plans to grow a regional game for women in Wales?

Rating Revaluation

- Preparations are underway for new rating lists to be introduced in Wales, following revaluation, from 1 April 2023. A revaluation comprises the review of the rateable value of all non-domestic properties by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA), which is independent of the Welsh Government.
- Revaluation is carried out to maintain fairness in the non-domestic rating (NDR) system, by redistributing the total amount payable between ratepayers, to reflect relative changes in the property market.
- Ratepayers wishing to understand more about their valuation should contact the VOA directly. You may also appeal your rateable value if you believe it is not correct. The Welsh Government is not able to comment on individual cases.
- The Welsh Government recognises the pressure that the current economic context, including high inflation, is placing on businesses and other ratepayers in Wales. Those pressures are also being felt by the public services we all rely on, and which are themselves reliant on the revenue raised through local taxes.
- On 12 December, the Welsh Government announced that we will be providing rates support package for the next two financial years costing over £460m. This is in addition to our permanent rates relief schemes which provide around £240m of support each year. We remain committed to supporting businesses and other ratepayers through current economic challenges and in their continued recovery from the impacts of the pandemic.
- We will provide all ratepayers whose liability is increasing by more than £300, as a consequence of revaluation, with transitional relief. Any such increase in non-domestic rates liability will be phased in over two years, before reaching their full liability in the third year following revaluation. We are providing £113m over two years to fund this relief, supporting all areas of the tax-base in a consistent and straightforward way.
- We have taken the decision to freeze the non-domestic rates multiplier again for 2023-24, at a cost of more than £200m over the next two years. This will protect ratepayers from inflationary increases to their non-domestic rates bills.
- We will be providing over £140m of non-domestic rates relief for retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in Wales. Eligible ratepayers will receive 75% non-domestic rates relief for the duration of 2023-24. The scheme will be capped at £110,000 per business across Wales and will operate in a similar way to how it has operated during 2022-23.

