

Chairman's Report WF AGM November 2016

My last report was written in anticipation of an AGM in December 2015, but as things turned out the AGM was adjourned until March - due entirely to the lack of a quorum. The Board was involved in a considerable amount of additional work in seeing the AGM through and this had an inevitable impact on and distraction from the day to day management of the company. One of the resulting shortcomings has been a lack of adequate communication with the membership. Mark has kept the website well stocked with information and has sent numerous circulars to the members and clubs, but we recognise that there is a need for the members to voice their concerns and seek explanation of the whys and wherefores of our actions. This is something that the Board intends to rectify in the near future.

Nevertheless, we have still managed to organise our programme of events and have also sent Welsh fencing teams to the major domestic representative events. I leave it to my colleagues to comment further on the competition scene shortly.

The Board has continued to meet regularly to discuss and resolve the many issues that arise and maintain the focus on the development of fencing throughout Wales. We have invested in much needed equipment and are mindful of preserving the resources that will be required should the Board's expression of interest in holding a Commonwealth Federation Junior Cadet Championship event be successful.

We are continuing our dialogue with BFA through the Home Countries Working Group and monthly telephone conferences, but, it must be said, we have differences of opinion on a number of matters. Presently, we are concerned at the interpretation which BF is now giving to 'Recreational' membership and which was not made clear before the new membership scheme was introduced. The Board has strongly voiced its objections, based on the impact on youth events, when beginners must pay such a high membership fee before being allowed even a taste of competition. We are also liaising regularly with SportWales from whom we receive various grants. We have had considerable support in maintaining our coaching grant whilst we resolve the way in which coach education is delivered within the Principality - a matter upon which Peter will comment further.

I think it is appropriate, at this last public meeting concluding my period in the Chair, to reflect on the last 4 years and how fencing has changed and developed.

When I took the Chair it is fair to say that incorporation for Welsh Fencing was still in its infancy and it came at a time when British Fencing was undergoing a review of its own structure and modernisation. The result is that there has been a greater emphasis on the controls of fencing generally. Regulations and constraints have been enhanced over safeguarding and welfare of children and vulnerable adults. Now coaches and team officials are subject to much tighter requirements. Alongside this, BF recognised that they were financially unviable and for that reason the new membership scheme was introduced with a consequent rise in fees across the board.

Commonwealth events at all levels have been held, and although I can take no personal credit, I am pleased to say that the results have reflected well on Welsh Fencing. But there is no room for complacency and there are warning signs regarding the standards of the fencers coming up and concerns over the future structure for coaching.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to thank all those volunteers who have assisted - in whatever capacity - in taking teams away; organising and assisting at competitions and running various courses; also Jayne Clays our Safeguarding and Welfare Officer and Michael Clemitson (who deals with both DBS and membership data). The work of both is essential and goes largely unnoticed. All these people are volunteers and WF could not carry on without them. We are short of sufficient support workers to whom we can devolve roles and share workloads and I urge those who have relevant experience and training to come forward to help out.

I would also like to thank our retiring secretary Lyn Robinson and her predecessor Hilary Rees.

Finally, I must express my gratitude to the members of the Board who have served with me in continuity throughout my chairmanship. Their hard work and unswerving support has been essential and a great comfort. In particular, I am indebted to Peter, who has been my mentor and invaluable support throughout my period of office.

David Rees

27/11/2016

The financial statements reflect the transactions of the year ended 31 March 2016 and include accrued amounts for the period.

The Board's intention is to support fencing activities throughout the region at both grass roots and elite levels while protecting sufficient reserves for the organization to be able to continue should grant funding cease or membership subscriptions reduce. Fencing activities include the sport of fencing, the training and improvement of coaches across the region, the training and improvement of referees and armorers and the provision of relevant administrative activities such as child protection, safeguarding and first aid.

Our income comes from grant aid, membership subscriptions, competition entry fees and payment for courses. This year we also received some income from the closure of bank accounts where clubs have ceased to operate. (1,991.99). Our total income for the year including grant funding was £53,474. The increase in income was due to higher competition entry fees which includes fencers' contributions towards the Junior Commonwealth in South Africa.

We received grant aid support of £22,000 from the Welsh Sports Council, this figure has not changed for several years. This money is used for development of the sport, to pay for coach training courses which have been held in North and South Wales at Gresford and Cardiff. The funds are also used to purchase equipment, to support Welsh teams representing the region at international and domestic events such as the Winton, Cadet Winton, 5 Nations and Commonwealths.

The Board also applies to the Welsh Sports Council for funds to support identified elite fencers. These funds are identified as 'talent cymru' and are distributed to the fencers subject to meeting training and performance criteria. This year three fencers did not receive the second part of the funding as they failed to meet the criteria to do so. The balance of £2,250 is held on the Balance Sheet in creditors, this will be returned to the Sports Council for Wales.

Our membership subscriptions are received by British Fencing and then paid to us on an ad hoc basis throughout the year after British Fencing has deducted their share of the subscription and from the current year onwards charges for handling the money. Our membership subscriptions were £7,936.

In order to encourage participation and try to grow the enthusiasm for the sport we keep competition entry fees as low as possible. Total income from competitions was £21,196, which includes £6,482 of fencer contributions towards the costs of participation in the Junior Commonwealth. The Welsh Open has continued to generate a surplus however this has reduced annually as the costs of referees and other officials from outside the region has continued to increase while entry numbers have fallen. The Board and the sub-committee who take on the huge and onerous responsibility of organizing and running the Welsh Open have reviewed the entry numbers and looked at other similar competitions and have established that entries to competitions are falling across the UK, indeed the Bristol Open has ceased to exist. This year the organisers of the Open have decided to offer cash prizes and

later start times to encourage entries, we shall see what impact this has on the profitability of the event in the 2017 accounts.

In the 2015 /16 financial year the Board supported coaching courses in North and South Wales charging a nominal sum for participants, the costs of these courses was £2,257 against income of £330. In the current year (2016/17) the Board has advertised for coach providers and implemented a new system that we hope will encourage more individuals to undertake coaching qualifications and lead to more coaches of a higher caliber.

The Directors are not remunerated and the Company does not operate a PAYE scheme. Occasional out of pocket expenses are reimbursed to the Board executive members on receipt of a valid invoice. In the year ended 31 March 2016 the following amounts were paid:

David Rees £nil

Allan Banks £nil

Caroline Wheeler £nil

Mark Ridsdale £nil

Peter Stewart £nil

In addition to this when we meet we have tea and coffee which WF pays for, the total spent on the execs tea and coffee at the WIS for the year was £31.42p and is included in the administration total.

We also paid £2,282.37 net of contributions from fencers to support the UKSG. The Board has continued to support this event as it is one of the two opportunities for our younger fencers to take part in competition against the other UK regions.

Our costs for the year totaled £44,974 – Coaching costs (coach Cymru & other coaching costs) £7,847; cost of domestic events – this includes the closed competitions, the open and the senior and cadet Winton £16,699, International competitions – 5 Nations, junior commonwealth and UKSG £15,636, other costs (bank charges, depreciation and general administration) £4,792.

General administration costs have increased as they include £593.53p of insurance costs for the Junior Commonwealth and £556.85p of costs for new medals.

Overall for the year we have a surplus of £8,500.

Our balance sheet shows we hold funds of £52,709 in cash at the bank and that we have spent £27,818 on new fencing equipment which includes roll out pistes and scoring boxes.

The Board constantly monitors the funds held as reserves as it is a careful balancing act to ensure we have sufficient money to keep the organization operating for at least the next twelve months but do not hold too much in reserve so as to have our grant funding restricted while also trying to be fair as to how the monies are distributed between support for grass roots fencing and supporting our regional

representatives and elite fencers at both junior and senior level. This task is becoming increasingly difficult as all Sports Councils are having their funding reviewed which always has a knock on effect to the governing bodies of all sports. In addition to this threat to our income British fencing has changed the subscription structure and we still do not know what impact if any this will have on our membership income. For these reasons the Board will continue to operate a policy of prudence towards expenditure.

2016 AGM REPORT

During the last year I have attended all Board Meetings and participated fully in the day to day tasks involved with being a Board Member.

Though not holding the Coaching portfolio I have been active in trying to resolve the lack of clarity which exists re the availability of a comprehensive Coach Education System by our National Governing body, the BFA. The BFA have concentrated on the delivery of coach education but are still I understand in the developmental stage of producing syllabus etc. Given this situation, WF have continued to offer coach education sessions to our members both in N & S Wales and are using WF Level One, English Fencing and British Academy of Fencing coach education materials, until such time as BFA materials are available.

I have organised Red Cross First Aid Courses on behalf of the Board in Cardiff and Aberystwyth for early next year – details are on the WF website. I trust that these courses will be well supported by our coaches.

In my report to the last AGM I highlighted issues with our membership totals. We must be constantly endeavouring to drive up numbers. 47% of our membership comes from 3 just clubs, the remaining clubs average only 13 members / club. This is neither a healthy or sustainable situation, I can foresee more clubs folding if this trend continues and unless resolution is found to the problem of Recreational fencers not being allowed to compete, even at a low, fun, introductory level.

This concludes my report.

Peter Stewart

26/11/16

Welsh Open 2016

This was another successful year for the Welsh Open

We have made changes over the last few years to increase the number of fencers entering each weapon and they seem to be having a positive effect. This year we have given cash prizes to the top four fencers in each weapon.

We were also nominated for Junior Epee which affected the Epee entries.

I do not have the figures for the number who entered, the completion, but the table below shows the number of people who fenced in each competition.

| | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Men's Foil | 117 | 109 | 72 | 73 | 56 | 63 | 62 | 66 | 102 |
| Men's Epee | 172 | 136 | 127 | 113 | 96 | 87 | 61 | 64 | 95 |
| Men's Sabre | 95 | 84 | 58 | 91 | 94 | 82 | 58 | 54 | 49 |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Women's Foil | 66 | 71 | 62 | 60 | 48 | 52 | 29 | 37 | 50 |
| Women's Epee | 91 | 101 | 83 | 73 | 77 | 95 | 47 | 67 | 101 |
| Women's Sabre | 55 | 48 | 33 | 45 | 46 | 55 | 32 | 43 | 27 |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 596 | 549 | 435 | 455 | 417 | 434 | 289 | 331 | 424 |

Overall the numbers for 2016 show a rise from 2015. Some of this is due to the Epee being a nominated weapon, but the rise in the entries for the Men's and Women's foil cannot be due to this.

As you may be aware the Bristol Open was cancelled this year and there is no guarantee that it will return. I understand that other events have also been cancelled in recent years due to lack of support.

In the light of that we feel that our policy of attracting high quality referees and equipping our armoury with qualified armours is justified.

We face further issues next year when Leon Paul will start to charge for the rental of the equipment we need to run the competition, we will have to pay for First Aid support and the total number of pistes available will reduce, although the latter is not so much of a concern.

Allan Banks

Vice-Chair, Welsh fencing

Director's Report: Mark Ridsdale

Governance

- WF annually completes a Governance review for SportWales. We complete this on a voluntary basis as it demonstrates good behaviour, but also allows us to validate our activities. It offers us independent evidence that we are conforming to best practice, particularly when it comes to the management of external funds
- This is an online process, requiring us to self-assess our capabilities and processes across a framework of 6 key structural components (governance, strategic planning, financial management, HR, organisational policies, risk management). These areas are broken into 60+ specific outcomes. For each, we have to self-assess our level of assurance, with detailed notes explaining the assessment, and with evidence attached.
- Each year, we develop an action plan based on the previous years' assessment to drive positive change, which we aim to follow during the year
- Following submission, our response is assessed by independent consultants, and a score-sheet & detailed response provided.
- Scoring is based on alignment and adequacy. Alignment measures if the assessor agrees with our assessment; adequacy measures if our responses and evidence are adequate. Our scores were 100% for alignment, 80% for adequacy. This equates to a traffic light score of 11 out of a max 15 (range -2 to 15), placing us as Green, once again.
- On review of the independent analysis of the submission just completed, we will again develop an action plan to drive our Governance activities through the year.
- Its worth noting that we are the ONLY NGB who complete this process voluntarily, and that this serves us well. Our contact at SportWales uses this throughout any assessment of our funding requests. Our anticipation is that at some point, funding will become dependent on this. Its easier to keep this ticking over and improving, rather than have to re-start from nothing.

Youth Events

- This year we ran the standard portfolio of youth events, across foil, epee & sabre, plus the BYC Qualifier events.
- Just over 100 fenced in the BYC qualifiers, consistent with last year
- There were more fencers across the Youth events, with a total of 130 fencers, a 13% increase over the previous year
- The Welsh Youth League continues to be maintained by Fran, at Russell Swords, and gives us a view of those young fencers actively involved in the various leagues. We will be able to use this as part of the selection for events, such as Cadet Winton, and School Games, but it will only be part of the decision making. Selector discretion will continue to play a part, but this will give a broader pool of names from whom to select.
- There was a plan to introduce an event in Wrexham, as part of this programme, but that failed to come to fruition. We will aim to do better next year.
- The membership scheme has also undergone changes that will impact on the youth environment. The 'recreational' category has been introduced, and BFA are actively looking at clubs to establish more recreational events, with a view to developing a broader base of fencers. It will be interesting to see how this plays out. We have raised a request for clubs to consider how they could do this, but there has been a limited response so far.
- I think its also worth mentioning the School Games. We again sent along a competitive team & were rewarded with a range of medals:
 - Individuals, 1 Gold (Carafo), 3 Bronze (Ren, Watkins & Hill)
 - Teams: 2 Silver (ME, MF), 4 Bronze (WE, WF, WS, MS)