

David Rees Chairman's report for WF AGM

We have had a busy year with the Junior/Cadet Commonwealths on which Mark will report. The workload of the Board is ever increasing and my role, as chairman and named head of WF, is to represent the organisation in the various dealings and considerable correspondence with third parties and members. In particular, since the last AGM, I have been heavily involved in discussions with the BFA and the other Home Countries over the new membership scheme which has recently been announced. In addition to the constant flow of e-mails, there have been regular 2 hour telephone conferences and a face to face meeting in London.

I also have regular contact with Sport Wales, primarily, over Grant issues. We have been supported to date with annual funding for Welsh Fencing itself, but we also receive a modest amount for our top fencers.

It is within my remit to set the Agenda for and chair meetings of the Executive Board and we have held 6 meetings during the year. I am very fortunate to have chaired a Board of extremely competent and committed Directors who have put in a lot of hard work on behalf of the membership. I take this opportunity to thank them for their support.

Welsh Open

From the organizer's viewpoint the 2015 Welsh open ran smoothly.

I have not been on the forums, but I am not aware of any negativity about the event, and we received several comments during the competition praising the organization.

Having said that the number of fencers entering the competition still causes concern.

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
Men's Foil	117	109	72	73	56	63	62	66
Men's Epee	172	136	127	113	96	87	61	64
Men's Sabre	95	84	58	91	94	82	58	54
Women's Foil	66	71	62	60	48	52	29	37
Women's Epee	91	101	83	73	77	95	47	67
Women's Sabre	55	48	33	45	46	55	32	43
Total	596	549	435	455	417	434	289	331
%change		92.11%	79.23%	104.60%	91.65%	104.08%	66.59%	114.53%
2015:2008								55.54%

Overall the numbers for 2015 show a slight rise from 2014, but are still only 56% of the 2008 figure. What can't be seen from the figures is that the quality of the fencers, from the NIF count was higher in 2015.

As organizers we have been well aware of the falling numbers, but all of the major opens seem to be suffering in the same way.

This year Mark Ridsdale tried an 'early bird' scheme of discounting the entry fee for fencers paying before a certain date. We also moved the start times of all weapons back by one hour. This may have contributed to the increase in entries, but without continuing for a few years it will be difficult to say.

The good news is that the competition does still make a profit and that profit is used by Welsh Fencing to continue to provide as much support as we can to our fencers.

Allan Banks

Vice-Chair, Welsh fencing

The financial statements reflect the transactions of the year ended 31 March 2015 and include accrued amounts for the period.

The Boards intention is to support fencing activities through out 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 also of armorer's.

Our income comes from grant aid, membership subscriptions, competition entry fees and payment for courses. This year we also received some income from the sale of equipment where clubs had ceased to run. (2,739.12p). Our total income for the year including grant funding was £44,802.

We received grant aid support of £22,000 from the Welsh Sports Council and 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 and 5 Nations.

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.

Our membership subscriptions are received by British Fencing and then paid to us on an ad hoc basis through out the year after British Fencing has deducted their share of the subscription. Our membership subscriptions were £7,475.

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 £12,040. 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. Various measures have been taken to encourage entry which have had some limited effect. The sub committee and board will continue to monitor the profitability of the Open as we do not want to slip in to a deficit situation with our premier event.

During the year the Board decided to organize various coach training days at a subsidized cost. The intention is to improve the standard of club coaching which we hope will lead to better membership retention.

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 2015 the following amounts were paid:

David Rees £280 reimbursement of hotel costs to attend CCF in Largs including time to meet other National Chairmen and discuss future CCF

Allan Banks £nil

Caroline Wheeler £nil

Mark Ridsdale £nil for his role as a Director and web manager but was paid the same expenses as the other officials for attending the Winton Cup on behalf of Welsh fencing (£200) NB also paid to Dan Perry and Lyn Robinson.

Peter Stewart Peter is not paid for his role as a Director but raises invoices for his work as Welsh Development manager these are met from the SCW grant £8,820 Coach Cymru, and administration costs of £838.30 (which are reimbursed expenses).

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 £44.36 and is included in the administration total.

During 2014/15 WF supported fencers at the senior Commonwealth held in Largs which increased WF expenses in respect of international competitions.

We also paid £2,864 net of contributions from fencers to support the UKSG. Previously this event had been funded entirely by other agencies, the Board decided that the event should be supported as this 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 £46,316 – Coaching costs (coach Cymru & other coaching costs) £9,908; cost of domestic events – this includes the closed competitions, the open and the senior and cadet Winton £17,054, International competitions – 5 Nations, senior commonwealth and UKSG £15,989, other costs (bank charges, depreciation and general administration) £3,365.

Overall for the year we suffered a deficit of £1,514.

Our balance sheet shows we hold funds of £60,368 in cash at the bank and were owed £6,539 towards the Junior Commonwealth.

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 is changing the subscription structure and we 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.

Peter Stewart – Board Members Report for WF AGM

As a Board Member I have attended all WF Board Meetings during the year and I have contributed, I hope positively, in helping with the considerable increasing workload and responsibilities which the Board have to deal with.

In addition to general Board matters my Board portfolio/responsibility has been that of Coaching. I have carried out the Coaching remit, as agreed with the Sports Council, and to whom I report to directly, for the delivery of coach education throughout the Principality. As members will know this includes the provision of sessions in North Wales delivered by Peter Northam. In addition to the administrative nature of the work I have coached at all of the Friday youth sessions, Made club and area visits, attended coach education events, various competitions etc etc.

At the last AGM a request was made to run a Youth Training day of the type we did very successfully for a number of years. I have not been able to do this as the problem I found, and discussed with David, was finding a suitable 'slot' in the calendar which did not clash with school activities, holidays, and the many 'training camps' now available in a very competitive market place.

Looking forward, major priorities for WF continue to be addressing the problems of retention within the clubs, maintaining/raising Welsh fencing standards, both Junior and Adult, halting the decline in membership affiliations, and the decreasing pool of suitable candidates, senior and junior, vying for selection in representative fixtures. Key to tackling these issues is the necessity to raise the quality of the coaching available to our members. I would encourage all who currently coach to continually endeavour to improve their knowledge and skills, and for new coaches to seek out coach education of the highest standards available. If nothing less, we owe it to our pupils to offer them the highest standard of tuition that we can.

This concludes my report.

Director's Report: Mark Ridsdale

Governance

- WF annually complete 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 try 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 score were 100% for alignment, 85% for adequacy. This equates to a traffic light score of 11 out of a max 15 (range -2 to 15), placing us as Green.

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
- There were slightly more fencers across the Youth events, with a total of 115 fencers
- This year, we have instigated the Welsh Youth League, aimed at tracking activity across all events, covering Welsh events, LPJS and Cadet/Junior events. Maintained by Fran, at Russell Swords, this will give us a better 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 is also a plan to introduce an event in Wrexham, as part of this programme.

Cadet & Junior Commonwealth Championships

- Held in Cape Town, South Africa, I took a team of 13 Cadet and Junior Fencers, along with Neale Thomas & Jayne Ware. We didn't take a full team, our preference being to select on quality. We were there to win medals, not to make up the numbers.
- The location meant that this was going to be an expensive event to attend, but WF were able to offer significant support to the fencers
- The team were extremely professional in their approach and their behaviour. We were clear on our expectations and they responded well. Considering those fencing had to be in breakfast by 6am, I note that we didn't have to call one of them. They were all on time, and well prepared. They also supported each other well throughout the week, and gelled well as a team.
- We were very pleased with the results:
 - Megan Ware – Silver Medal, CWS
 - George Morris – Bronze Medal, CME
 - Henry Talbot – Bronze Medal, JMS
 - Men's Sabre Team – Silver Medal
 - Men's Epee Team – Bronze Medal