

Chairman's Report – Mark Ridsdale

Once again, welcome to the Welsh Fencing AGM. It's an important part of the year, as it gives us an opportunity to talk to you face-to-face, and to outline some of the activities that have taken place. Much of this is behind the scenes, and really not 'fencing' at all, but it's important in ensuring we continue to deliver against our strategy, particularly in such times of turbulence, both political and financial.

I am going to cover off four topics, some in more details than others; some I will hand off to my colleagues here to discuss.

My main topics are:

- Governance & Funding
- Safeguarding
- Communication
- Volunteering

Governance & Funding first.

Once again, we find ourselves in the middle of change. The landscape of governance within Sport in Wales continues to change. This is a transition year, moving away from the previous governance model that required a highly time-intensive exercise each year of self-evaluation, data provision, and external analysis of our self-evaluation. That frankly took way too much time for very little benefit. Sport Wales has developed a new strategy, which outlines a commitment to investing its resources differently. As part of this a new Investment Model is under development. The Investment Model requires a significant change in the way that Sport Wales and partners work and whilst the Investment Model will be phased in, we will be implementing aspects of the approach within the 2020-21 year Partnership Agreements. The first stage is going through right now, and requires a much more 'light touch' approach from Sport Wales. Effectively, we have to self-certify against seven key questions, enabling us to submit funding requests. That works well for us, because we have those requirements in place, and Sport Wales know that. That means they can focus on other NGBs who may not have those in place. This year is a maximum of standstill budget, but the change will allow us to bid for increased funding in future. Funding request will be against a number of investment priority areas – foundations, participation, progression, performance, and succeed. We are already starting to plan for these and have signposted some areas of development that we would like to move into, should the resources be available. That's our way of saying what we would like to do, rather than us simply saying we will just do more of the same. Sport Wales need to see our plans for growing the sport, not just maintaining it.

Safeguarding

I don't plan to cover this in detail, as clearly Tania is much closer to this subject area. I just want to emphasise its importance within the sporting arena, and particularly its impact in the club environment. I can only see the Safeguarding requirements getting more onerous, and I believe it's important that we embrace these changes. They are there for a reason, and it's important that we pay it the appropriate level of attention. We not only need to resource

it appropriately, we also need to be able to demonstrate that we are paying it the correct level of attention. It's a key leg of our capability framework, and we have successfully achieved level 1 status; we need to maintain that, as well as have an aspiration to achieve level 2. Why wouldn't we want to do that?

Communication

This is always a challenge in any organisation, so we are continually striving to improve. Clearly, the website is our primary communication channel, so that's where to go to find out what's happening when, who's selected for what, how selection happens. However, one area that was particularly difficult was selection for events. It is such a time-consuming and email-intensive process, historically its been really challenging. Some people are great, and respond immediately; some don't see the emails as they go into spam mailboxes; some simply don't do email. So, in an aim to improve on this, we have selected the teamo app as our communication tool of choice, and are requesting fencers to register for the app, particularly if you are expecting or hoping to be selected. It offers a closed and secure whatsapp-type messaging environment for us to select teams, and to communicate that selection. It offer a simple tap-based response to reply, removing the requirement for email responses. It allows parents to register their young fencers, so they can see and respond to all communications. Its GDPR-compliant so the right people can see the right information. It reduces the need for paperwork as key details are registered in the app (such as medical notes etc). It also supports simple invoicing and Stripe payments, just as you pay for your BFA licence. I am not claiming it will solve every problem – nothing will. We still have people who don't register, or don't respond, but I think things are improving. So, if you are requested to register, I would urge you to do so. If you need more information, there is a FAQ section on our website describing is privacy and data sharing policies. We pay for this service, so your details are not being sold to advertisers.

Volunteering

I talk about this every year, and for good reasons. This entire organisation runs on volunteers, so if you go to an event, its being run by volunteers, if you send your young fencers to an international event, its been organised by volunteers, and is being managed by Team managers who are volunteers. If you fence at the Welsh Open, its organised by volunteers. Unfortunately, we have a limited number of people who do volunteer, and that puts pressure on them. I think its only a matter of time before we have to cancel something because we simply don't have the resources to support it, and that would be extremely disappointing. So, why don't you ask what you can do to help? Let one of us know that you are interested and we can talk to you about the options and the requirements. The more volunteers we have, the more we can spread the load. So that's my pitch for new help. What about the current help?

First of all, can I say thanks to all the members of the Board, who all spend time behind the scenes, making sure that fencing continues to thrive. So to you, I say 'thank-you.'

Michael continues to manage our dbs data, working closely with BFA and Sport80, neither of whom are as responsive as they should be. Michael – thank you.

Gethin and Fran continue to maintain our Twitter world (although I think its mainly Gethin!). Always interesting, always getting our image out there in the world of Twitter. With 500+ followers worldwide, our 'brand' is seen every day. Gethin – thank you.

Referees. This cohort is small but developing well, and it was nice to see a fair number of Welsh referees at the recent Welsh Open. Considering it was the largest UK fencing event this year, that's quite impressive. But, guess what, we need more? We need these when its time to run our youth events.

Armourers. These come along to all our Welsh events, and make sure our any issues are quickly sorted. And its great to have Welsh armourers at the Welsh Open. So, thanks – Nigel, Simon & Michael.

Team Managers. Crucial for us to be able to send teams to events such as Cadet Winton, Senior Winton, Challenge Wratistavia in Poland, Y5N (in Ireland this year), S5N (in Ireland this year). So thanks, Fran, Rachel, Jayne, Elaine, Carl, Tania, Rich, Matt. Time to start planning for the next Junior & Cadet Commonwealths in India in 2021.

The Welsh Open team. They ran a great event this year, this time the largest event in the UK calendar, with 428 fencers, over 26 pistes in 2 halls, 22 of those metallic. There were 1218 poule bouts fenced, and 422 d/e bouts, finishing at around 6:30 each day. All results were presented on rolling displays, with results posted to the web in real-time. That's a great job, so well done to Allan, Tom & Sarah, with Pat running the referees. Again, we could do with more help there.

So, in conclusion, thanks to everyone for their support throughout the year. I will let my colleagues cover off the fencing side.

Treasurer's Report – Caroline Wheeler

The financial statements reflect the transactions of the year ended 31 March 2019 and include accrued amounts for the period.

This has been an expensive year for Welsh Fencing as both the Junior and Senior Commonwealth events were held in 2018/19. The Junior was held in Newcastle while the senior event took place in Australia. The Board allocated funds to both events, paying entry fees, referee costs and some subsidies to the fencers. The International competition costs of £40,430 include Junior Commonwealth gross costs £20,892.40p, Senior Commonwealth gross costs £14,133.79 and the Polish trip gross costs of £5,403.85. Contributions towards those events are included in income within Competition entry fees.

The costs of Domestic events has also increased from £31,560 to £39,549. This figure includes BYC entry £1,754, Senior Winton £1,843.90, Cadet Winton £2,454, GB Cup £466, Youth 5 Nations £19,069.38p, Welsh Open £10,923.71, Welsh nationals £651.47p and additional hall hire costs of £2,386.77p due to the reduction in premise grant.

Competition entry fees of £34,557 includes income from Youth 5 Nations £10,395.20p, Cadet Winton £520, Welsh Open £13,053.40p, Junior Commonwealth £7,539 and Polish trip £3,050.

The net cost or income generated to WF of each event is as follows

Junior Commonwealth	£13,353.40p
Senior Commonwealth	£14,133.79p
Polish trip	£2,353.85p
Senior Winton	£1,843.90p
Cadet Winton	£1,934
Youth 5 Nations	£8,674.18p
BYC	£1,754
GB Cup	£466
Welsh Nationals	£651.74p
Welsh Open	-£2,129.69
Hall hire	£2,386.77p

The cost of the Youth 5 Nations, a new event intended to replace the UKSG, was to have been shared with the other home countries. Ireland and England have both paid towards the event unfortunately both Scotland and Northern Ireland withdrew at short notice and have not honoured their agreement to contribute, we had expected to receive £5,434.64p,

£2,662.32p from Scotland and £2,772.32p from Northern Ireland, which would have kept our costs for the event at £3,239.54p.

These costs have resulted in a net deficit for the year of £29,857 and have depleted our reserves from £84,333 to £54,476. The Board has recognised that the costs of the Commonwealth events will not be incurred again until 2021/2022 and has put in place budgetary measures to recoup reserves ready to support these two major events again.

We are also aware that the reduction in grant income from Sport Wales will continue, we received £18,000 again in 2018/19 but have been warned to expect further cuts in 2019/20. Talent Cymru of £3,000 was received and distributed in full to the eligible fencers.

Income from membership subscriptions has remained stable at £8,440 compared to £8,283 last year. We have continued to provide discounted coaching and first aid courses. The Board has offered coaching courses in both North and South Wales. The costs of the courses has increased from £2,728 to £3,766. We are now using venues outside of the WIS as our premises grant does not stretch to using Sophia Gardens for coaching events, we are fortunate to receive a discounted rate from Russell Swords for the use of their venue.

Administration costs have reduced as depreciation is lower. The general admin costs includes the purchase of medals, tea and coffee for Board meetings, train travel for attendance at meetings and other minor expenditure.

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 2019 no amounts were paid to Directors in their capacity as a Director, some Directors supported Welsh Fencing events in the role of team manager and were then reimbursed for their costs in respect of those specific events.

Included with in the administration costs is £210.53p which relates to the costs of tea and coffee when the Board meets, tea and coffee for the AGM and room hire.

Our balance sheet shows we hold funds of £47,768 in cash at the bank and £9,231 in assets. The debtors and creditors on the balance sheet relate to amounts to be received and paid in respect of the Poland trip which took place in March 2019 and a coaching invoice for a coaching day that took place at the end of March.

The Board regularly reviews the financial position of our organisation and carefully considers how to allocate funds to obtain the best value and return for Welsh Fencing. Although this year has seen Welsh Fencing suffer a significant deficit this was expected, as financing two Commonwealth events in one year is exceptional. Based on our income forecasts and planned spending the Board is satisfied that the level of deficit will not be repeated in 2020. Indeed, the six months to 30 September 2019 shows a surplus.

Director's Report - Allan Banks

Welsh Open 2019

The table below shows the number of people who fenced in each competition over the last 11 years.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
MF	109	72	73	56	63	62	66	102	100	73	109
ME	136	127	113	96	87	61	64	95	110	90	78
MS	84	58	91	94	82	58	54	49	48	50	52
WF	71	62	60	48	52	29	37	50	51	47	73
WE	101	83	73	77	95	47	67	101	115	85	79
WS	48	33	45	46	55	32	43	27	46	29	37
Total	549	435	455	417	434	289	331	424	470	374	428

The peak number of fencers was in 2008 when we had 596 fencers over the weekend.

An innovation this year was including some formal referee examinations, organized in conjunction with British Fencing. From discussions we had with those involved this was a welcome inclusion and it would be good to include this in future years.

The lead referee's report comments that this was a happy and successful competition, that the competition ran to time, that the organisers and helpers worked well together and basically we delivered all that the competitors and referees attending have come to expect from 'The Welsh'. We received similar comments from competitors.

The report also contains suggestions for improving the competition both for the fencers and for the referees. These will be taken onboard for the 2020 competition.

It's also worth noting that 2020 will be the 50th Welsh Open. Over that time it has developed from a competition organized by fencers and run to provide an open competition in Wales, through a period when it provided the funds needed to support Welsh Fencing and Welsh Fencers into the current competition that promotes Welsh fencing as a sign of quality, development and support.

We will continue to look at what is necessary for Welsh Fencing to support the Welsh Open and also ensure its reputation as an event that is worth attending.

GDPR

We have not received any challenges that fall under the GDPR regulations.

On a personal note, this has been my final year serving on the board.

It has been an interesting, enjoyable and at times challenging experience. I believe our current board has the most diverse range of experience of any of the boards I have served on and that Welsh Fencing needs someone actively involved in fencing in the role of Vice-Chair to enable it to continue to develop and face the challenges ahead.

I wish the members of the board every success in the coming years.

Director Report – Matt Russell

Welsh Fencing – AGM Report: Junior Fencing

2019 has undoubtedly been a successful year for the junior members of Welsh Fencing.

The first major event of 2019 was Challenge Wratistavia. Thanks again to all the team officials and coaches that support this important development event for our young fencers. Across all age groups and weapons, the Welsh fencers did themselves and Welsh Fencing proud. For many fencers, this is probably the first experience of such a high level competition, and one where there is a cut after the poule.

A 30% cut is particularly brutal, yet most of our fencers made their way through to the DE's, with some particularly positive results showing their ability to fence long and strong through some long days fencing. This experience will prove vital as they develop their fencing careers.

At the 2019 BYC's, it was a real positive to see a significant number of our fencers go and perform strongly. A summary of these results are below:

BYC	Gold	Silver	Bronze	L8	L16	L32
	1	2	2	3	11	20

Throughout the year, our fencers give a significant Welsh presence at the 2 main junior series held across the UK, with some particularly strong performances in 2019.

In the Elite Epee and LPJS series, Welsh fencers have performed well, and the results are summarised below:

Elite Epee	U12	U14	U17
Boys	1 & 2	9	
Girls	9 & 20	2 & 37	7 & 18

LPJS	Sabre			Foil			Epee		
	U11	U13	U15	U11	U13	U15	U11	U13	U15
Boys	3 & 13	4,6,20,21,35,38,55	2,17,20,21	2 & 3	8,19,23,40,43	7 & 15	26	1,2,4,11,14,32,33,43	7
Girls	14,17,23	2	14,20	24 & 36	39 & 48	13	6	13	1

The Youth 5 Nations saw a number of the younger cadets (and a few more experienced hands) take to the road to Dublin. Full results are available on the WF website, but the highlights include:

- WS Individual – Gold, WS Team – Silver
- ME Team – Bronze
- WE individual – Gold & Silver, WE Team - Silver

It is testament to the strength and development of our cadet fencers that we have had several of them represent Wales at Senior Events including the Senior Winton and Senior 5 Nations. As well as being used as development events, these fencers have earned their places on merit, and proudly and successfully represented Welsh Fencing.

Finally, special recognition should go to our 8 cadet and junior fencers that have been selected to represent GBR in 2019.

Director's Report – Tania Craig

Safeguarding report for AGM

Since the last AGM there have been four reports been made to me as Welsh Saceguarding Lead. All of them have been welfare based rather than safeguarding. All have been resolved / dealt with with no on going issues.

A number of people have undertaken their Team Manager training at all three levels. This is great as it gives us some flexibility when taking groups of fencers away. As part of the training they all complete their safeguarding training - all three elements of it.

There have been a number of welfare training courses on offer across Wales through different sporting bodies which a number of welfare officers have attended

I have attended all the National Sports Governing Body update meetings with Sport Wales this year and have been able to forge some solid links to other governing bodies. One of the positive from this is we now have a 'buddy' who we can work with to support us in achieving our Level 2 Safeguarding accreditation. We have many of the elements in place already but with Zita's support I hope we will get there a bit more smoothly

Mark has opened discussion with the Welsh Sports Association and I am hoping that they will be able to support us in the delivery of more local welfare training in the future, in conjunction with other sporting bodies.