

P-05-1027 - Allow Welsh domestic football clubs to play friendlies allow supporters to attend matches

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 13 Hydref 2020
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Petition title: Allow Welsh domestic football clubs to play friendlies allow supporters to attend matches

Text of petition: At the moment, only 'elite' athletes can play football matches in Wales. These games are being played behind closed doors, without spectators.

In England, clubs below the sixth tier are now admitting spectators at a reduced capacity to friendlies, In Scotland, fans are back at PRO14 matches.

Providing clubs meet the guidelines presented, they should be allowed to play friendlies with spectators.



1. Background

As the Welsh Government's letter responding to this petition states:

Organised outdoor activities, including team sports and classes, involving up to 30 people have been able to go ahead. On 3 August, some restrictions on the holding of sports events (including team sports and classes) outside were lifted. Now groups (all participants/competitors, ground staff and spectators who are there for the specific purpose of the event) of up to 30, from different households, are able to meet outside as long as they are able to maintain social distancing rules. The Welsh Government's advice 'Sport, recreation and leisure: guidance for a phased return' provides general guidance on organised outdoor activities.

This Welsh Government clarifies that outdoor sports are able to take place even where social distancing is not possible:

outdoor gatherings are limited to 30 people, and all reasonable measures must be taken to maintain social distancing unless the gathering is an outdoor team sport.

2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government has worked with Sport Wales - the national organisation responsible for developing and promoting sport and physical activity in Wales - to support sport through the pandemic.

Back in April, Sport Wales repurposed a total of £9 million - from Welsh Government, National Lottery and its own resources - to support sport and physical activity organisations during the pandemic. This package did not involve any new funding from the Welsh Government.

The first stage of this funding was a £550,000 Emergency Relief Fund for not-for-profit community sport.

The next phase was the Sport Resilience Fund, designed to help sports organisations operate in a world of coronavirus. This included the £4 million Be Active fund to support grassroots clubs and community organisations and £4.5

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million to support larger organisations, such as sports governing bodies, local authorities and leisure trusts.

On 17 September the Welsh Government announced a £14 million Sport and Leisure Recovery Fund. The Welsh Government has said:

The sport and leisure recovery fund is designed to help provide essential support to sports clubs and organisations, independent providers and sporting events which have suffered a significant loss of revenue over recent months. The fund also makes available funding for innovation in local authority leisure centres and leisure trusts which complements funding available for increased costs and loss of income from the local government hardship fund.

The Deputy Minister recently told the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee that this is new money which had not previously been allocated to the sector.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee published a report into the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on sport.

The Committee heard that some of the sports that attract the largest crowds also attract significant broadcasting revenues, mitigating the impact of this lost match-day income. As Jonathan Ford from FAW told CWLC in June “at that top level, the economics work. The money from the TV markets in football is quite substantial, and the economics will allow that to survive”.

Domestic and grassroots sport, by contrast, has a greater reliance on match-day income from box office and clubhouse takings. The FAW explained that there are “massive financial difficulties ahead” in this tier of sport, and that there would probably be “fewer clubs at the end of it”.

The unequal impact of the crisis is not just one based on scale, but also gender. The FAW warned that recent growth in the female game “could be completely torn up on the back of this pandemic”.

The Welsh Government accepted all the Committee’s recommendations.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.