

Response to the Petitions Committee Call for Evidence on the Establishment of a Welsh Cricket Team

Sport Wales Consultation Response

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Sport Wales is the national organisation responsible for developing and promoting sport and physical activity in Wales. We are the main adviser on sporting matters to the Welsh Government and are responsible for distributing National Lottery funds to both elite and grassroots sport in Wales. We aim to not only improve the level of sports participation at grassroots level but also provide our aspiring athletes with the support required to compete successfully on the world stage

1. Do you feel that the action called for is reasonable and/or feasible?

We would like to take this opportunity to emphasise that the establishment of a Wales cricket team and the decision to take membership of the ICC rather than the ECB is a matter for the governing body of cricket, Cricket Wales, and we would be supportive of their decision on this matter. Any discussion around this issue would need to be framed by what is best for cricket in Wales on both a participation and elite level.

Recently the Cricket Board of Wales and the Welsh Cricket Association merged to form a single governing body that oversees both the junior and adult recreational game in Wales. We welcomed this decision to provide more joined up governance for the game in Wales and are continuing to work with the new governing body, Cricket Wales, to develop the game further. In 2011/12 Sport Wales has provided over £550,000 of funding to Cricket Wales for this purpose. The grant we provide is also supplemented by funding directly from the ECB, which is outlined in the response to the committee made by Cricket Wales.

The governing body has also been working to continue to develop a close working relationship with Glamorgan CC, which represents the professional game in Wales. We have been very pleased with how both agencies have worked together to ensure that there is a joined up pathway for those wanting to play cricket in Wales.

At present both Cricket Wales and Glamorgan CC are of the view that the establishment of a Welsh cricket team would not be in the long term benefit for the growth of the game in Wales and we support this position.

2. Is there evidence to support the assertion that the current arrangements mean that Welsh cricketers do not have access to the same opportunities as cricketers from other UK nations?

We do not believe that this is currently the case, as talented cricketers are supported by both Cricket Wales and eventually Glamorgan CC if they reach that standard. We recognise the wider issue with regard to the England & Wales cricket team being referred to exclusively as “England” and the acronym for the England and Wales Cricket Board being the ECB, does lead to the perception that Wales is overlooked. In fact Wales has a strong history of providing players to the international side and currently both James Harris and Tom Maynard, both of whom are products of the Glamorgan Academy, are in the England development squad with aspirations of making the senior side.

We would be concerned if the establishment of an independent Wales team would see Glamorgan alienated from the County Championship. There is every chance that this could result in Welsh professionals opting to play for English counties resulting in a dip in focus and standards in Wales.

3. What are the barriers to establishing a Welsh international cricket team?

For Wales to have representative teams of its own, it would have to break with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and become affiliated to the International Cricket Board (ICC) instead. This would have significant funding implications as Glamorgan CCC and Cricket Wales who collectively receive up to £2 million funding per annum from the ECB. If Wales was ratified as an associate member of the ICC it may expect to receive a significantly smaller grant. The reduction of funding would undoubtedly have a significant negative impact on both the professional and recreational game in Wales.

The quality and regularity of competition that a representative Wales international team would be exposed to would be significantly inferior to the standard of competition enjoyed by Glamorgan in the County Championships. Wales would start at the bottom rung of the international cricket ladder and it may be some time before they achieved test / one day international status. Other small cricketing nations (e.g. Ireland and Scotland) are thought to struggle for meaningful, appropriate competition between major events (i.e. the Cricket World Cup).

4. Should the ECB (England and Wales Cricket Board) team play home games in Wales? What are the arguments for and against this?

They do. There was an ashes test at the SWALEC stadium in 2009 and it has recently been announced that a further ashes test will be held here in 2015. The bid for the 2015 Ashes Test included an ambitious plan for the future of the game in Wales to ensure that a sporting legacy remains following the game.

Further to these test matches, one day internationals and twenty-twenty matches against other nations have also been held in Cardiff, all helping to boost the profile of cricket in Wales. If Wales were to become an independent cricket nation then such matches are highly unlikely to be held in Cardiff.

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