

Hi Abigail, I'm a Scottish cricket writer, with the Herald, who was talking to some of my friends in Wales. They mentioned that some people in their homeland were talking about canvassing for Wales to be given separate status with the ICC and asked if I could support this idea, which I am delighted to do so.

This could have many benefits, both for Wales and the other Associate members. Scotland have taken great strides in the last 20 years and Ireland have fared even better, whether in developing a string of outstanding county players, such as Eoin Morgan, Ed Joyce and Niall O'Brien, or recording some terrific results at the World Cup, including memorable wins over Pakistan in 2007 and England this year.

I think, with English cricket currently among the strongest organisations, if not THE strongest in the world, that this would be the right time for Wales to seek separate membership of the ICC. I believe that this would have major benefits, including the following:

1)It would enable Scotland and Ireland to join forces with Wales in a tournament, which might offer possibilities such as rugby's Celtic League. There is always keen competition when these countries meet in rugby and I have doubt - after watching the Scots beat Ireland in a memorable match in Edinburgh this summer - that the same interest and excitement could be generated in cricket.

2)It would allow Wales to move away from a situation where all their best talent is immediately swallowed up by England. This might still happen in some cases, but Wales has the benefit of a professional county in Glamorgan, and no shortage of development streams, so the next logical step, given the introduction of devolution, is for Wales to go their own way in cricket and other sports.

3)Cricket needs to expand its own horizons and the more countries there are in Europe, the better the prospect of expanding and generating interest in a European League (which would not include England).

I am firmly of the opinion that this would be a positive step forward for Welsh cricket and believe, as I do with Scotland, that we have to work with the ICC to nurture the sport at Associate level.

Yours sincerely
Neil Drysdale