



Welsh Hockey Union Limited
Annual General Meeting
5th July 2009

Agenda Item 6

Reports

PRESIDENT

My thanks to everyone involved in the work of the Union for without their commitment and expertise the game would not flourish to be enjoyed by so many.

It seems only yesterday that I was writing my Annual Report to you the members of the WHU, but because of the change in our financial year it has been 18 months since I presented my last report. Time seems to have passed so quickly – probably because so much is happening in hockey both in Wales and in GB. There is no longer an end of season; the game is now played all year round indeed as I write this all of our teams are either preparing for or involved in International Competition. Our focus this years has to be on the Women and Men's Senior teams who compete in the Euro Nations Tournaments, the women are in Rome while our men are at home at Glyndwr University, Wrexham. This is the biggest hockey tournament ever to be held in Wales, please come and support Wales! It is vital that our teams perform well at these tournaments; this is our opportunity of raising the profile of Welsh Hockey both at World and European. Both teams will be aiming for promotion to the top division or at least finishing in the top four places and securing valuable world ranking points which could give them qualification for the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

For the second year Road shows were held in the Regions giving members the opportunity to meet staff and officers discuss, ask questions, make suggestions and raise any issues of concern re the Welsh Hockey's Strategy Plans. This document formed the basis of our submission for four year funding to the Sports Council for Wales. I'm delighted to report that funding for this year has been agreed with an in principle agreement for the following three years. In terms of Governance, at last years AGM we elected four Directors, all of whom have taken responsibility of a specific area in hockey i.e. competitions, umpiring , performance with Karen Evans being elected by the Board as Chair. At last years AGM, we had only one non executive director Louise Evans who is our expert on Finance. During the year Peter Martineau was appointed as our second non executive member and within the last few weeks Sheila Morrow has joined the Board as our third member. We are grateful to all our Directors and especially to our non executive members for bringing their specific skills to the Board. All our Directors are committed to Welsh Hockey and I am grateful to all them all for the time and expertise they give to Welsh Hockey.

Development continues to be a priority, work in this area is essential if we are to build a strong and vibrant organization. Progress has been made in a number of areas e.g. The introduction of the Club Accreditation scheme and the "awarding" of the first awards. More detailed information on development progress can be read in the Development Managers Report. Mathew James our Development Manager will be leaving us at the end of this month to work in development with Powys Local Authority. I would like to thank him for the excellent work he has done during his two years with Welsh Hockey and to wish him well in his new role.

Domestic Competitions are the cornerstone of hockey in Wales and the number of competitions offered to members is expanding. It is however becoming increasingly

difficult to produce a competition calendar which caters for all ages, leagues, cups, international training and matches. Finding dates to fit in all our competitions is almost impossible and it is therefore vital that we plan, cooperate and are prepared to compromise to achieve the best outcome for the players.

Junior membership continues to grow with regular competitions for both boys and girls both in school and clubs. The continued growth in entries for the Primary Schools Welsh competition and the increase in numbers for the Regional and Welsh Clubs Youth competitions have to be the most major positive for Welsh Hockey. My sincere thanks to all the schoolteachers and Junior Club coaches who give their time and expertise to work with these young people.

My congratulations to Sarah Thomas on her outstanding performances in the Olympic Games in Beijing – unquestionably she was GB's best outfield player. Well done Sarah. Wales had both a women and men's team in the GB Super League with the first round of matches being played in Cardiff.

Every year I express concern regarding the lack of volunteers at all levels from club through to National level. I ask yet again that you consider giving some time to help – it does not have to be a huge commitment – there are many small jobs to be done.

My sincere thanks to all members of staff, Directors, coaches, managers, umpires. Teachers, club administrators and to everyone who works and contributes in any way to Welsh Hockey, it is because of the commitment, expertise and enthusiasm of all our volunteers that we are able to maintain high standards and create opportunities for more people to play and enjoy hockey.

We are grateful to the Sports Council and our liaison officer Sue Maughan for their ongoing support.

I look forward to welcoming you and listening to your views at the AGM on July 5th at Newtown.

Finally, there are still challenges ahead; we need the support of each and every member if we are to fulfill our Mission Statement "To continue the development and promotion of hockey in Wales as an exciting and successful family sport accessible to all".

It remains a great honour and privilege to serve as your President.

Anne Ellis
President

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

What have we achieved in Welsh Hockey in our collective drive towards creating a more accessible and well run sport at all levels since the last AGM?

The 4 year WHU Strategic Plan, debated during the Road Shows in September 2008, was launched in March 2009. It builds on the May 2007 Strategy and is designed to create the opportunity across Wales for the Hockey community to:

- Increase participation
- Improve performance
- Raise its profile

To meet these goals, the sport needs to be well structured, accessible, and forward thinking. Are you? In particular the NGB is seeking to ensure:

- Strong clubs
- A transparent development pathway for players
- Quality coaching and umpiring
- Maximum use of good facilities
- Respect internationally

The main aim for the past 18 months has been to make sure that the building blocks are securely in place.

The WHU has exceeded its target for training coaches by some 60%, membership has risen in excess of the 2% target, the pathway is developing and expanding on schedule and the number of junior clubs is on the increase. We entertain Europe at Wrexham in August.

Community

The WHU has agreements in place to support 60% of Unitary Authorities with projects running in a further 3 areas supporting 82% of the population in all. Maximising the capacity of Hockey Development Officers to generate hockey activity in their communities in a joined up manner with school based 5x60 officers, activators and club coaches has led to a proliferation of new junior clubs, mini leagues, fun centres and stronger club-school links in many UAs. This has been further enhanced where Hockey Forum have been set up. The new club accreditation scheme (WHAC) has also been a catalyst for expansion by focussing on being well organised, developing a youth programme and linking up with schools. Those clubs who have embraced the WHAC are already reaping benefits from it.

Player Pathway

Youngsters with talent attend performance development centres. There are now 9 in place, largely based at hub clubs, feeding regional academies that run from 4 venues and leading onto the National Academy. In the light of experience we are adjusting the way in which these centres operate. The development of both individual skills and a performance culture is also being complimented by synchronising competitive opportunities at school, club, county, regional and international age groups as part of one talent ID structure in partnership with many voluntary groups. The WHU's Strategic Action Groups are an important vehicle for this. Substantial progress has been made to time table all activity as part of a unified approach, a prime example being the changes agreed to competition and timing with the Counties in South Wales. The player development criteria used in the international arena and academies will soon be available to all and a common syllabus is being rolled out to every qualified coach so that in time, the benefit will be reaped at senior national level.

Volunteers

Development of volunteers is also high on the agenda. Although we failed to secure additional funding through the Millennium Trust to support this project, the EuroNations Trophy in Wrexham is providing hockey with a catalyst for drawing volunteers together from all over Wales including the excellent Activator scheme maintained through external sponsorship and sports match. We hope to use the EuroNations as a spring board for further work with volunteers.

International and Competition

Wales has basked in the glory of Sarah Thomas's outstanding performances at the Olympic Games last September. We have also had a further 6 athletes involved in GB activity in some capacity. Our national senior sides however need to step up their performances if they are to qualify for Commonwealth Games in 2010 and the age group sides also need to be more competitive this summer. That said, the coaching teams and squads do remarkably well with very limited funding and have been working consistently and successfully to improve the performance culture. The national sides will also compete indoors in January for the first time in many years, primarily as an additional opportunity to improve skill levels.

Congratulations to Whitchurch and Cardiff&UWIC who both won promotion in European competition last month to move Wales into the Trophy division next season. Whitchurch and Swansea Ladies also retain their national league status, an important outlet for aspiring players. The WHU are still keen to find the right formula for domestic competition that maximising club involvement.

Governance

The WHU has also scrutinised its structure. Having streamlined the WHU Board last year, we look to work increasingly closely with Regional Associations to deliver against the Strategic Plan. In particular, the North Wales Men's Association are making a determined effort to develop opportunities. Where community forums have been set up between UAs, clubs and schools, the co-ordination of hockey development in those areas has improved considerably. It is a blue print for success. Of significant interest is the work underway with the Cardiff forum and WIS to make the pitch at Sofia Gardens a hockey only venue, something that other areas are also looking to achieve.

Coaching and Umpiring

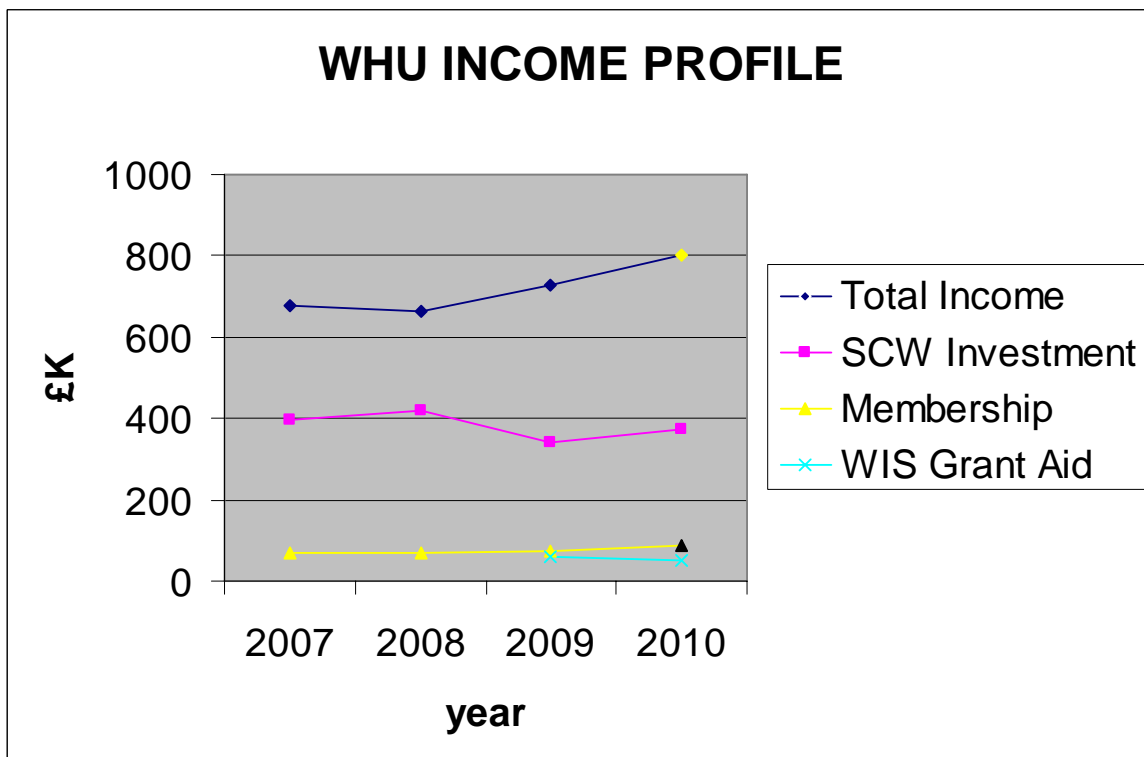
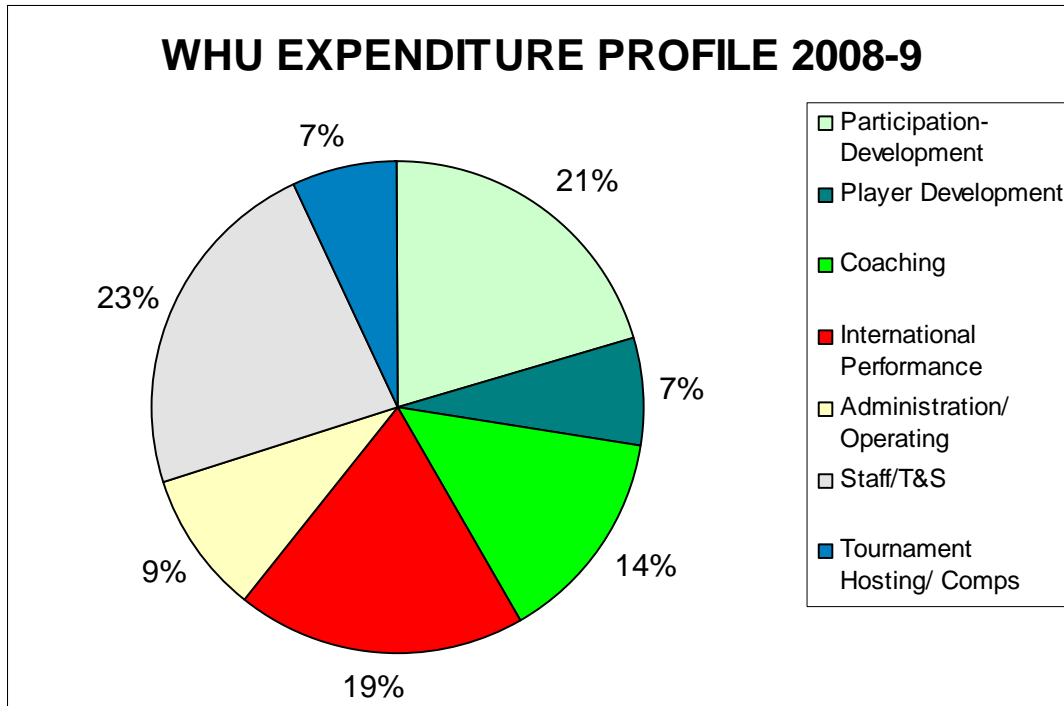
The WHU has had a bumper year in coach development with more courses, a bigger programme of evening seminars, and increasing opportunities for coaching involvement within clubs and the player pathway. Our coach education work force has expanded and the overall quality is on the up. Whilst Welsh Umpires and officials continue to show well at international level closer to home, the WHU is working with the WHUA to finalise a development plan that will take umpiring forward in support of the modern game. On that note, the rule changes this season will be a challenge for both umpires and players; so make sure you are ready!

Profile and Communication

Raising the profile is very much a joint venture. Everyone needs to advertise hockey through the local media. For our part we have drawn events to Wales; GB Super League, EuroNations Trophy and, in a supporting role, the UK School Games – the hockey community needs to support these by going to watch and using them to motivate others. The web site, our most important line of communication, has been refreshed. The membership is starting to contribute more in the way of stories and we encourage everyone to submit more to help grow the interest in hockey. The 'members only area' will be introduced soon.

Finance

Financially, the WHU works hard to make every pound of its income from the Sports Council for Wales, the membership and sponsorship count. The recession is bighting and costs continue to rise. Nevertheless, we have just about balanced the books this year and still delivered but it will get harder to do so if we are to continue to progress our levels of service and development.



Confidence

The WHU is now working much more effectively with the Sports Council for Wales, international hockey federations and domestic organisations; and in so doing is gaining the confidence of players, clubs and schools that the sport is healthy and growing.

Hockey of course, is largely reliant on a volunteers work force supported by a small NGB staff. I wish to thank and congratulate all involved in hockey for their considerable contributions over the reporting period.

We need to build on this solid foundation and not be afraid to take some bold decisions in the longer term interests of both the sport and those who play and organise within it. There will be further changes to the WHU structure next year and additional initiatives such as the community coach project and the introduction of *i-Hoc* to improve our reach across Wales.

Mike Leatt
Chief Executive Officer

CHAIRMAN

'We will continue to be judged on the delivery of the elements within our strategic plan and the development of your clubs and players, and is important for our future success...' For those of you who remember, this was mentioned in my last address and in keeping with that very statement we are now concentrating on a new 4 year plan now that we have secured our funding from the Sports Council for Wales. Welsh Hockey can continue to grow and succeed but only with your help and support; after all, we are here for you! Our objectives remain the same that is; strengthening development, coaching, competitions and performance to deliver hockey at grass roots level

The changes to the WHU Board that were agreed at the last AGM have also taken place. This has resulted in a more streamlined, organised system with Directors having specific responsibilities as well as having three Non Executive Directors with specific skills necessary if we are to move forward as a business. However, it would be very remiss of me not to thank those members that have already served on the Board. Without their work, support and vigour we wouldn't be able to be in the position we are now so that we may move onwards and upwards!

2008-2009 has had its fair share of highs and lows but the future holds some ambitious and interesting projects which our members and clubs will all benefit from if they get involved. One of the indubitable highs is that we will have representation in the GB Womens Hockey team in Beijing. Sarah Thomas, a former Dowlais and Swansea player and current Welsh international has succeeded in her quest and hard work to make the GB Hockey team. This is a fantastic achievement and one which I hope many of our young players wish to emulate.

Finally, I wish you all well for the coming season both on and off the pitch and hope that we can continue to all work together to ensure the future of Welsh Hockey. I also wish all our international teams 'Good Luck' for their forthcoming tournaments this summer.

Karen Evans
Chairman

"The ladder of success is best climbed by stepping on the rungs of opportunity."
Ayn Rand

CLUBS AND YOUNG PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

The WHU's 5 year Clubs & Young People Development Plan (2008-13) identified five fundamental aims:

1. extending development support throughout Wales
2. increasing hockey participation
3. strengthening clubs
4. strengthening club & school competitions
5. strengthening the hockey workforce.

The WHU are pleased to confirm that progress has been made towards achieving each of these goals, and a brief account of both the progress made and issues faced follows.

Aim 1. Provide development support & leadership throughout Wales

The WHU are very fortunate to have a team of committed and talented Hockey Development Officers (HDOs), who are the key enablers of hockey development in their area. The WHU currently part funds 10 HDO posts, serving 13 of Wales's 22 unitary authority areas. The WHU remains very grateful for the Sports Council for Wales's continued investment in the hockey development officer network, and the partnership funding from individual unitary authorities, URDD, Sport Experiences and Glyndwr University.

Unfortunately, not every area of Wales is being served by a HDO, but the WHU are pleased to report that support was extended to 3 additional unitary authorities (UAs) during the last year. The WHU tries to support those areas without a HDO through Hockey Forums and through the Head Office team based in Cardiff.

A new part time HDO post for Pembrokeshire was created in March 2008 in partnership with Pembrokeshire County Council, and thanks to sponsorship from Sports Experiences. Angela Miles was appointed to this post and is making a significant impact despite the constraints of her one day a week contract. For example, Angela has established a programme of hockey coaching for Pembrokeshire's primary school families; set up a hockey Fun Centre for 50 children at Fishguard Leisure Centre; facilitated coach and umpire education opportunities; and helped coordinate the setting up of a Performance Development Centre (PDC) for Pembrokeshire's talented young players.

The WHU are also supporting hockey development in Snowdonia and Anglesey through a new partnership with the URDD, and thanks to the Sport Experiences sponsorship deal. Aled Jones, URDD Sports Development Officer for Eryri and Ynys Mon, is managing delivery of the hockey development project, which is focused on increasing participation in school and community hockey, and strengthening local club-school links. During the last year Aled has established a new Anglesey secondary school hockey tournament with support from Stenna Line and Sportsmatch Cymru, and established new hockey Fun Centres at Bangor and Llangefni.

In those areas where the WHU has longer established hockey development partnerships; Cardiff (Dawn Mitchell), Caerphilly (Bev Rogers), Carmarthenshire (Rae Ellis), Ceredigion (Helen Thomas), North East Wales (Lee Ible), Powys (Katie Hamer), Rhondda Cynon Taff (Judith Powell), and Swansea (TBC); the respective HDOs continue to perform with distinction. During the last year, therefore, all the HDOs have contributed in a multitude of ways, to the WHU being on track to fulfill its key hockey development aims and objectives.

The WHU will continue to keenly pursue opportunities to support those areas of Wales without a HDO, and do all it can to maintain the current network during difficult times for local government sport and leisure funding.

Aim 2. Increase the number of hockey players in Wales

The WHU has set itself the target of increasing junior hockey participation by 2% p.a. and adult participation by 1.5%, believing this can be achieved by, for example: extending the HDO network; supporting more clubs to establish junior sections; establishing stronger Club-School Links; raising the profile of hockey in schools; and by providing more casual hockey playing opportunities. WHU affiliation is the most reliable measure of the number hockey players in Wales, and this is therefore the key performance indicator (KPI) for this important aim.

Therefore, it is pleasing to report that affiliation has increased by 2.4% overall, from 6124 in 2007-8 to 6273 in 2008-9, with a further increase expected before the end of August. The total number of U18s has so far risen by 4.3% from 2635-2748, whilst adult affiliation has risen by 1% from 3489 to 3525. The overall increase of 2.4% is mainly the result of a 4.7% increase in affiliated senior women and the expansion of the Performance Development Centre (PDC) network throughout Wales. A slight decrease in both the number of affiliated men and the number of U18s affiliated through clubs, highlights the need to help clubs build junior sections and links with their local schools, as well as the need to make the affiliation process simpler and quicker for clubs.

In order to continue to attract more players and retain those not able to cope with the commitments of the regular season, the WHU must try to provide alternative points of entry to the sport as well as opportunities to play hockey on a casual basis. The WHU therefore invites the hockey community and all its partners to consider, discuss and develop ideas around this objective.

Aim 3. Improve the performance of Wales's hockey clubs

The Welsh Hockey Accredited Club's Scheme (WHAC) is the main driver of this aim and the WHU are pleased to report an increase in momentum since the turn of the year, following the launch of a 15% affiliation rebate for accredited clubs. The idea and funding for the rebate came from Friends of Welsh Hockey, and the WHU are very grateful for their support. The 15% rebate is available to a limited number of newly accredited clubs per year on a first come first served basis, whilst clubs that achieve the Level 2 or 3 criteria will receive a second rebate in Year 2, in recognition of the work involved running junior sections and Performance Development Centres (PDCs).

Whitchurch Hockey Club were the first club in Wales to become accredited, achieving the Level 3 criteria in December 2008. Since then, 6 clubs have achieved the Level 1 criteria and 12 clubs are registered as working towards Accreditation. The WHU have therefore paid out £1,400 in rebates to clubs, whom as well as receiving a cheque, also receive jpegs of the WHAC logos and are presented with a WHAC certificate. There are therefore significant tangible benefits for accredited clubs, as well as intangible benefits such as increased profile and quality assurance, whilst the whole process can provide clubs with the incentive to raise their game and look to the future with optimism and clearly identified goals. The six clubs that have achieved Level 1 accreditation are: Abergavenny HC, Llantrissant & Llantwit Ladies HC, Rhondda Ladies HC, Rhyl HC, Sue Noake HC, and Wrexham HC.

Aim 4. Strengthen Wales's club & school competitions

The WHU continues to work in partnership with each of the Regional Associations to strengthen the club and school competitions, so that more teams enter and competitive opportunities are appropriate and a quality experience for all involved.

At a senior level the Competitions Strategic Action Group continues to try to strengthen the outdoor and indoor competitions. Please refer to the Competitions Report for a detailed account of this activity.

Youth hockey competitions in Wales are managed by the Regional Associations and supported by the WHU's staff and the RAF Careers – the WHU's principal youth hockey sponsor. By helping clubs to develop their youth/junior hockey sections, and in a few cases helping to establish new clubs where there is an obvious gap, HDOs have helped increase the number of clubs competing in regional and national level competitions.

The WHU has recognised a need to strengthen the youth hockey opportunities in both West Wales (boys and girls) and North Wales (girls only) during the next year. A recent Sportsmatch grant of £6,000 will be invested in West Wales during the next two years, to develop coaches and umpires, competitive opportunities and stronger links between the area's clubs and schools. In North Wales, the WHU are very pleased to see the Men's and Women's regional associations working together to establish girls U11 and U13 club opportunities for 2009-10.

Secondary school hockey competitions in Wales are also managed by the Regional Associations and supported by the WHU's staff and the RAF Careers – the WHU's principal school hockey sponsor. These competitions are always very well coordinated, highly competitive and an enjoyable experience for pupils. It is therefore a serious concern that so many teachers are now reporting how difficult it is to fulfill fixtures, because of a tightening up of school resources. The WHU will continue to advocate the importance of school hockey fixtures to the Sports Council of Wales and Welsh Assembly Government.

The County Schoolgirl Tournaments are still a prestigious competition for schoolgirls in Wales and a great opportunity to identify the Sarah Thomas's of the future. The WHU have therefore been very pleased to support the South Wales Women's Hockey Association develop and implement a new competition structure, which next season will allow players and coaches more time to prepare for competition, involve round robin tournaments for South East and South West County teams, and culminate in RAF Careers sponsored South Wales Cup and Plate Finals at Swansea University. The North Wales Women's Hockey Association already hold similar round robin competitions at U18 and U16 age groups, and the WHU is planning to support the development of an U14 age group competition, to bring the County Competitions in North and South Wales into alignment.

The National Primary Schools Hockey Competition "Activate" is rightly a major highlight of the WHU calendar. Held in Newtown on the first Friday of July, the 2008 winners were Ysgol Penybryn from Tywyn, Gwynedd. With a backbone of Dysynni hockey players, and with a couple of near misses in previous years, staff and players were delighted to come out on top of 134 primary schools that entered area and zonal competitions throughout Wales.

Aim 5. Strengthen the hockey workforce (paid and unpaid)

The WHU Coaching Unit continues to expand the coaching workforce and the programme of evening seminars, and opportunities for coaching involvement within clubs and the player pathway. Please refer to the Coaching Report for a full account.

The Clubs and Young People Development Plan recognised that more must be done to manage volunteers throughout Welsh hockey, and by this the WHU means the recruitment, retention and reward of volunteers. The WHU realises that to do this

properly it must secure sufficient funds to appoint a Volunteer Project Manager and the implementation of a fit-for-purpose volunteer management system. The WHU has applied unsuccessfully to one major funder during the last year and will continue to approach potential funders in order to achieve this key objective.

The highly regarded WHU Youth Hockey Activator Programme continues to deliver an excellent return on investment for the funder's Sportsmatch and Welsh Hockey. The 2008 recruitment conference was held in July at Swansea University and for the first time was open to young people from across Wales. Twenty-seven young people attended the conference; completing a team building session with RAF staff; drawing up action plans with their respective HDO; and all received a £100 coach education voucher. The majority of these Activators have spent their vouchers on UKCC qualifications and are now active in their local areas, assisting with club coaching sessions, running sessions for local HDOs, generally helping out, and in some cases coaching at their PDCs. The WHU plans to streamline the recruitment process for Activators in future, enabling HDOs to induct them locally instead of holding the induction at the recruitment conference. The WHU hopes this will increase the number of Activators in Wales, whilst the conference will be used for training and communication purposes.

Matt James
National Development Manager (Clubs and Young People)

Activities, Events & Publicity

The Welsh Hockey Union is continuously trying to find new ways and methods to promote and publicise hockey in Wales. One way is through WHU organised events in which children and young adults were able to participate in a number of hockey activities lead by Development Officers and 'home grown' coaches. We continue to place a great emphasis on participation of hockey in Wales and the period from April 2008 to March 2009 was no exception;

- Sport Experience Youth Hockey trip to Amsterdam
- Welsh Cup Final Weekend, Cardiff
- The National Primary School competition 'Activate', Newtown
- U18 Four Nations, Cardiff
- Swansea & Wrexham Summer Camps
- Sarah Thomas Media Day
- U14 & U16 South Wales County Schoolgirl Championships
- RAF Development Days, Cardiff, Llandrindod Wells & Llandudno

In the summer of 2008, history was made when Sarah Thomas was selected for the Beijing Olympics Games. Sarah was officially the first ever Welsh woman to play outfield at an Olympics. A great media buzz surrounded Sarah and relationships with the local and national press were made which became stronger over the following months.

Aims for 2009 – 2010

The main aim for 2009 - 2010 is to continue using events and activities as a vehicle to promote hockey in Wales. The EuroHockey Nations Trophy being held in Wrexham in August 2009 will be a fantastic platform to increase media and press networks in Wales.

With a growing calendar of events and activities, the WHU will continue to coordinate domestic events, support the GB Super League and bid to host prestigious international events, resources permitting. The emphasis as always is 'quality not quantity'.

Another aim is to increase the coverage of hockey in the local and national press. Working closely with Hockey Development Officers and clubs to increase their publicity output will be crucial. With both the Wales Men's and Women's teams hoping to qualify for the 2010 Commonwealth Games, we will use this as another vehicle to promote hockey in Wales.

Beth Fisher
Events & Publicity Coordinator

COACHING

Coach Education

We are pleased to report that our expectations (and targets) for UKCC courses and candidates were exceeded in the year to 31st March 2009. A full programme of Level 1 and Level 2 Courses is planned for the New Year starting 1st April 2009. We have seen a significant increase in the number of clubs taking advantage of Community Chest and all Clubs are asked to plan ahead of courses with their Hockey Development Officer and/or Local Authority Sports Development Unit to secure Community Chest funding to cover all or part of the cost of Coach Education fees. On a number of occasions we have been close to postponing courses as applications are arriving after the advertised closing date usually as a result of applicants not having funding bids in place in time.

Our Coach Education Workforce is now near to its optimum size although there is a need to identify additional staff to allow us to satisfy demand in the North West of Wales. We have trained four more Coach Educators, four more Coach Assessors and four Internal Verifiers during this period. Eight of our Coach Educators/Assessors attended the UK Coach Education Conference at Lilleshall alongside the GB Super League. This event formed part of our effort to have a quality assured Coach Education programme; further events are planned on a Wales only and UK basis in the coming year. The Coaching Unit is keen to hear from coaches that would like to register an interest in joining the Coach Education Workforce.

Although no coaches were able to attend the 2008 Level 3 UKCC programme, we have been able to secure additional spaces for the 2009 event and will have 7 candidates attending. This is an important step in allowing us to move closer to our overarching aim of "Right Coach, Right Place, Right Time, delivering the Right Stuff".

Coach Development

We have continued to run a successful Coaching Workshop programme to help coaches to extend their knowledge in particular areas of the game and stay up to date with technical advances and tactical ideas. During the period, we responded to demand and delivered a number of workshops to provide more in depth understanding of the coaching of the Core Skills. The EuroNations tournament in Wrexham provides a great opportunity for Coach Development and a workshop is planned around the new rules that will be used across hockey from 1st September. This coaching event is being organised in partnership with the WHUA. The summer programme of Technical/Tactical Coaching Workshops led by former England Head Coach Malcolm Wood will be up on the Coaching pages of the WHU website in early June 2009. These 3 hour workshops on a variety of relevant topics are usually well subscribed so booking early is recommended.

Claire Sims from Cwmtawe LHC attended an EHF Goalkeepers Workshop during the period, and we will be sending three coaches (Merijn van Willigen, Wales U21W Head Coach and Senior Women Asst. Coach, Jo Nightingale, Wales U21 Women Asst. Coach and Malcolm Wood our High Performance Coach Development Consultant) to the inaugural EHF High Performance Coaching Course that runs alongside the 2009 EHL Finals where it is hoped that they will be bringing back some useful information that we will make sure is passed on through Coaching Courses and Workshops.

For the 4th consecutive year, we were able to get all of our National Teams and Regional Academy Coaches to a High Performance Coaching Workshop at Wrexham in January. This event is proving invaluable in not only developing our High Performance Coaches, but also in bringing greater communication and cooperation across our International and Player Development programmes.

Talent Identification and Player Development

The past couple of years have seen some new elements to our Player Pathways and the challenge over the past year has been to consolidate this work, build on it and make sure that all elements of the Pathway, which is currently delivered by a few different stakeholders, are working together in a joined up fashion. This work continues and is accelerating. There are some exciting concepts on the horizon for the 2009/10 year all underpinned by current evidence based and validated Long Term Player Development principles.

Suffice to say that it is results that count and it is good to see the number of Regional Academy players making it into National squads, and very pleasing to hear National Team Head Coaches reporting that they can tell apart those players that are attending Regional Academy Sessions and those that aren't!

On behalf of the WU Coaching Unit, I want to thank all of those that have attended our events over the past year. We strive to make them better each time around and hope to see all coaches that are active in Wales at our events in the 2009/10 season.

Chris Marriott
National Development Manager (Coaching & Players)

PERFORMANCE & INTERNATIONAL

Top Representative Honours

For any budding hockey player, aspiring to represent Wales and GB should be regarded as the pinnacle of performance. The example of Sarah Thomas playing for GB in Beijing is testament to the fact that all things are possible for those who have such ambitions. Not only did Sarah represent GB but she was in fact one of the best players in the team. Other younger players namely Carys Hopkins with a senior Women's development squad, Lewis Prosser and Sophie Robinson with GB U20s, and Ben Carless and Owain Dolan-Gray with GB U20 development. All have been through the junior ranks of Wales and are part of the Academy structure. These are our future role models for the younger generation. However it is recognised that there will always be a fine balance between serving the needs of grass roots hockey and funding players to reach the highest levels.

Player Development

To that end, Performance Development Centres for the younger players have been very successful in giving them the opportunity to progress in hockey. Indeed the number of Centres in Wales has increased significantly since they were first introduced. The Player Pathway has now been firmly established with the intention of targeting those with potential to reach the highest levels. Those with the most immediate promise participate in the National Academy, which operates as a series of coaching satellite venues with centrally run testing and education week-ends. The High Performance Centre in Cardiff is also a partnership with Universities and Clubs; the South Wales Institute.

I also attended some of the Club and School age group finals at which many of our PDC and Regional Academy athletes were on show. Always a privilege to watch our potential stars of the future competing with such enthusiasm, I am further convinced of the value of the player development opportunities we are now putting in place and their longer term value for the sport.

International

The WHU regard all age group teams as part of the development process: The U21 men were competitive last year in Europe whilst U21s Girls struggled. There was a similar story in the U 18 Home Nations event first held in Cardiff last year. The Seniors had a short programme including the Celtic Cup and the U16s had a test series with Scotland.

This year there has been a more comprehensive programme all round. The U18 Girls played in a series of test match against Scotland, drawing one and losing two matches but showing promise for the summer. Following a successful camp in Gibraltar they play Australia Schools in Cardiff in June. The U18 Boys played Scotland in a test series winning two out of three matches, and played and lost two matches against England. They travel to play France this month.

The U16 Girls and Boys also played a test series in Scotland; in a turn round of fortunes from the previous year, the Girls won one and drew two matches, the boys were comprehensively beaten.

Now is the time the senior teams increase their training regimes. Following the GB Super League, when many of the internationals were on show, both the Men and Women had matches against Ireland and Belgium respectively, early in June. Results were not in our favour but it was an opportunity to trial players and systems. The next big event is the Celtic Cup on 27th – 29th June in Edinburgh. Following that, the Senior Women go to Rome for the Euro Nations Trophy from 19th – 25th July. The men have a camp in Spain before returning to play in the Euro Nations Trophy in Wrexham from 1st – 8th August. The U18's also have Euro Nations events in Madrid (Girls) and Vienna (Boys) whilst the U16's will be competing in the Home Nations in Scotland.

Reduced funding has, unfortunately, led to condensed programmes and many limitations placed on international activities. The WHU do not run an U21 programme in non European years and the U16s no longer compete in European competition. Amazingly though, with the goodwill of players, team managements and other volunteers, international teams continue to compete with the best on the tightest of budgets.

Performance Events in Wales

Part of the Performance Development process is bringing high quality competition to Wales. The EuroNations in Wrexham is the biggest event ever held in Wales and the WHU is very appreciative of the outstanding support received from Glyndwr University and the new partnership with Wrexham County Borough Council. Hosting this tournament in Wales is therefore a golden opportunity for us to support the Men in their quest for the top positions and promote hockey. The longer term aim of both teams is to compete on the world stage by participating in the Commonwealth Games in Delhi in 2010. A current assessment is that to do this the Women have to consolidate their position in the Trophy whilst the Men need to achieve a promotion position to the top flight. This situation may change following results from other competitions around the world.

This event comes on the back of staging the GB Super League Round 1 in April in Cardiff and ahead of the UK School Games in September, also in Cardiff.

Information

The web site is a good place to go to keep up to date with performance and international news, results and programmes. Access to the international schedule is through a link under resources.

Thank you

On behalf of WHU I would like to thank all those who work so hard to make international hockey a reality and wish the teams who are participating during the summer much success and enjoyment.

Mary Bainbridge
Performance & International Directorate

UMPIRING & TECHNICAL

Hockey is now a 12 months sport and throughout there is a need for umpires and technical officials. Unfortunately the demand and supply is not meeting pace and with the demand growing the supply is dwindling, especially during what we knew as the off-season, although regions are finding it difficult to cope with the demand during the season.

The regional committees are continually trying to keep up with the demand for umpires and their elected committees must be congratulated for their work. They have continued to develop their business systems and in particular providing more umpires coaching and training events. During the year the South region undertook 15 Level 1 courses with 71 new umpires and 1 Level 2 course with 4 new umpires. The North appointed a new Development Officer and since Christmas held 3 Level 1 courses in strategic venues where nearly 50 attended. It is hoped that these will all fully qualify before the start of next season. If anyone wishes to attend a course it is painless to organise - just contact the Regional Development Officers, Carolyn Llewellyn in the South and Ian Wright in the North.

It is known that we have over 500 qualified umpires in Wales but therefore why during the past year has it been a battle to get the required number of umpires out each week for the leagues and cups. The numbers of level 1 courses have increased, but it is still very difficult to persuade new umpires to join the rank of umpires available each and every weekend to take over from the older members. Each year I have report this, but it is getting essential that we now focus on a number of these younger newer umpires to become "fulltime" as the situation is now getting desperate as very few neutral umpires are available. On a Welsh perspective it is also essential for Wales to have a number of younger umpires to move into the Elite group so that we can fulfil our future EHF and FIH requirement. This year it has been difficult to find umpires to undertake European club and international appointments as the same few cannot undertake all the games. There is a need to push umpiring to younger people, as well as all those players who wish to umpire, as the opportunity to continue to develop in the future is in their hands. A strategic Development Plan is at present still in draft form and it is hoped that this will focus the mind and assist in the development of umpire and technical officials. However it is fine to have a Development Plan but that will require funds and that seems to be a stumbling block.

This year Sheila Morrow was the guest speaker at the 5th Alun Bunce Memorial Lecture, which took place at the Cup Finals at WIS. Sheila gave an insight into her appointment at last years Olympics. The only pity was that the attendance was so small. This was an opportunity to hear how the Olympics actually operate at the coalface. Perhaps more members of the WHU will attend future lectures.

Wales can be justly proud of the achievements of their umpires and technical officials. During the season Welsh officials have received a total of 30 appointments to FIH, EHF and international indoor and outdoor tournaments. In addition to these Wales have had to appoint 33 umpires and officials to EHF and International events. It is particularly pleasing to note that a number of these were senior appointments. It is also very pleasing to note that all umpires and officials, who undertook European tournaments, had very good reports.

The work of the WHUA can only be successful through the hard work and dedication of the few who continue to show commitment and diligence. The Chairs of the various regions and sub committees have continued to assist the executive undertake its responsibilities. This does ensure that the umpire and technical message is spread

throughout Wales and that consistency is maintained. Finally, I must place on record my thanks to Carolyn Llewellyn and all members of the Executive who continue to battle on behalf of the technical officials and umpires throughout the Principality.

Colin Crayford
WHUA

'Friends' of Welsh Hockey

During 2008 and early this year FRIENDS has been restructured. In agreement with the Board of the WHUL a set of Financial Rules has been drawn up and this calls for there to be four persons acting as the management of the fund and for regular reports to be submitted to WHUL Board. In this respect it is good to report that the following persons agreed to undertake this work;

John Taylor, Rae Ellis, Roger Harris and Roger Caddick to continue to manage the day to day work of the fund.

As often reported the fund was designed to provide the basis for a Capital Project. No such opportunities have arisen so it was agreed by the Board of WHUL that in conjunction with its Chief Executive we should seek other ways to support the work of the WHUL. This support to be managed within the profit stream generated on an annual basis. The first such support was agreed in late 2008 in the form of an incentive scheme to support the Club Accreditation Programme. The sum of £2000 has been made available in this respect.

If we are to keep this level of support available on an annual basis then with interest rates low we need to find about another 200 members of the monthly draw to help generate the funds . We shall shortly be carrying out a campaign for new members. Prize winners are displayed on the WHU web-site.

The last audited accounts for FRIENDS as at 31.12.2008 showed a Fund totalling £35638.

The profit for the year ended 31.12.2008 was £2044.

The fund is made up of;

Cash at Banks and Building Societies	£21868
Loan to Welsh Hockey Union	£12000
Stock of Pins/Ties/Pennants	£ 1770

The loan to Welsh Hockey is being cleared at the rate of £1000 per annum at the present time.

Apart from the above, FRIENDS acts as the stockist for WHUL Pin badges, Players Ties and Pennants used mainly by International Teams.

Further information and membership forms for the monthly draw are available from Chris Brewer at the WHUL or direct from Roger Caddick (029-2036-2860 e-mail roger_caddick@hotmail.co.uk)

Roger Caddick
FRIENDS Organiser

