

Welsh Netball – 2015 Annual Report

CEO Report

It has only been four months since I commenced in the role of CEO at Welsh Netball. I can genuinely say that it is a privilege to be in this position and one that I am excited and enthused by. Welsh Netball has continued to experience growth in its development and performance areas over recent times and all of this despite the continued challenging environment. With the support of Sport Wales, Welsh Netball has been able to realign its financial position and strategic aims through significant restructuring both in staffing levels and terms and conditions of employment, undertaken to ensure that the organisation is able to deliver its targets appropriate to its financial means. The immediate objective is to see the organisation prioritise **stability** to enable further **growth** and create a **sustainable** future.

Welsh Netball, together with all National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGB's), continue to face times of change as we are all slowly affected by public sector funding cuts. With this being a World Cup year, in Sydney Australia, for the Open Squad and Wales U21 scheduled to compete the youth world championships in 2017 being held in Botswana, these are additional considerations to normal operating years and planning. We should not underestimate just how well Welsh Netball has done with its staff, volunteers, the coaches and players from across all age grades, both within performance and development who have collectively worked and participated in the Welsh Netball environment. The result of this endeavour is seeing our sport and our country represented on the world stage at one of the highest level competitions within the sport.

I would like to thank the Board of Directors for their support and hard work over the past year and the diverse skills of this group of volunteers covers a range of business, organisational and operational areas that are so important for the association to stabilise and thrive.

In relation to financial management of a growing organisation we cannot survive without the many *volunteers who work professionally to support events run by Welsh netball across Wales*. Without wanting to miss out on naming anyone I would like to thank everyone for their contribution. I would like to say thank a big thank you to our following supporters/sponsors/service providers throughout the year, including: University of South Wales, NPTC Group, Samurai, Gilbert, Perkins & Slade, AnalysisPro, Inspiresport, Edwards Coaches, Strachan Travel, club mascots and supporters.

We have also been very fortunate to provide fundraising opportunities for a number of charities through the year and we would like to continue to work with those partners going forward as well. A special mention to one of these charities, namely Dreams & Wishes, and we thank them for their support and we were more than happy to ensure that smiles were put on children's and their family's faces who face far greater difficulties than sporting challenges.

Development

Development is key to the sustainability of Welsh Netball. It is an area that the Welsh Government and Sport Wales are keenly looking at through all sports and stakeholders. Whilst they recognise the elite and performance element of the sport is important, what is more important is ensuring that

people play sport and then carry on playing sport from childhood into adulthood. Welsh Netball are in an ideal position to facilitate the aims and aspirations of our Government and Sport Wales.

This year has seen a key appointment in Jemma Appleby being recruited as Workforce Development Manager. Jemma will be responsible for managing netball development nationally; leading seven regional development officers to deliver Welsh Netball's strategic plan. Furthermore Jemma will lead on workforce, education, and safeguarding and is responsible for the growth of the netball membership. More needs to be done to ensure that we have more netball played at a younger age and retained during their teenage and young adulthood years. The Netball Development Officers have continued to work tirelessly during this past year, following the reorganisation that was required, and they continue to ensure that the development aspect of our sport is at the forefront of Welsh Netball with continued growth in numbers, creating partnerships and delivering diverse initiatives.

One initiative to mention from this past year, was the successful 'Netball November' campaign. During the campaign the final figures highlighted the coverage Welsh Netball received through the Twitter social media platform of 5.7k Tweets, that created 16.3k Re-Tweets that resulted in a Tweet Reach of 7.58 Million. The aim is to build on this again in 2015 and the NDO's are already planning on this initiative.

Performance

Wales Open squad successfully achieved qualification for Netball World Cup in 2015 currently ranked 8th and this must be commended. Preparations are well underway for this major event – both on and off court.

During the summer of 2014 our senior team played at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games as part of Team Wales finishing in 8th position. In a tough campaign the players benefited greatly from the experience of playing at a multi sport, multi nation event and as part of a great Team Wales set up did themselves and Welsh Netball proud. Can I take the opportunity of thanking Head Coach Laura Williams, who took up the reigns late in the year, and her management team for their hard work and efforts during the campaign.

This year we welcomed a new Head of Elite Performance to the association. Trish Wilcox joined in November 2014 and immediately hit the ground running as not only did she have to prepare the Celtic Dragons for the 2015 Netball Superleague Campaign but within a month of her appointment she took on her first International test as Wales coach when asked to assist England in fulfilling a fixture following the withdrawal of Malawi. Trish accepted this full on and a young squad with 5 new International Caps accepted the challenge, and despite the loss to an experienced England team it was an opportunity for Trish to measure exactly where the squad was at this early stage.

The Celtic Dragons campaign this year was all about a transition year. This was a challenge in itself as the group of players would now be exposed to a level of Performance Coaching that would leave no stone unturned. It was a credit that the Celtic Dragons squad performed to a level that was acknowledged by many as a positive new approach adapting to a new style of play. The squad this season were made up of all Welsh eligible players and again this is a credit to the environment being

created by Trish that and was seen as being part of the building process for Wales going to the World Cup.

I know that everyone new to the set up have been amazed by the continued support of the 'Green Army' and with most of the home games a sell out that we could have sold twice over, then we all hope to see this continued support over the coming years.

The age group squads continue to work hard and the U21s are building towards their Netball Europe campaign, being held in Glasgow during October 2015. The Under 17s, under the coaching of Wendy Lewis and her management group, competed at the U17 Netball Europe event in Hull (March 2015) finishing in 3rd position. Congratulations to all our age group management and players in what again has been a difficult year and one of transition.

The Regional Hub programme has continued to grow again with over 250 young netballers taking part. The end of season Gemau Cymru event showcased the talent of netball from these Hubs.

Whilst our management and players have been busy so have our Umpires and Umpire Assessment Panel members who have had success on the national and international stage. Congratulations to the following who were selected for national events:-

- NE U17 Umpire – Hayley Lewis - Wales
- NE U17 Umpire – Maria Webber - Wales
- NE U19 Umpire – Alison Smith - Wales
- NE Open Umpire - Alison Davies - Wales

Successful Learner UAP's and UAP's for NE these are:-

- Wales - Sarah Jones - Learner UAP
- Wales - Jan Aikhionbare - UAP

At this point we would like to acknowledge the valued contribution of Ann Burt-Williams who has provided over 20 years of voluntary work across umpiring, tutoring, mentoring, assessing and invigilation.

Governance

I would like to thank every member of the Board for their unwavering support during this past year. It is clear that sport Governance is again at a stage of transition with greater emphasis of ensuring we continue to cover diverse skills on the board with clear Governance remit. The association has recently signed a pledge committing to the delivery of a national Code of Governance and we will work closely with key stakeholders to meet the requirement. Governance changes will be required and the Board will look to further these in line with the Code of Governance principles, but it will be taken at a pace that meets our needs. This will ensure that we have a board and professional staff that work within a strong, independent, transparent and accountable organisation that reflects the identity of our sport and its community.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Chair, Catherine Lewis, for her hard work over the past two difficult years but also in the support, guidance and expertise she has provided me during my initial months as CEO. Also, and I can confidently state that, the sustainability of the organisation at operational level would not have been possible without the contribution made by Jean Foster.

The panels for development, performance and commercial, together with finance and audit continue to support the environment and professional staff. This year will be a key area in implementing several strategic goals and all panels will play a key role in these developments. The personnel on these panels have provided invaluable support but I also see them evolving to bring on board other specialists from across the sector needs. So may I thank the present chairs of each panel namely Merle Hamilton (Finance & Audit), Alison Dacey (Development), Mel Tuckwell (Performance), and Dani Delamere (Commercial) along with all panel members. We continue to seek diverse skilled competence personnel who would be prepared to contribute and are willing to bring their expertise, as volunteers, to Welsh Netball to help us continue grow the sport that we all know and love and will be asking you to work hand in hand with us to do this.

As I write this report our Senior Open squad are preparing to participate at Netball Europe in Belfast from **14th – 17th May** where our opposition will include hosts Northern Ireland along with England, Scotland, South Africa, Trinidad & Tobago providing a competitive few days. This is again a great opportunity for us all to enjoy netball at its best in the UK, so we wish them well. This then leads to Head of Elite Performance Trish Wilcox as National Head Coach finalise her squad in readiness for Netball World Cup being held in Sydney, Australia from 7th-14th August. This will be a great opportunity for us to play on a World stage yet again and promote the 'Calon' that Wales has in its Netball and as a nation. Prior to this event the squad fly out to Tasmania where they will be hosted Netball Tasmania and the Tasmanian National Government for a training camp and warm up games. We wish Trish and her squad of players and management every success in this campaign.

Finally, may I convey a personal thanks to everyone who has made my introduction to Welsh Netball an encouraging one and a thanking all who have been involved at all levels of the governing body. Our President, Wendy White and our two Vice Presidents, Sheila Cooksley and Wendy Pressdee, have been invaluable with their support to the organisation and long may it continue.

Everybody has a part to play, whether you wash the kit; whether you are a scorer on a particular league night; whether you come along to support under the Green Army; whether you take up a whistle or you simply just play! We are all part of the big Netball family and we all work together in this endeavour.

Alun Davies
CEO Welsh Netball

