**WRU Status Update 19/08/2020**

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**1. Chairman’s Comment**
"It has been fantastic to see the beaming faces and excitement from around the country as organised training for our beloved game of rugby returns – albeit in a different way from past seasons.
The WRU Community Director Geraint John has already gone on record expressing his delight that some clubs have worked tirelessly and diligently to get back on the pitch, and rightly so, but the fact we have got to this point illustrates perfectly just how closely the community clubs and the Welsh Rugby Union have worked collaboratively and in harmony together to get to this point.
To get our players back on the pitch isn’t a development which has happened overnight. It has been the result of a tremendous amount of hard work from the clubs and numerous departments within the WRU. It’s been refreshing to see everyone pull together in these unusual and trying times – the fact we had 400 people on a recent webinar discussing the club game suggests we are all doing something right.
Prior to the pandemic bringing the game to a screaming halt, the Community Sub Board had actually been working alongside our clubs to create a strategy fit for purpose for the future of our game.
Obviously Covid-19 has been a major impediment to completing the work, but the engagement of our Community Board and the various departments and staff within the WRU has in my eyes brought the Union and clubs closer together.
The Club of the Future strategy started in earnest last October with numerous workshops which included our clubs (District Workshops), Board Members, Council, District representatives and major partners.
The task at hand was to create the ‘**Club of the Future’** with a launch pencilled in for the coming season but obviously Covid-19 has put a spanner in the works there. What is the Club of the Future, how does it work, what does it involve, how can it shape the future of Welsh rugby community, were just some of the questions raised and discussed at length.
The Council, Community Board and the Board have worked together, garnering feedback from the clubs in the process, as they are a vital element in this process.
Some key elements have already been borne out from this procedure which covers the integrated game for men and women so basically the strategy covers every aspect of the game. For example, when it comes to playing and the support of the game on the field in the core game which includes the right competition structure from top to bottom, it is vital we get this area right to support our game for the long term, both on and off the field – players, volunteers and our fantastic supporters.
We need more support which includes training and education around our volunteers – coaches, referees, plus all our off-field volunteers including team managers, first aiders and administrators. This is now vital under current circumstances and vitally important and moving forward it is of imperative importance we develop our digital online presence in regards to this as on-line learning becomes increasingly important in the modern era.
When it comes to facilities, our club houses and facilities are key, we have bricks and mortar – but how do we use these to support our current rugby family? We need to ensure all male and females are catered for as well as our impressive communities in a totally inclusive environment.
As well as rugby being the core product, we now offer so much more with alternative products, we have major offerings for our community – 7s rugby, touch rugby, disability and mixed ability rugby, wheelchair rugby, deaf rugby and visually impaired rugby are just an example of our growing reach.
We, alongside other incredible partners, also provide a large amount of support to our wider communities. Partnerships are important as they help grow our community game – organisations like Sport Wales, Urdd, Street Games and School of Hard Knocks are just some as we continue to provide numerous options for all concerned.
With regards to schools and education, all our children go to school – we must continue our support here and grow rugby in our schools and support our excellent teachers - not only on the field but also in the classroom where the WRU Hub Programme and high value presence within schools, colleges and universities throughout Wales is doing wonders where the brilliant WRU digital classroom curriculum support which reaches a big audience of youngsters and parents - they could be our club players and volunteers of the future.
We’re now aiming to launch the club of the future strategy in 2021 with more input from our Community clubs. To support this ambitious project, we must make sure that the model supports the game and also the growth of our clubs.
All of the above, in my view, shows we have a plan to support the game, the players, the people and our community clubs."

Yours in Rugby
Gareth Davies
WRU Chairman

**2 - WRU buoyed by appetite seen throughout community rugby**
The WRU is buoyed by the appetite seen throughout community rugby to complete the required education and club safety processes in order to resume training within the current guidelines.
Registration numbers are high – within a week of the WRU online registration process opening on August 1, more than 25 000 players, coaches and other volunteers had completed the World Rugby Covid Education Course and WRU online registration. That number has since risen to 33,000.
Many clubs and Female Hubs all over Wales have now begun organised training for some or all of their teams with many quick to praise their coaches, volunteers players and parents who have ensured this process has run smoothly. Others are planning their phased return.
WRU Community Director Geraint John said, “It is uplifting to see players, especially youngsters, out enjoying being part of their rugby team again. We’ve all missed the game itself, and the physical, mental and social benefits we all cherish. It’s important for us to adhere to government guidelines to help keep Wales safe, and with player welfare key, we’ve also taken a safety-first approach to the re-introduction of contact rugby at all levels.
“We are truly thankful for the commitment shown by all involved in the game to go through the education and safety processes we’ve put in place to support the community game and heartened by the pure desire we’re seeing to get back out on the pitch and throw a ball around with team mates.”
**Caerphilly**chairman Gareth Ashman said, “We have teams training every evening - either seniors and youth, minis and juniors or the Chargers Female Hub who are a welcome new addition to the club. “The return of club activity is a saving grace after not only lockdown but the floods before that. We have turned the car park into a beer garden and the weather has helped in generating some much needed income. Not only that but we are a community, a rugby family and everyone is so pleased to see their team mates, fellow coaches, other parents etc within the social distancing rules.”
Caerphilly have also found a time and energy-efficient way to stay on top of the track and trace process.
“For a nominal amount, we pay a monthly fee for a club-specific QR code. Everyone who comes to the ground – either for training or social purposes – uses their smart phone to log themselves in so that if there were to be a case of Covid, the company who holds all the contact info would then notify the public health authorities who would contact us and the relevant individuals to put in place the necessary measures. The whole process is GDPR compliant and contact details are destroyed within three months.”
**Wrexham** secretary Becky Pomeray said, “We are so grateful for the hard work put in by coaches and our other volunteers to help get our teams back on the pitch.
“Following the first WRU-led webinars, we held our own zoom meetings to take coaches especially through all guidance and we set up a dedicated email address to keep control of the paperwork coming in. With the requirement for Covid training for all and WRU registration, we put in place a contract for players and parents of players to ensure they understood the ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’. This is now a requirement before any player comes to training along with the World Rugby course and the WRU symptom checker”.
“We have small groups, stringent cleaning processes and regular hand sanitising during training. One coach got his players to line up with a cone each and got each player to put their drink at their own cone station. We thought that was a great idea so we’ve adopted it in our other groups”.
“I think about 95% of our players have returned. It’s been brilliant so far really. Everyone has bought into it and parents have welcomed our approach”.
“It’s a public health issue. We turn people away if they haven’t gone through the proper checks. If we get it right now, we can get back to playing matches quicker so it’s in our interest to get it right the first time.”
**Bridgend Sports’**Steve Pillner added, “Most of our teams have returned this week with the Hawks Female Hub back with us next Monday. “It’s still early days and we’ve all got a long way to go in this battle against Covid so it’s much better to take it slowly and get everything right. We don’t know what’s around the corner. The current phase is also a great chance to develop ball skills at all levels, the contact side of the game can come later.
However, the game is a community too. It’s important to keep in touch and everyone is pleased to see each other to keep that community alive.”

**3 - ‘Bird is the word’**
Liza Burgess always led the way in her playing and coaching career and is now doing likewise as she looks to make an impression in Welsh rugby governance.
The former No 8 – known as Bird – captained her country 62 times and became the first woman to be elected to the Welsh Rugby Union’s board in November last year.She hopes to help women’s rugby continue to flourish – among other things – but admits the Coronavirus pandemic has had and will continue to have a big impact on the game in Wales.
[**For full story**](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=8eb640bfb417ddefe298fe6f0ed6c248&i=496A504A1A1423)**:**
**4 - Aberystwyth RFC raises £2,500 for town's hospital**
Aberystwyth Rugby Club has donated £2,500 to Bronglais Hospital, after the club’s players, coaches and supporters ran, walked and cycled over 3,200 miles between them.
The money is going to be shared between the hospital’s Gwenllian ward and the intensive care unit.
Nearly 100  people took part in the challenge to raise money for Hywel Dda Health Charities, using a GPS app, Strava, to individually track their miles.
A spokesperson for Aber RFC, junior secretary Nerys Hywel, said: “We at Aberystwyth RFC are extremely proud of the fundraising efforts of our players, from U7s through to the first team, committee and supporters.
Our vice-captain Matthew Hughes and his teammates have decided they wish to split the money equally between the intensive care ward and Gwenllian ward at Bronglais Hospital.
We’ll keep on with the good work of supporting our community and hopefully it won’t be too long before you’ll all be able to watch and support us back on the pitch in Plascrug.”
The club has also been selling specially designed NHS Aberystwyth RFC shirts, with money from sales going to the NHS.

**5 - Global expertise confirmed for inclusion coaching conference**
The inaugural Welsh Rugby Union Disability/Inclusion Coaching Conference takes place virtually this Sunday between 10am – 2pm.
External speakers from around the world will be part of a packed online programme around the importance of inclusion in sport and creating the best environment to thrive.
The conference is aimed at anyone with an interest in developing opportunities for people with disabilities in sport, through coaching and partnerships, focusing on the following areas:

·         Inclusive Coaching Practices

·         Visually Impaired Rugby Coaching Experiences

·         Coaching Elite Wheelchair Rugby

·         Coaching Deaf and Hard of Hearing Players

·         Coaches & Talent Transfer

Athletes, coaches and sector experts from different aspects of the Disability Rugby Landscape will share their knowledge  through talks, presentations, and panel discussion.
The virtual conference aims to provide a platform for the sharing of good practice and learning lessons from each other. This includes supporting attendees during and post event with a range of resources specifically developed to support us all in creating the best environment to thrive.
The external speakers include Paul Shaw, head coach of GB Wheelchair Rugby, Robert John Coles, head coach Wales Deaf, Alex Bassan on developing visually impaired rugby around the world, Rob Townsend of the University of Waikato, Russell Earnshaw of Magic Academy and Fiona Reid, Disability Sport Wales Chief Executive

**Book your free place**[**here.**](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=8eb640bfb417ddefe298fe6f0ed6c248&i=496A504A1A1424)
\* The community coach education department is putting together a series of tag and early contact courses which will be held online to support junior coaches in the coming months. Keep checking[**wrugamelocker.wales**](http://wrugamelocker.wales) for more info.

**6 - The ups and downs of social media**
Wales Women duo Elinor Snowsill and Roby Lock have spoken about the positive and negative impact of social media. After taking part in a wide-ranging BBC survey on many areas affecting women in sport, the issue of social media trolling stood out.Of more than 530 elite sportswomen that completed the survey, more than 30% said they’d experienced different levels of social media trolling or harassment, a figure that has doubled since the last survey of this kind in 2015.Fifty-six-times capped Elinor Snowsill and five-times capped Robyn Lock confirmed they had both been subject to this kind of unsolicited attention. While they are quick to welcome the advantages social media brings to women’s sport, there is no place for abuse of any kind in Welsh rugby.

Snowsill said, “I think social media is vital, especially in women’s sport. We are able to talk directly to fans and we can have a positive impact on aspiring sportswomen. However, the constant private messages I get when I post something can feel a bit like harassment. It’s such a strong word but if that person was constantly coming up and reacting to everything you did in real life, it would feel a bit odd”.
[**Click here for full story**](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=8eb640bfb417ddefe298fe6f0ed6c248&i=496A504A1A1420):

***Rugby News***
**COVID-19 Player statement**
An individual (a player) at the Dragons has tested positive for COVID-19 in Welsh Rugby's testing programme.
The person is symptom free and is currently isolating.
All subsequent Public Health Wales and Government guidelines are being followed. This is Welsh Rugby’s first positive finding in over a month of testing with well over 1100\* tests being undertaken to date.
No further details regarding the individual will be provided.

**James hooked on coaching**
With his illustrious playing career now behind him after 16 years at the top which included two Grand Slams in his 81 Welsh caps, James Hook is turning his attention to coaching the next generation of stars at the Ospreys – and he can’t wait to get going.
Renowned for his silky skills and coolness under pressure, Hook would have been deemed a natural choice to take up coaching, but that’s an assumption he doesn’t necessarily agree entirely 100 per cent with. (More of that later)
Since last September Hook has been among a hand-picked group of players selected to take part in the inaugural 12-month-long Player to Coach programme developed by the Welsh Rugby Union overseen by WRU Performance Coach Manager, Dan Clements.
The building blocks have been put in place for Hook and co. to construct firm foundations in their fledgling coaching careers but for Hook transitioning into coaching from playing hasn’t been an overnight decision.
[**Click her for full story**](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=8eb640bfb417ddefe298fe6f0ed6c248&i=496A504A1A1421):

**Dai eager for return to action**
Scarlets backs coach Dai Flanagan is looking forward to the return of action on a regional level. On our latest podcast he tells us what it has been like under new management at Parc y Scarlets and also reveals what it has been like being part of the WRU’s coach development scheme.
We also hear from former Wales international and intrepid explorer Richard Parks on how he coped with lockdown – along with some interesting warnings.
[**Click here to listen to podcast**](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=8eb640bfb417ddefe298fe6f0ed6c248&i=496A504A1A1425)
**Big Nick Williams calls time on his career**
Cardiff Blues No 8 Nick Williams has hung up his boots after 16 years as a professional player.
“It’s sad not to have had one last run out at the Arms Park but with Covid-19, and everything that has come with it, there have been much bigger things to worry about,” said Williams.
“I’ve been blessed to play this game for so long and could never have imagined I would be a professional for 16 years and travel to so many brilliant places around the world.
“It’s sad not to have had one last run out at the Arms Park but with Covid-19, and everything that has come with it, there have been much bigger things to worry about,” said Williams.
“I’ve been blessed to play this game for so long and could never have imagined I would be a professional for 16 years and travel to so many brilliant places around the world.”
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