**WRU STATUS UPDATE 01/07/2020**

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1. **CEO’s comment:**

*There is no doubt the pandemic has presented challenges, sacrifices, heartache and anxiety.*
*We are under no illusions about the reality of the last three or four months. That said, without getting too philosophical, we can choose to view our future through a lens of hope or one of fear. You don’t need to watch too much TV news, or read too much media or social media, to get your daily dose of fear!*
*So, whilst there are tough days ahead, and inevitable challenges as we transition to life with the virus supressed or defeated, I would like to talk about our hopes rather than fears. We have a vision for how life can be for us in Welsh rugby if we believe that good things will happen. Rest assured everyone at the WRU will graft shoulder to shoulder with you to bring the game back stronger – we will leave nothing on the pitch.*
*During challenging times, it can be difficult to see beyond the day-to-day. However, I have been struck recently by how rugby in Wales can not only survive this pandemic, but could thrive. I am sure many of us have been through a process of re-assessing what really matters in life. Family, health and well-being are obviously front of mind, but equally the value of community, of social interactions, of our local environment and being part of a larger social circle feel important now. In many ways, rugby is ready made for this moment. The health benefits of sport are self-evident, but what is a rugby club if not a welcoming, social community hub? What is a rugby club if not the product of the collective efforts of players, coaches, referees, volunteers and families? What is the roar of the Principality Stadium if not the sound of our communities celebrating our collective Welsh identity?*
*Rugby will be back. And rugby will be better if we all put in place the things we have learned during this hiatus.*
*So, from a positive and hopeful perspective:*

·       *Our players will have missed playing and will be itching to get back out there with their team-mates. We also have a gilt-edged opportunity to recruit new players who will be looking to be part of a team and who will be looking for the camaraderie that a team sport like rugby provides.*
·       *Rugby is the ultimate social, team sport and nothing will compare to the return to that sense of “Hwyl”.*
·       *Lapsed players who have stopped playing may want to pull the jersey on again and we will provide the welcome.*
·       *Our coaches at all levels will have had time to plan, time to learn and will return with new ideas, having developed new approaches and with new energy.*
·       *Our volunteers will have missed the sense of purpose that volunteering brings, that chance to put something back into our communities.*
·       *Better still we can embrace new volunteers who will have endured months of relative isolation, who will be keen to be part of something purposeful and where new relationships can be formed.*
·       *We have learnt some new practices in lockdown. We have held many video conferences and webinars. In future we may still sometimes need to travel for a meeting or coaching workshop, but now sometimes we can conveniently get this done from closer to home.*
·       *We have missed the sense of belonging that only a rugby club can bring. That sense of community, being part of something and shared experiences with our team-mates.*
·       *All of our staff at the WRU care about the game and we are all itching to get back into our workplaces, back into clubs, schools and colleges to engage and excite about all that rugby brings.*
·       *Rugby clubs are the most welcoming of places, open to everyone and we have an opportunity to be the venue of choice to bring people back together for the ultimate “Social” experience.*
·       *Welsh rugby’s mantra has been a “Jersey for all”. Whether it be 15’s, 7s, touch, tag, walking, disability or mixed rugby we have a game for all.*
·       *We have over 300 clubs, we span all of Wales and we can be the most inclusive sport in the country. We can embrace all of society, men, women and children, regardless of background with a safe and welcoming place to come.*
·       *The pandemic has been a financial reality check. We have had to cut our cloth accordingly and we have the chance now to take that new mentality into our new world and to genuinely live within our means. We can choose to not take payment for amateur players into our new world. It’s in our hands.*
·       *We have many great rugby partners and many great commercial partners who have stuck with us through the tough times. We have the opportunity, as we wait to resume playing, to build plans for a successful shared future.*
·       *Life will be more “Local” for some time. We can set our clubs up to be the sport and social hubs in our communities as we all look local for our leisure time.*
·       *As people stay local, our clubhouses have the potential for more events and celebrations than ever before.*
·       *Some people have used lookdown to be more active than ever and will be looking for physical activity in groups rather than as individuals. Some people haven’t been active enough and will be looking for somewhere to get active. We have a game for all.*
·       *We all recognise the positive impact that physical activity and the sense of belonging rugby can bring to our mental health. We can be there for those who need to be with others, to have someone to talk to and somewhere to go when we need company.*
·       *There is a backlog of professional rugby to fit in. We can go and support our local teams or meet at the clubs to watch the games together*
**·***We know that club volunteers have been busy painting, fixing and maintaining. How positive when we are up and running again to return to clubhouses that have been given an overhaul.*

*We plan to work together to make our clubs a safe place to visit - the detailed process we are undertaking will make the rugby club and all associated activities as safe as possible for you to return.*
*Patience – we are playing the biggest waiting game of all. We understand club frustrations but we can use this time wisely (deal with everything that you didn’t have time to do before) to prepare our clubs for the greatest of comebacks when it is safe to do so
We have a brilliant sport that is at the heart of our communities. Life after this pandemic Will never be the same and it can be better than it was before. There are many, many factors that mean we can come out of the other side of this crisis stronger than when we went in. This is why we have committed a further £600,000 to member clubs today, further details of which are below, taking the total amount of emergency funding for clubs to more than £1m in the last six months.*
*If we believe all of this is possible, we plan as clubs for the opportunity and work together, I’ve no doubt the game will continue to grow and get stronger.*

*Stay safe,*
*Martyn Phillips*
*WRU CEO*

**2.**     **CV-19 Return to Play and Social Distancing Support Grants and Funding**

We are pleased to announce that a one-off £600,000 fund will be made available to member clubs to support return to play protocols and to assist with the purchase of equipment or adaptations to premises/facilities that may be required as a result of CV-19 related social distancing measures.

The £600,000 will include the central procurement of items such as PPE with grants awarded to individual clubs on a criteria and assessment of need basis.

All clubs will be eligible to apply for a grant for qualifying expenditure within the scheme and the amounts awarded by the WRU can potentially be increased further by external funding sources.

***“Following a period of consultation via the recent Club Impact Survey, the findings identified clubs were protected for a minimum of six months,”***said WRU Community Director Geraint John.

***“Consequently we have now outlined our intention to further financially support our clubs to prepare to return to rugby and remain at the heart of our communities.***

***“A Facilities Working Group has been established including club representatives to ensure that we continue to listen and support our community game in line with Welsh Government guidance.***

***“Further details on what types of expenditure will be supported and how clubs can apply for the grant element of the scheme will be provided shortly.”***

Once guidance on the scheme has been published, the Club Development Team will host local/virtual sessions where WRU staff will be on hand to provide detailed guidance on the support that will be available to clubs.

The £600,000 fund will be in addition to the rugby and development grants for the 2020/21 season, with details on those grants due to be announced shortly.

This additional £600,000 means the WRU has now committed over £1m in emergency funding to clubs in the past six months, including £100,000 to support remedial works following Storm Dennis, and c.£300,000 paid to clubs at the start of the CV-19 lockdown, via the £1,000 grant per club.

Further information on the new funding programme will be issued to Club Secretaries shortly.

In the meantime clubs should direct any queries to clubdevelopment@wru.wales

**3.**     **Election reminder**
We hope that member clubs enjoyed the virtual hustings hosted online last week for the National Council Member election, being contested by Nigel Davies, Ieuan Evans and John Manders, with all three candidates making strong cases and answering questions with obvious passion and interest. Clubs are reminded that the closing date for ballot papers to be returned for this election is 3pm on Friday 10 July. Any Club that has not already received the ballot paper should contact Rhys Williams (rjwilliams@wru.wales

**4. Rugby news**

**MENAI BRIDGE FUNDRAISING GAP FOR LOCAL HOSPICE**
Members of an Anglesey rugby club have put their best feet forward to support a local hospice which has been hit hard by COVID-19. When Wales went into lockdown in March, St David's Hospice were forced to close their 26 charity shops and stop all face to face fundraising activity, with 90% of their income drying up overnight. Despite its financial woes, the charity has continued to provide high quality end of life hospice care to patients from Conwy, Gwynedd and Anglesey throughout the pandemic. After hearing of the hospice's plight, Menai Bridge Rugby Club's players and supporters rallied around, setting themselves a sponsored challenge of running, walking and cycling the 10,104 miles from Menai Bridge Rugby Club to the Six Nations rugby grounds of Wales, England, Scotland, Ireland, France and Italy, as well as the venues for the British and Irish Lions' three test series in South Africa in 2021. Thanks to the lung busting efforts of more than 100 players and supporters, a total of 16,045 miles was covered over a six week period, with £1,250 raised for St David's Hospice. Darren Owen, Chairman of Menai Bridge Rugby, said:
***"St David's Hospice is a cause which is close to the hearts of many of our players and supporters so we were very pleased to be able to help this wonderful charity in a small way.******"On behalf of Menai Bridge Rugby Club I'd like to thank everyone who has been so generous in sponsoring us."***

**EARLY FINISH FOR SEVENS SERIES**
The remaining rounds of the HSBC World Rugby Sevens Series 2020 have been cancelled due to the ongoing and dynamic global nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing the 2020 Series to an early conclusion. Wales’ men’s team had been due to compete in London, Paris, Singapore and Hong Kong as they sought to climb back up the rankings to avoid dropping out of the top tier. However, an announcement this week from World Rugby confirmed there will be no relegation, although Japan will join the HSBC World Rugby Sevens Series 2021 as the 16th core team
More here: [www.wru.wales/2020/06/early-finish-for-world-rugby-sevens-series-2020/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=5a1045fb48edeaf4ce958528f7f2c3bf&i=483A491A1A1332)

**DEE DOESN’T SAIL ALONE**
No man is an island, as the famous line goes. Wales and Dragons hooker Elliot Dee would agree.
***“In rugby it’s rare that you sit down and reflect on all your achievements and the people who helped get you where you are,”***says the 26-year-old. ***“If anything good has come from this time in lockdown, it’s made me realise how much of a whirlwind the last three years have been. I hadn’t had a chance at all to look back on the World Cup or the Grand Slam, but these were some amazing achievements.”***
It was only when he had a special chair upholstered with all his team jerseys that Dee tumbled down the most welcoming of rabbit holes. Most of it is a tapestry of Gwent rugby. Born and bred in Newbridge, in the county of Caerphilly, Dee’s earliest memories are of wet nights at the Welfare Ground. Coach Paul Shipp, father of Wales U20 and Dragons hooker Ellis, was a big influence for Dee in his ten years at Newbridge. With no youth set-up at the club, however, Dee went on to join Penallta, fifteen minutes down the valley. By this time his potential had been recognised by the Dragons Academy, his talent evident in his district displays for Gwent, Caerphilly and Islwyn.
Read more here:
[www.wru.wales/article/dee-gives-thanks-to-support-network/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=5a1045fb48edeaf4ce958528f7f2c3bf&i=483A491A1A1333)

**McBRYDE HEADING OUR WAY**Billy McBryde is using Josh Adams as his inspiration as he keeps on working his way north to try to find a way back towards a full-time career with a Welsh region. The 2016 Wales Under 20 Grand Slam outside half spent the past two seasons playing for Colwyn Bay-based RGC 1404 in the Welsh Premiership after being released by the Scarlets. Now he has picked up a contract in the English Championships at Doncaster Knights. McBryde will join former England U20 outside half Sam Olver in the battle for the No 10 shirt at Castle Park and knows he will have to more than match the consistency he showed with RGC if he is to make the grade in the Championship**. “I’d love to be able to come back to Wales in the future and play regularly for a regional side, but now all my focus will be on winning a place in the Doncaster team and helping my new club to do well,”** he said.
More here: [community.wru.wales/2020/06/29/mcbryde-using-josh-adams-as-inspiration/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=5a1045fb48edeaf4ce958528f7f2c3bf&i=483A491A1A1334)

**HEAR FROM GREG**
We speak to WRU Rugby Enterprise Manager Greg Woods this week. He tells us what his day to day job involves and explains how alternative versions of the game will play their role leading the way out of this Coronavirus crisis, as well as providing a welcome update on how are teams in the Indigo Group Premiership preparing.
Listen here: [www.wru.wales/audio/welsh-rugby-union-podcast-26-2020/](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=5a1045fb48edeaf4ce958528f7f2c3bf&i=483A491A1A1335)

**AND FINALLY… CHARVIS RECALLS AUTUMN YEARS**WRU Council member Colin Charvis vividly remembers the day when he realised Old Father Time had caught up with him in Bermuda. The former Wales captain – still Wales’ fifth highest all-time try scorer, and way out on his own as the leading forward, with 22 from 94 caps – was a regular visitor to the annual World Rugby Classic, held on the subtropical island. The tournament, for 35-year-olds and upwards, has always attracted some of the best vintage rugby players in the world, including plenty of Welshmen. Dafydd James and Chris Wyatt featured in the 2015 tournament, playing for the Classic Lions team, in a competition which featured in a tournament highlights programme on S4C on Monday night (still available online here: [www.s4c.cymru/en/sport/#](https://wru.acemlnb.com/lt.php?notrack=1&s=5a1045fb48edeaf4ce958528f7f2c3bf&i=483A491A1A1336)). Charvis graced three events, the last of which he showed impressive staying power by playing at the relatively ripe old age of 41 in 2014. His Classic Lions team came up against Argentina, featuring a squad of players who had mostly made up the core of their national side that had gone to the 2011 World Cup in New Zealand. Last year’s event featured former England and Toulon star Delon Armitage, who had just nudged past his 35th birthday, as well as Wales’ evergreens James, now 44, and Ceri Sweeney, who passed his own 40th birthday landmark this year. Charvis made two finals with the Classic Lions and one semi-final, but never quite managed to lift the trophy. But as well as showcasing the cream of world rugby’s slightly greying playing group, the World Rugby Classic is about far more. The event, says Charvis, has a vibe and atmosphere unique in the sport and one that owes its special appeal to an old-school regard for the game’s cherished traditions – both on and off the field.
Full story: [www.wru.wales/2020/06/62624/](http://www.wru.wales/2020/06/62624/)