

# Developing a Major Events Strategy for Wales

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Sport Wales Consultation Response

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Sport Wales is the national organisation responsible for developing and promoting sport and physical recreation. Working with partner agencies, on a national and local level, our primary focus is to increase the frequency of participation in physical recreation and sporting activity. We aim to focus on those who are currently sedentary to become more active and to encourage people, young and old, to develop a portfolio of activities through which to achieve healthy levels of activity. We are the main adviser on sporting matters to the Welsh Assembly Government and are responsible for distributing funds from the National Lottery to sport in Wales.

## Executive Summary

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation on developing a major events strategy for Wales. We agree that there is a need to improve the co-ordination around both attracting and organising major events.

This strategy rightly sets out the desire to attract events to Wales and does reference the current economic climate that we will be undertaking this task within. We believe that, coupled with the need to develop infrastructure in Wales, there is a need to strike a realistic balance around whether within the lifetime of this strategy Wales would be able to seek to host a mega event. We would advocate a strategy for sport of focussing on growth events and a few major events, which could strategically grow the infrastructure in Wales and put us on the map as a sporting destination beyond rugby, football and golf. With this in place by the end of the strategy as a nation and a sector we would be better equipped to bid for a mega event such as the Commonwealth Games.

The decision over what events to attract will be equally important. In June Sport Wales will be launching our Elite Sports Strategy, which will outline what sports we will be focussing our support on in the coming years. We would welcome a discussion with the Major Events Unit once the strategy has been published to look at how we can ensure that the events we are looking to attract complements the sports we will be supporting. Any sporting event should also seek to complement the work that is being undertaken on a grassroots level to promote physical activity and participation in sport. We would not want to see funding diverted from these programmes to support the hosting of a major event.

The development of guiding principles and an assessment framework provide a useful tool for agencies to use when considering whether to bid for an event. It is critically important, though, that there is some form of further categorisation so that agencies are fully informed of what the Assembly Government views as the most important of these criteria. It is unlikely that any event will fulfil all the guiding principles or assessment criteria, so there needs to be some form of flexibility. The principles and assessment also need to better reflect the non-economic benefits that hosting events can potentially have, including promoting physical activity, community cohesion and participation in particular sporting activities. It is positive that the strategy views the lasting legacy of any event as important, but this needs to go beyond economic benefits, particularly when considering growth events.

Finally we believe that there needs to be a greater emphasis on the Major Events Unit to build capacity within the sector to be able to bid, secure and deliver across the different categories of events, engaging with experience in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

**1. Does the strategy make clear the types of event which we will support, and those which we will not support?**

The strategy clearly outlines the different categories of events and when taken alongside the guidelines and assessment criteria there is some indication as to the type of events that will be supported. We do not feel it is as clear as the consultation question above implies, as there is no suggestion around which type of events will be prioritised.

Inevitably if the Assembly Government with partners is looking to attract a mega event such as the Commonwealth Games this may well have an effect on the ability of the unit to look to attract events in the other categories. This may particularly be the case when considering the potential economic climate during the lifetime of this strategy. This also raises the question of whether supporting a mega event is viable in the lifetime of this strategy.

We believe that the strategy needs to recognise these economic and capacity issues, to ensure that an unrealistic expectation is not built up that the Assembly Government and partners will be looking to deliver multiple events across the four categories at the same time. Sport Wales would advocate a strategy of concentrating on growth events with some major events, with a view to building the infrastructure in Wales. This would allow for consideration of a bid for a mega event post 2016.

**Sport Wales recommends that the strategy has a clearer expectation on how multiple events across the four categories will be delivered, taking into account economic and capacity pressures both on the Major Events Unit and partner agencies.**

**Sport Wales recommends that the strategy commits itself to focussing on attracting growth events with some major events in order to build capacity, experience and infrastructure with a view to being in a position to bid for a mega event post 2016.**

It is positive that the strategy is not simply seeking to identify and attract established events, but will also be looking to investigate all events that may be suitable for Wales, within the assessment criteria. We also welcome the commitment to a 'Team Wales' approach to working together with partner agencies and agree that the strength of these partnerships is critical to the success in attracting major events to Wales. In terms of sport we believe that it is particularly crucial that we are looking to attract events that reflect the sports referred to within our Elite Sports Strategy due to be launched in June 2010. Some of these governing bodies may not have the experience of bidding, securing and delivering what would be major or growth events in Wales, which would mean significant support would be needed in order to bid for the significant events within these sports.

**Sport Wales would welcome the opportunity to discuss with the Major Events Unit at an early opportunity the events we would like to see considered for support, which would complement the sports referred to within our Elite Sports Strategy.**

**2. Do the guiding principles provide a clear statement about how we will prioritise our investment in major sporting events?**

Again broadly we feel that the guiding principles provide a basis for identifying events, although as there is no weighting in the guiding principles it makes it difficult to see how these would be used to prioritise particular events. We understand that each of these principles are important in themselves, but believe that the Assembly Government should provide some guidance as to whether particular principles are more important. It may be difficult for all events to meet all of the principles, so a decision will need to be made around whether meeting say five out of the nine would be enough to receive support. This will potentially be particularly important when considering growth events, which might be quite small initially, but with potential in the future to meet all the principles outlined in the strategy.

**Sport Wales recommends that the Assembly Government looks to categorise this principles to identify those that are essential in order for an event to receive support and those that may be considered desirable.**

We believe that there is also the need to be more specific in the principles about the legacy for communities of any major event. Whilst the principles do state that “clear and measurable benefits to Wales” (p.7) must be evidenced, this is much more associated with value for money and adding value to investment. Major events can provide other opportunities, such as raising awareness of a sport, boosting participation in the sport or simply encouraging more people to get active. This should be taken alongside any financial benefit as a valuable outcome. At present we do not feel that these benefits are clearly included in the guiding principles.

**Sport Wales recommends that the guiding principles are amended to ensure that there is a clear link to the wider benefits that a major event can have in encouraging participation, access and awareness, as well as recognising the need to add value to existing investment.**

**3. Is the assessment framework we have described in Section 5 fit for purpose?**

Broadly the assessment criteria match with the guiding principles in Section 4. We welcome the development of an assessment criterion as it would allow sports organisations to have a guide as to whether an event would be supported or not. If the guiding principles are amended to take into account the recommendation in the previous question relating to non-economic outcomes of hosting a major event, this would need to be reflected in the assessment criteria.

We further welcome the statement that the assessment criteria will not be a “checklist” where every event will have to meet every single section of the criteria. It is critically important that there is some flexibility. It may be worthwhile, as recommended in an earlier response, considering whether there are any parts of the assessment that are more important than others, to provide an even clearer lead to organisations looking to gain support for events.

Whilst we also recognise that Cardiff has a central role to play in attracting larger scale events, we would also want to ensure that some of the facilities that have been developed across Wales are being utilised to attract significant sporting competitions.

**4. Do you agree that the Major Events Unit should be the lead national body for Welsh public sector support for major events as described in Section 6 of the strategy?**

Again we welcome the recognition of the “Team Wales” approach and that the experience for delivering and hosting major events lies with the Assembly Government’s partner agencies. We believe the role of the Major Events Unit should be to provide additional funding where necessary and be a hub for sharing experiences and information about bidding and delivering major events between organisations. We recognise also that it will have a role in itself in identifying and leading on the bidding process for certain events, particularly mega events.

Currently the one section missing from the main functions would be around capacity building across the sector in bidding and delivering major events. This would involve building capacity around the legal aspects of a bid, marketing, TV rights, environmental issues, etc. This would mean that the Unit would be building the capacity of NGBs and others to develop bids themselves.

**Sport Wales recommends that a bullet point relating to capacity building within the sector is added into the list, to develop the ability of organisations to bid for events.**

This section also does not recognise that there may also be relevant experience in the voluntary and private sectors that could be harnessed to attract and deliver on major events. As Wales is a small country we need to ensure that we are utilising all resources at our disposal.

**Sport Wales recommends that reference to the experience within the voluntary and private sectors are included in this section of the strategy to ensure that all available experience is being fully utilised.**

The budget for the Unit will also be critical and whether this will be allocated on a first come, first serve basis or whether it will be divided up across various sections of the Heritage portfolio. Consideration will also need to be given to whether existing funding arrangements between bodies such as Sport Wales and the NGBs will be effected by any grant or developmental funding from the Unit. It is also critical that any decision to fund a major event does not have an impact on the grassroots funding for participation or development. Through programmes such as Dragon Sport and 5x60 we are successfully engaging more children and young people in physical activity in an effort to get them hooked on sport for life. Major events can be powerful in influencing an interest in a particular activity or sport, but there then needs to be an infrastructure to sustain that involvement. We would not want the funding for a major event to threaten these developments.

**Sport Wales recommends that a section is included looking at the allocation of any budget and how it will integrate with current funding streams organisations receive from Sport Wales and other funders.**

**5. Are the Key Performance Indicators we have outlined in Section 7 fit for purpose?**

We welcome the commitment that some events may require specific research and evaluation to determine the impact. Restricting this to larger scale events may prevent some valuable findings, particularly from growth events, being captured, so we would suggest that a variety of events are considered for specific research and evaluation. This is also with the knowledge that there is not a huge amount of research into the impact of major events on different parts of a society. By developing this aspect we in Wales could not only develop our practice and knowledge, but be contributing to an under researched area.

**Sport Wales believes that this strategy should commit the Assembly Government and partners to developing a well established research and evaluation programme for a range of events, that will improve practice and also develop international understanding of the impact of major events.**

**6. Are there other actions which we should be considering in the early stages of implementing the strategy?**

In reading this strategy we are unsure whether this is laying out a clear vision for the development of major events in Wales in the coming year or whether it is more laying out a proposed way of working. We would expect that following this strategy consideration is given to developing an action plan specifying the events that Wales would be looking to keep and attract, following discussions with partner organisations.

We would be happy to discuss further any aspect of this response.

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