

P-04-561 Promotion of Grassroots Rugby in Wales to Encourage Take-Up of the Sport- Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Clerking Team, 17.11.14

Dear Kayleigh

Thank you for your email of 12th November, which we have had the chance to read and consider.

Whilst we feel from experience that the Welsh Rugby Union is not doing nearly enough to help the grassroots of Welsh rugby and to support Welsh Rugby Clubs (as evidenced by sides failing to fulfil fixtures or disbanding), we appreciate the position the Petitions Committee will find itself in, in having to accept the Minister's letter at face value. The "new strategy" mentioned in the letter has only been in place since 2nd October and sadly therefore we cannot assess its impact at this stage. However it is clear to us that such a strategy has been implemented at an extremely late juncture and notably after our original petition was submitted. We would like to question why this has only now been introduced despite the protracted problems in the lower echelons of Welsh rugby, as well as women's and junior rugby (often highlighted in our own programme, IWRTV and not covered by the BBC) and why the Welsh Government had not sought to expedite the process.

There is however a great omission from this letter and that is any absence of a resolution relating to the broadcast of games below professional rugby in Wales. Whilst we appreciate the Minister's explanation that broadcasting in general and in terms of the specific events in question are not within the direct power of the Welsh Government, we are clear in stating that more could be done to facilitate such a development, particularly given the fact that a substantial subsidy has been accorded with the specific remit of widening the appeal of sport and narrowing the participation gap. Broadcast of matches at this level would substantially support that aim and it is certainly surprising to hear the Government is not pressing this issue to the forefront of broadcasters minds at this time.

Anecdotally, since our original submission we have noted an attempt to broadcast a lower level match such as those we had included in our own programme, however rather than being a positive experience for those concerned, it was managed in a manner which alienated the participants. If required, further evidence could be

provided regarding this issue which should be used to understand how broadcast in the correct manner will enhance the sport.

I trust this response will assist your deliberations and hopefully enable you to decide upon a solution which will enable us all to shore up the foundations of the National sport of Wales.

Yours sincerely

Paul Turner, Stewart Spencer and Gareth Spencer