

PET(4)-11-12 : Monday 2 July 2012
P-04-335 : The Establishment of a Welsh Cricket Team

Correspondence from Chief Executive, Cricket Ireland

Dear Mr Powell,

Thank you for your letter of March 26, which our (now) former President Mr Richard Johnson has passed to me for response.

The debate in the Assembly was very illuminating and struck a chord with me, as one that has worked at ECB, ICC and now Cricket Ireland.

If you will permit me to sound vague, my sense of the matter is that both the petitioner and Glamorgan CCC are right. The petitioner is half correct to say that creation of a national team on the will ultimately benefit the nation, but one presumes that he is assuming automatic success based on his assertion of historic performance of the Glamorgan team in the ECB system. Of course, the key word here is 'ultimately'.

And this is where Glamorgan CCC, Cricket Wales and Sport Wales are correct – is the sport in Wales prepared to forego the funding and match-hosting benefits which accrues from being part of the ECB system in order to reach the sunlit uplands of future international success at some indistinct point in the future? It seems to me this is the rub.

My sense is that the petitioners have their hearts in absolutely the right place – they are patriots who care deeply about their country, understand the capacity for successful sports teams to foster national pride, and see the talented cricketers who can deliver that. It seems to me that the sports administrators fully understand those concepts, and I am sure are equally patriotic, but their job is to run businesses as well as sporting teams and as a consequence they understand that the long term may be beneficial, but is the game in Wales prepared to go through the short-medium term pain of financial impecunity to reach that stage?

One of the petitioners says that the argument should not be about money. Unfortunately, it is. Money creates playing contracts, coaching expertise, staffing, infrastructure, overseas tours, inbound tours, administration costs, development programmes, academy structures and all the things that drive performance in the first place. I guess you need to look no further than the WRU to see how funding properly channelled creates success and engenders national pride.

It seems to me the reality is this. ECB has already notified Glamorgan and Cricket Wales that if the latter secedes from ECB, then it will essentially become a competitor to England, and will no longer receive funding. Wales would enter the ICC structures in a low division, and would take time to secure the requisite funding. Ireland is the #1 Associate country and receives a guaranteed US\$685,000 per year plus an annual grant of US\$300,000 for qualifying for the World Cup. We get a separate participation fee for qualifying for the World T20 every 2 years. The rest of our funding is made up of government grants and commercial revenue. It seems to me that even if Wales was to supplant Ireland in that role, it would take a while to get there (working through the ICC divisions) and you might still be worse off!

This is not to decry the desire among the petitioners to get there – their desire is wholly laudable. It strikes me that the sporting bodies are merely playing the role of the Finance Director agreeing that it is a laudable aim in principle, but one should be aware of the risks of doing so. However, whether the financial reality should ever supplant a dream is another matter.

Please feel free to make further contact with me should you feel it necessary.

Kind regards

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Chief Executive