

24 January 2023

Delyth Jewell MS
Chair Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International
Relations Committee
Welsh Parliament,
Cardiff Bay,
Cardiff CF99 1SN



Dear Chair,

We enclose a copy of a letter we have sent to the Chair of the Welsh Rugby and ask that you consider setting up an inquiry to look at the issues raised.

The joint Supporters Group are an organisation that comprises of the supporters groups of the 4 professional rugby clubs in Wales. We have been concerned for some time about the governance of rugby in Wales.

Today we have seen the distressing allegations raised by some former WRU employees in the BBC Wales Investigates programme aired on 23 January 2023.

We believe our game in Wales is now facing an unprecedented crisis at all levels. Because of the delays in signing financial deals, all four professional clubs can not initiate unconditional contract offers for retaining or recruiting players for the 2023/24 season. This is causing immeasurable anxiety for the players and their livelihoods, many thinking of leaving Wales for contracts in other nations.

We feel it is time that our elected representatives investigate the issues we raise in the latter and ask that you instigate an inquiry by your committee into the governance and management of Welsh Rugby Union. We would be happy to meet you in person to discuss our concerns further if this would be of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

JSG Cymru

Please reply via email to: contact@jsg.cymru

24 January 2023

Ieuan Evans
Welsh Rugby Union Limited
Principality Stadium
Westgate Street
Cardiff
CF10 1NS



Dear Mr Evans,

You will be aware we wrote to you and the Chief Executive on 30 December to express our concerns about the cessation of meetings between the WRU and the Joint Supporters Group (JSG). It also expressed our concern about the failure of the WRU to sign a financial agreement with the four professional clubs.

We received a holding response on 3 January, followed by a response from Malcolm Wall on 17 January in his capacity as PRB Chair (on behalf of all PRB members). We have thanked Malcolm and we will take him up on his offer to discuss our concerns, but we are disappointed neither yourself or the Chief Executive chose to respond to us personally.

Our game in Wales is now facing an unprecedented crisis at all levels. The lack of agreement on budgets for the professional teams is causing immeasurable anxiety for the players and their livelihoods, many thinking of leaving Wales for contracts in other nations. Who can blame them?

It was on 14 December that the PRB verbal agreement was announced. However, the full agreement has not been completed and all four professional clubs can not initiate unconditional contract offers for retaining or recruiting players for the 2023/24 season. Meanwhile, you have overseen several costly changes to the coaching set up of the Men's national team during the same period.

We are also concerned about the allegations raised by some former employees last night. The BBC programme was distressing to watch and brings about many questions about what is happening inside the WRU. With this in mind, we will be calling on the Welsh Senedd Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee to initiate an inquiry into the governance and leadership of the Welsh Rugby Union during Steve Phillips' tenure.

Many of our membership are also involved in the community game, some as players, some as coaches, and there the problems are all too apparent with playing numbers dwindling. We have all seen recent statements from officials at the professional clubs lamenting the lack of action from national governance and warning of threats to the very existence of the teams.

Rugby Union is too important to us as a nation to flounder due to the inability to find an equitable solution, much needed to ensure the future of the professional game in Wales. Equally, the solution must be one within which the professional clubs have the foundations with which to be successful on and off the pitch. Success of the professional clubs will thereby ensure the international team will thrive. Something every supporter of the game in Wales wants to see.

We are mindful of the problems exacerbated by the recent pandemic which is why Welsh rugby needs good governance and a vision suited to the needs of a modern, international sport. In that vein, and in the interest of creating trust and understanding in the wider rugby public, we also urge transparency, which has been lacking for well over a year.

We are calling upon you as Chair of the WRU to:

- meet with us directly to respond to the many questions we have about the WRU management of the game in Wales
- relieve Steve Phillips of his position as Chief Executive immediately and instigate a full investigation into the culture in the organisation.

Yours sincerely,

JSG Cymru