

A VIEW FROM THE CHAIRPERSON'S SEAT!

Yes, I know! I said I was standing down in last years newsletter item and in my AGM notes. Some of you at least will, therefore, be surprised to see that I am still in post, writing yet another article for your annual newsletter

It had been my honest intention to stand down, but I was persuaded (conned, cajoled, bullied – call it what you want) into staying on to support the transition that was bound to occur whilst our new Chief Executive Officer got his feet under the table. Mike's feet are now well and truly under the table and we will have to see what happens from now on.

The appointment of a CEO was not simply about creating a new role and putting a person into post. It represented a substantial culture shift intended to take the WHU and Welsh Hockey through the next essential step change to ensure our continued development. Essentially this change meant transferring the day-to-day management of the Union to the professional staff, whilst the Directors and other volunteers who still form the backbone of the Union, concentrate on policy, strategy and governance. This change of direction reflects the needs of sport (and our business) in the 21st century

We have already seen many changes within the management and operations of the Union over the last 9 months or so and I trust that in the forthcoming months many more of you will be able to recognise these developments.

The Sports Council for Wales (SCW) fully supported the appointment of a CEO. In addition, as part of an initiative aimed at modernising Welsh sport, SCW also asked us, and a small number of other National Governing Bodies, to examine our operational practices and adopt new arrangements, especially at Board level. We readily accepted the challenge!

SCW was quite happy to 'put their money where there mouth was' and provided us with special funds, over and above their already considerable investment in Welsh hockey, to enable the Board to undertake the review. The Board consequently spent an extremely productive (and enjoyable) weekend ripping apart our practices and rebuilding them, as well as considering some prime target areas for attention over the next few months.

Numerous actions were agreed and many more were rejected after initial discussion. The actions can be grouped together under the following broad headings:

- Board Restructuring
- Board Effectiveness
- Communications
- Volunteers
- Financial Stability
- Club and Hockey Development.

Major steps have already been taken in respect of the two Board items and initial work has been completed on the Club and Hockey Development item. Progress is also being made on the Communications front, with an updated website to be launched in the very near future and other initiatives being pursued. That leaves the Volunteers and Financial Stability items in need of attention.

For several years I have talked about change in newsletter items, AGM notes and at various general meeting. I make no apology for this and will undoubtedly still be promoting change even after I escape from the Chairman's role.

The Union now has more members than ever before, it has greater resources than ever before and hopefully the new arrangements introduced in the last 12 months will ensure that your Union continues to grow.

Alan Rookes
Chairman
WHU Board

PERFORMANCE HOCKEY - THE WAY AHEAD

I would like first and foremost to thank the Welsh Hockey community for their warm welcome and support for some of the new things that I have been looking to introduce for the future of our sport.

Firstly we should look at the status that we currently enjoy, and I should pay tribute to my predecessor Alan Lints for the strong position in which our Performance area finds itself.

Our summer has, so far, yielded

- Performance Clubs, Whitchurch and Swansea Ladies have entered and shown their quality in the English National League with Swansea also obtaining promotion in their European Club competition after hosting a very successful tournament.
- Our Junior Academy had wins against their Belgian counterparts in April (for the boys, a first win against one of the best U-16 teams in Europe)
- A win for our U-21 men against Scotland
- A bronze medal for our U-18 boys at the Euro Trophy
- Competitive performances, not represented by the results that we would have liked for our U-18 girls
- Strong Celtic Cup performances for both our women and particularly our men against A division countries

With expanded programs coming in to place for our junior programs, and the introduction of new National programs being introduced in the 2005/2006 season, it is easy to see that I consider the development of technical skills at a younger age to be a key area for Welsh hockey.

Our newly appointed regional Coaches, in addition to guiding through these initiatives will also be at the forefront of an expansion of our talent identification procedures. The process of finding the right scouts has already commenced, and new opportunities for coaches to be involved in elite programs will follow.

All in all, an exciting time to come for Welsh Hockey and I hope that I will be able to repay some of the goodwill that has been pointed my way, in the form of results for our National Programs.

I trust that you will enjoy your season.

David Griffiths
National Performance Coach

GILMOUR SPORTS HOCKEY EQUIPMENT SHOW



We have all the new ranges from all the top brands and would be delighted if you could join us for our annual Hockey Show at Whitchurch Hockey Club on

WEDNESDAY 21st September
from 5.00pm to 9.00pm

Whitchurch RFC, Velindre Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF WELSH HOCKEY'S CEO

I would like to start my article by thanking every volunteer, player, coach, teacher, parent, board member, staff member and sponsor for your support of Welsh Hockey. Having come from outside of the sport of hockey I am genuinely astounded by the level of commitment and dedication you all give to the cause. Thank you all!!

Looking back to the 6 September 2004 little did I realise on my first day the extent of the challenges that faced Welsh Hockey and indeed how long it would take to get the organisation into a position where we could honestly say that we were a modern business fully equipped for the rigours of business in the 21st century. Indeed I specifically remember one evening during the first month of my employment having a discussion with my wife about how long it would take me to get the modernisation process through. Buoyed by the mini success of putting in place a few new personnel and finance procedures I boasted that it should only take me about 12 months to put everything into place, my wife said 'don't be so silly it will take you at least three years' to which I replied 'we will see!' Well one year on I hate to admit it but my wife was right!!

What's been achieved?

Having said that it will take three years plus to get there, we have made significant strides in 2004/05 in a number of areas. I have highlighted some of the key successes below to add to those already highlighted in the Chairman's, Development and Performance reports:

Income Generation

New three or four year sponsorship deals have been signed with sponsors Gilmour Sports Ltd, Sport Experiences, HSBC Bank Ltd and RAF Careers. The combined worth of these deals over the four year period to the Union is £123000 which if successfully matched with the Sportmatch scheme will expand to a whopping £220400.

Member Services

We have entered into partnership with our sponsors and suppliers to offer members a wide range of membership benefits and discounts. A few of the packages agreed are highlighted below:

Online shop – offering Welsh Hockey Union branded kit through Gilmour Sports.

Sport Experiences – offering all travel requirements including organisation of tours (home and abroad) for both clubs and schools

Lyreco – All stationery requirements

Communication Systems

A new website and bi-monthly newsletters are shortly to be launched with fuller details given elsewhere in this newsletter.

Corporate Governance and Strategic Planning Improvements

A number of improvements have been made in this area including:

- The production of Board Modernisation Action Plan;
- Implementation of Board Effectiveness Improvements;
- Strategic targets for 2002 – 2006 amended to reflect growth in membership and performance standards;

- Staffing resources have been restructured to be able to best achieve strategic plan targets;
- Annual operational plan produced which is linked to the four year strategic plan;
- Staff work programmes are now linked to the operational plan.

Operational Management Policies, Procedures and Systems

New procedures and policies are in place for Personnel, Operational and Financial Management. We now have a financial procedures manual, staff handbook, new financial reporting and recording system, child protection policy, sponsorship policy and have updated or are in the process of updating several other policies and procedures. In addition the Union has adequately equipped its staff and office with permanently sited and mobile IT and telephone systems.

What about the Next Twelve Months?

Without wishing to get carried away with the above successes and those mentioned in the development and performance articles overleaf, make no bones about it we face a tough challenge to move this sport forward at the pace required to keep in front of all our competitors. Over the next twelve months not only will we need to keep improving in those areas already mentioned above but will also need to:

- Develop a New Strategic Plan for the period 2006 – 2010;
- Address the lack of media coverage and profile of hockey in Wales;
- Improve communication from the board down to the grass roots and vice versa;
- Restructure the way the sport is run in Wales both at and below Board level;
- Address Club Development weaknesses and Volunteer Recruitment Shortages;
- Revisit our Competitive structure so that everyone is accessing appropriate level competition;
- Improve our management information systems;

My hair might be going greyer by the minute but I am really looking forward to tackling the challenges ahead!! I hope that you will contribute in some way in helping us achieve our goal of being a National Governing Body that all others aspire to.

Mike Bull
Chief Executive

STATIONERY SUPPLIERS

Amongst a number of agreements made with various suppliers is one with Lyreco. For those who have not heard of the firm they are quality stationery suppliers. Widespread discounts have been negotiated with them across the whole of their range varying between 55% off their own brand and 45% off branded items. The Welsh Hockey Union has been using them for some time and the service has been excellent. Orders placed by 17:30 are delivered the following day and with a 30 day 'no quibble' returns policy it is strongly recommended that you give them a try. Orders are not restricted to businesses alone as individual orders are also welcomed. Please contact Lynette Laidlaw on 07795-091959 quoting 'Welsh Hockey' who will be more than pleased to discuss any orders that you may wish to place.

DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Staff

Since last year's newsletter, the Development Section has seen some big changes to its staff. Claire Burrows from Wrexham has relinquished her role as Hockey Officer although she remains in the Sports Development Unit in Wrexham as Sports Development Officer. Former U-21 Goalkeeper Claire Sims has stepped in to assist Rae Ellis in Carmarthenshire to keep things moving along since the departure of her assistant Darren Bartley who has now finished his studies at Trinity College and is currently living in Canada where their idea of hockey is a little different to ours! Hockey in the Vale of Glamorgan is currently being driven by our International player Sarah Thomas. Back in the UK for the summer from Holland where she plays her club hockey for Rotterdam in the Hoofdklasse (Premier Division), Sarah has picked up the reins following the departure of Chris Marriott who has moved to Head Office as Education Development Manager.

There are a number of further changes afoot with new Hockey Development Officers planned for Gwynedd. There is also the possibility that we will also have "Phase 2" Hockey Development Officers in a further three Unitary Authorities subject to a few final negotiations with our various partners. That would take us to a staff of 19, a far cry from the pioneering days when the Development "Section" comprised of just one National Development Officer!

Coach Education

Work continues to bring our coaching awards in line with the other Home Countries alongside a comprehensive programme of Tutor training, mentoring and assessment that is helping us to have the right number of tutors to enable us to run a full and high quality coach education and development programme. Course resources for the Leaders Course have now been revised and Tutor notes written and the number of Leaders Courses delivered continues to grow. We are currently looking to run extra Youth Courses to cope with demand and will update the Coaching Calendar on the website with further details. Our National Trainer, Sarah Powell, is still working hard developing our Hockey NVQ's (Coaching, Teaching and Instruction Levels 2 and 3) and elements of these are starting to find their way into our Leaders and Youth Awards. Following the release of additional funding from the Sports Council for Wales, the WHU have recently appointed Chris Marriott as Education Development Manager. Chris will be responsible for coordinating the delivery of the new Coaching for Teachers Awards, along with the implementation of the HSBC Skills Awards.

Youth Hockey

The number of Youth Competitions continues to grow with the most significant increase being the number of entries for the Activate Primary School Competition with over 2000 players from over 200 schools taking apart. It is now anticipated that as a direct result of our work with the SCW Dragon Sport initiative, there are in excess of 7,000 U-11's now playing hockey. The challenge for the WHU Development Section is to keep these players in the game through the provision of both competitive and development opportunities. A new RAF Under 18 Girls Cup competition has been established this year, together with new Regional Leagues for U-11 Boys and Girls. If you would like more information on any of these competitions, please contact the Development Section at the WHU at chris.marriott@welsh-hockey.co.uk

The WHU is keen to initiate working partnerships with Further Education Colleges to continue to support the development of 16 to 19 year olds. We have devised an Accredited Centre programme which involves technical, tactical and sports science support for talented players. Jen Barton has agreed to undertake the role of coordinating a competitive structure for all Welsh Colleges to start in October 2005 to provide formalised playing opportunities.

Youth Activators

The Youth Activators programme is now into its third year. Devised to bring young people into the areas of the game it has given them the opportunity to participate in areas such as coaching, umpiring, club development/administration, competition organisation etc. Following a Youth Conference last year, the Activators were given the opportunity to join the WHU Development Section staff and some of the Local Development Officers on the International Hockey Experience (IHE) at Disneyland Resort Paris during the Easter holidays. The Activators took on the role of coaches to the 58 U-15 girls that signed up for the 5 day trip that included coaching sessions, tournaments and of course the chance to spend time in the Disneyland Parks. As a result of the success of the first trip, it is now intended to make this an annual event and the planning for next year is well in hand. The 2006 IHE will be bigger and better following new sponsorship from our travel organisers Sport Experiences.

The new intake of Youth Activators has now been selected, and will attend the 2005 Youth Conference which takes place at the Welsh Institute of Sport, Cardiff. Competition for places has been extremely high with more than 28 applications for only 14 spaces. Running from the 31st August to 2nd September, the Conference will give the Activators the opportunity to learn to work together to help to develop the game in Wales and of course to have lots of fun doing so! If you would like to find out more about being a Youth Activator, contact Chris Marriott at chris.marriott@welsh-hockey.co.uk

Two of our third Grade Activators, Jon Elliott and Chloe Guy have been selected to represent Wales at the bi-annual World Youth Festival which this year takes place alongside the Women's Junior World Cup in Chile in September. Following in the footsteps of the inaugural World Youth Promoter Bethan Walsh will be no mean feat, but we wish Jon and Chloe the very best for their exciting trip ahead and know that they will be real ambassadors for Welsh Hockey and their fellow activators.

Club Development

All of the Local Development Officers throughout the Principality have now set up Hockey Forums which give the opportunity to drive and shape hockey locally to all schools, clubs and individuals. If you have some ideas, want to have your say, or just want to know more about the work of the forum in your area please contact your Development Officer or of course Chris Marriott as above.

The three "Phase 2" Development Officers mentioned earlier will focus on club development issues to help provide support to new and existing hockey clubs to enable them to meet the challenge of the massive demand for hockey that Dragon Sport and WHU initiatives have created.

In addition to the U-13 and U-15 Girls elements of their work programmes, the Local Development Officers will be extending their work to include U-13 Boys development. This programme aims to support the players that have progressed on to Secondary Schools from Dragon Sport hockey in Primary Schools.

The Centres of Local Development and Centres of Regional Excellence have now moved to the Performance Section of the WHU. The events have now been rebranded as Local Elite Talent Squads (LETS) and National Elite Talent Squads (NETS) and will be joined by a new Under 13 talent identification and development programme under the guidance of the National Performance Coach David Griffiths. Please contact mark.hopkins@welsh-hockey.co.uk for further information.

The support of volunteers in clubs and clubs is vital if we are to continue to be the fastest growing sport in Wales, and we look forward to working with you all in 2005/6 to make this happen.

Debbie Austin, Chris Marriott, Sarah Powell & Local Development Officers
"The Development Section"

WELSH HOCKEY UNION SHOP

A number of members (and non-members) have been suggesting for some time that there is no where for them to be able to purchase WHU-branded clothing.

I am delighted to advise you that the 'shop' is now open and can be found at the following site – www.gilmoursports.com/ and click on WHU shop. This link will also be available on the WHU website when launched in September.

A range of items are available to purchase, including replica playing shirts (Men and Women), polo shirts, supporters t-shirts, rain jackets, hooded tops, baseball caps, woollen hats as well as holdalls. All items are embroidered with the Welsh Three Feathers together with the WHU initials. The site also provides pictures of all the items which are of excellent quality.

DATABASE

Members, and in particular Club Secretaries will no doubt be as pleased as the WHU staff are, to learn that a new database is currently being tested. Once all the gremlins have been sorted out full details will be issued to clubs to enable Secretaries to update their own club's individual members' details on-line. This will substantially reduce the amount of paper that is passed to and fro and will make everybody's life a little easier!

Members will, in time, also be able to search for other club's details in respect of pitches, club contacts etc.

Full details will be issued as soon as the database has been launched.

INTERNATIONAL MIXED HOCKEY

A number of members may not realise that each year, Wales play England in the only recognised Mixed International in the World. There is a possibility that next year the one-off match will be expanded by inviting two additional countries (possibly Scotland and Ireland) to play in a mixed version of the Celtic Cup. If anybody is interested in being considered for selection please contact Rob Riley (Manager) on 07868-744535 or hockey@robendis.plus.com

CHILD PROTECTION / ANTI-DOPING CODES

I am delighted to advise you that at the last WHU Board meeting, sanction was given to formulate an all encompassing steering group whose remit will be to cover all aspects of the WHU codes, regulations, policies and rules. Invitation to join this group will be issued to selected individuals over the course of the next few weeks and information regarding the roll-out to the membership of CRB checks as well as new Anti-Doping regulations will be issued after the group's first meeting. If you feel that you have something to offer the group and would like to be involved please forward your details together with appropriate information to Chris Brewer at Welsh Hockey.



Sport Experiences is The Official Travel Company of the Welsh Hockey Union and is also the proud sponsor of the WHU Youth Hockey Activator Programme.

Sport Experiences will be providing the official travel arrangements for the Senior National Teams, U21 National Teams and Junior Academy Teams throughout 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009.

We will also be offering official WHU supporter tours to overseas International Tournaments, so that you will be able to cheer on your heroes, friends, sons or daughters when they are representing Wales!



Sport Experiences is also developing a range of overseas tours and tournaments for clubs and schools in conjunction with the Welsh Hockey Union. You can therefore plan your club or school's 2006 or 2007 tour with Sport Experiences, in the knowledge that the travel and accommodation arrangements are organised by the WHU's Official Travel Company and the competition and pitches are endorsed by your National Governing Body.

To discuss your club or school's touring plans for 2006 and 2007, or for any further information about Sport Experiences, call us on **020 8335 4949** or e-mail us at team@sportexperiences.co.uk



**Sport Experiences, The Newmarket Group, McMillan House,
Cheam Common Road, Worcester Park, Surrey KT4 8RQ**

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Sport Experiences Website: www.sportexperiences.co.uk



UMPIRE AND TECHNICAL SNIPPETS

The summer has been one continuous hockey season for a number of umpires and technical officials. Since the beginning of May there have been a number of senior international matches, European Nations under 18 international matches, a mixed international match, European club competitions and also U-16 internationals. In total, Wales provided over twenty umpires and technical officials to these events. Who said that the summer was for rest and the family??

Hurray!!!! The FIH has announced that there will be no new rules for 2006 and therefore there will not be a 2006 Rules of Hockey book. There will however be the change to the technical dimensions of the stick which was indicated last year. As from 1st January 2006 the shape of the stick has been slightly amended as now the maximum bow/rake of the stick is being reduced from 50mm to 25mm when laid down with the playing side on the ground. The FIH has also stipulated that the front side of the stick must be flat and smooth and the introduction of any grooves or slots is forbidden. If you buy a new stick for the season, be careful and remember that as from 1st June 2006 all sticks must conform to this new dimension although this rule will be enforced from 1st January for international matches and for the English National League premier division. However if you require a rulebook contact Colin who is Chair of the WHUA, on either Tel: 01446 746611 or by email at: colin@crayford.net, who still has a supply of the 2005 rulebooks as UK distributor. The FIH website contains additional information and answers to frequently asked questions on the rules for both outdoor and indoor for those interested. The web site address is: www.FIHockey.org and it is being continually expanded and updated. Also look at the WHU website where the WHUA has a section dealing with umpiring matters.

In an effort to support young umpires the two new awards have been successfully introduced. The Dragon Award is available for young people up to the age of 13 years, which will train them to umpire Mini/Dragon Sport hockey and the Foundation Award for those interested in becoming an umpire. If you want further information please contact your regional WHUA representative who will be able to assist you, failing that contact Carolyn Llewellyn Tel: 02920 882696 or the WHU Development Unit for more details of these new exciting awards. Through the assistance of the Sports Council for Wales an Umpire Development Consultant has been contracted for a 6 months period to produce important tutorials and write a 3 year Development Plan. It is hoped that the outcome will be successful and will produce the information required to develop umpiring in Wales. If the scheme is successful it is hoped that further funds will be made available to employ an Umpire Development Officer.

Well, it is now only a few weeks to the start of another season and another plea to clubs, players, parents and teachers to get involved and start providing umpires or even try it yourself. There is someone near to you who will assist you in getting the right advice. All leagues in Wales are now getting desperately short of umpires. If you would like to offer your services and join the happy bunch please contact your Regional WHUA Secretary or Colin or Carolyn who will be delighted to advise you accordingly.

Colin Crayford
Chair – WHUA

DECEASED MEMBERS

2005 has again proved to be one of sadness with a number of members having passed away. Glyn Davies of Northop Hall died in July following a long illness. He was heavily involved with, in particular, North Wales Youth hockey and was instrumental in organising the original National Schoolboys competitions. Glyn had also been a hockey specific officer within Flintshire before his illness curtailed his activities. His work with hockey was officially recognised at the AGM in January 2005 when he was awarded the WHU Certificate of Merit.

Ruth Fletcher has also passed away, again after a long illness. Ruth was heavily involved with umpiring, having been awarded her 'A' badge (equivalent to FIH level), as well as the technical official side with her being appointed to the Los Angeles Olympics as a Judge. She also served on the International Rules Board as well as serving as President of North Region and also Secretary of the WWA until 1991. Ruth had been elected as a Life Member some years ago. Both stalwarts of Welsh hockey will be sadly missed.

WELSH HOCKEY UNION WEBSITE

Following a lot of hard work I am delighted to advise members that the new Welsh Hockey Union website will be launched during September.

The web address will remain the same and it is the intention that as much information as possible will be made available. All sections have been completely reviewed and with new systems introduced, news items, all up to date information as well as match reports from International matches will be available as soon as practical.

We will also be launching a bi-monthly e-newsletter from October and anybody wishing to receive a free copy should send an email to info@welsh-hockey.co.uk detailing the word 'newsletter' in the subject line. We may also send infrequent messages to those subscribing if we consider anything is sufficiently urgent for our membership to learn about. (If in time, you wish to no longer receive the newsletter send an email to the same address with the word 'unsubscribe' in the subject line). As this newsletter will be available to clubs, schools, individual members and non-members alike it is the intention that the usual quarterly circular will be withdrawn over a period of time.

HANDBOOK ON CD-ROM

As a further step towards modernisation the decision has been taken to stop issuing paper WHU Handbooks with a CD-ROM version being issued in its place. All the usual information will be included together with full versions of regulations considered appropriate. All information will be embedded into a pdf document with a simple 'directory' to assist you to find what you are looking for. It is the intention that only 1 CD will be issued to each club with the request that it is copied onto each pc as required and passed on to whoever it is felt would benefit. Up to date versions of the calendar will continue to be available on the website. For those members who do not have access to a pc, hardcopies of selected sections will be available upon request.

VETERANS

Veterans' hockey is continuing to expand with Home Nations over 40's and 50's tournaments both being played in late August in Ireland. As well as recent international matches against England, other matches and tournaments are regularly played and anybody wishing to be considered for selection should contact Bernie Wheeler on either 01834-891443 at the _wheelers@talk21.com

Competitions

A major review of all junior, youth, schools and senior competitions is being undertaken in the coming months which will be your opportunity to feedback any changes you would like to see in the competition structure.

This could include looking at new competitions and removing some existing ones from the calendar. There will be full consultation with the Regions and we want as many views as possible from those of you who participate either as a player or official. If you have any comments please pass them on to your regional competitions representative or regional secretary or you can always send them to me. This is your opportunity for all those occasions when you have said or thought "why don't they do" Well, let us know and we just might!!

The programme for 2005/6 remains very similar to past years as we don't want to make many changes prior to the outcome of the review. The only plea I would make is that if your club is entering a competition there is a 50/50 chance that you will have an away draw at some point. If you enter in the hope that you are drawn at home and know you are unlikely to travel away then please consider very carefully whether to submit your entry. There is always going to be the occasion when circumstances conspire to make it impossible to travel but they should be the exception. There is nothing more galling for a team beaten in the first round than seeing their opponents conceding a second round game because they weren't prepared to travel.

May I wish you all a very successful season in whatever competition you are playing in.

Alison

Director – Competitions



Developing Sport in Wales Datblygu Chwaraeon yng Nghymru



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www.sports-council-wales.co.uk
www.cyngor-chwaraeon-cymru.co.uk

As you will probably already be aware, our greatest sponsor without doubt is the Sports Council for Wales. Including (amongst others) the areas of Staffing, International squads, Women and Girls initiative, UK Coaching Certificate, Regional Coaches, Coach Cymru, Senior Academy and Umpire Consultants the funding received is in excess of £400k and we would like to take this opportunity of offering our sincere thanks for their continued support.

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