

## Chairman's Update – AGM 2017

If I reflect on the last year or so, the overall theme seems to have been one of 'change.' This goes right back to the last AGM, where David Rees completed his tenure. I would like to formally thank David for all his work, in what were quite difficult circumstances, picking up from Bob Turner who fulfilled the role for so many years. Soon after, Peter Stewart also submitted his resignation. He has been the face of Welsh Fencing for so many years – way more years than I have been involved – and I think we all owe him a debt of gratitude for where we are as a fencing nation right now. So, thank you Peter.

The end result of this was a totally changed Executive Board, with a different set of skills, and frankly, a different age demographic. I think this has also driven a lot of change throughout the year, but I will let each of the Board Members present their own reports and demonstrate the progress we have made. I would however, like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to everyone on the Board for all of their efforts this year. So much work has been undertaken over the year, so much of it behind the scenes, and I want that to be recognised. So, thank you.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank some of our volunteers, actively working to support some aspect of our organisational Governance. Thank you to Michael, who manages our access to BFA data, so we know who our users are, and also for managing the DBS process, to ensure we are meeting the overarching requirements of BFA. Michael also undertook an Audit, on the Board's behalf, to ensure we continue to meet our safeguarding requirements. This is an increasingly important aspect in all sports, and I am pleased to say that on the whole, the findings were positive. We are currently working through the individual issues that were identified. Its interesting to note that BFA have subsequently initiated their own Audit, although its not related to ours. This thread will continue to be important, and something that we will need to focus on in the coming year.

Thanks also go to Jayne Clays, who is our Welfare lead, and manages our relationship with Liz at BFA when any safeguarding issues arise.

I also send a big thank-you over to Gethin, who is our face & voice on Twitter. The use of Twitter and Facebook is pretty much endemic these days, and Gethin (along with Fran and Pete) are ensuring we are using these communications tools – in Gethin's case, also ensuring that we are doing this in Welsh as well as English.

I see my role on the Board as effectively one of 'Stakeholder Management'. My role is to ensure that all of those organisations out there, with whom we have some sort of relationship, are fully aware of our vision, and our strategy for how we intend to deliver on that vision. So, I am part of the regular Home Nations Working Group, with the CEO of BFA and the Chairs of the various Home Nations. That allows for two-way communication and to share insights and best practice.

I had a very good relationship with Max here at SportWales, until he left. More change. I look forward to meeting Richard, his replacement, in due course. This is an important relationship as its our primary funding route. We need to be able to evidence good governance when we are working with public money. Also part of this picture is Rhys, recently appointed as Governance and Leadership Framework Officer for Wales, who has joined us here today. His role is to support us in ensuring that our articles are fit for purpose and consistent with the emerging requirements, and

that we are able to evidence that we are conforming with this articles, back to SportWales. I am also building a good relationship with Cerri Dando, recently appointed as Child Protection in Sport Unit - Development Officer (Wales). I will work with her to ensure that we can provide evidence that we conform with the Level 1 Safeguarding Children Standards. This safeguarding them will continue into next year, and beyond. Its important that we address these issues, and as a Board, we will continue to see this as a priority.

As a Board, we have also introduced a level of Change. Typically, we meet 5 or 6 times a year. This can be quite intrusive, especially if you live or work a distance away. We have therefore introduced the good old conference call. Not exactly the newest technology, but I'm not sure the SWNC is ready for Skype just yet. I have to say it has worked really well. I think its still important to meet face-to-face, but opens up an opportunity for future Board members to be less Cardiff-centric, and for meetings to be less intrusive. We also make massive use of email when organising things!

We will be implementing more change later in this meeting, when we come to appointing Directors. Its great to see more new faces on the Board. They will add new skills and capabilities, and capacity, so I look forward to working with all of them into 2018 and beyond.

From a fencing perspective, its great to be able to celebrate Welsh success.

British Senior Fencing Championships:

- Silver medal, Men's Epee

School Games

- Individual Bronze Medal, Womens Sabre

Cadet Championships

- Bronze Medal, Women's Foil
- Bronze Medal, Men's Epee
- Bronze Medal, Men's Sabre

In addition, Welsh fencers have been particularly successful in GBR representation this year:

- 8 fencers selected at Senior level
- 5 fencers selected at Junior level
- 9 fencers selected at Cadet level.

Next year will be a busy year, with the expectation of both a cadet/Junior Commonwealth Championships in England (to be confirmed) and the Senior Commonwealth Fencing Championships in Australia.

My report now concludes, and I am pleased to be able to hand over to my colleagues.

Mark Ridsdale

26 November, 2017

## Welsh Open 2017

The table below shows the number of people who fenced in each competition over the last 10 years.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>MF</b>	117	109	72	73	56	63	62	66	102	100
<b>ME</b>	172	136	127	113	96	87	61	64	95	110
<b>MS</b>	95	84	58	91	94	82	58	54	49	48
<b>WF</b>	66	71	62	60	48	52	29	37	50	51
<b>WE</b>	91	101	83	73	77	95	47	67	101	115
<b>WS</b>	55	48	33	45	46	55	32	43	27	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>470</b>

The numbers in 2017 continue the improvement shown in 2015 and 2016.

Looking at the figures the main gains were in the Women's Epee and the Women's Sabre. We expect to lose the Epee nomination after this year so those figures will probably drop and traditionally our Sabre figures have tended to fluctuate.

This year we lost the use of the Upper Hall and it will not be available in future years either. This means the total number of pistes we can make available has dropped from 36 to 28.

The number of competitors fencing and the reduced number of pistes produced some challenging planning and means we have no slack should the rounds overrun, which happened on Saturday. Thanks to the experience of the team in the control room and the cooperation of the referees we were only 30 minutes behind by the end of the competition. The timings on Sunday ran to plan. This shows that the figure of 470 fencers is close to the maximum we can take.

One bonus of this is that the competition was always busy and as a result the feel was of a competition that was full of energy.

This year we had more focus on the fencer's experience of the Welsh. We used modern boxes on all pistes (SG12 or better) and as well as continuing our on line results service we had online check in. It was noticeable that a number of fencers were checking the results pages on line instead of relying on the notice boards. I think the provision of screens in the foyer linked to the control room also helped.

We also continue with our policy of using a mixture of high quality referees and referees that are working up the qualifications scale. The aim here is to get referees to recognize the Welsh as a competition they want to officiate at and thus ensure the quality of the event.

Equipping our armoury with qualified armourers also means that the fencers know they can come to the Welsh and find the quality of support they should be able to expect. As an aside all three of our armourers were from Wales this year which is something we would like to continue to encourage.

Leon Paul's stance of charging for equipment rental has not materialized, but we are reducing our reliance on rental equipment. The pistes in the jubilee Hall were equipped with our own SG12 boxes and we had our own equipment available for spares if there were any failures.

Allan Banks,  
Vice-Chair, Welsh fencing

## **DIRECTORS REPORT 2017 – PETER RUSSELL**

Since joining the board last November my primary role has been coordinating coach education within Wales. In this capacity I have supported the board by:

- Liaising with Steve Kemp at British Fencing to facilitate the adoption of the new BF coach education system in Wales and communicating this to clubs and coaches within the region.
- Establishing and maintaining social media groups to improve communication between Welsh clubs and coaches, and encourage greater participation and interaction with the NGB
- Bringing together a group of Welsh affiliated coach educators to deliver seminars and courses within Wales
- Coordinating coaching seminars at various locations, and encouraging clubs to host seminars to improve participation
- Organising and co-delivering an ITCF course, qualifying 12 new level 1 coaches
- Organising first aid and safeguarding courses, and supporting clubs to ensure coaches meet the criteria for registration with BF
- Arranging for a level 2 course and a further ITCF course to be run in 2018

In addition to these responsibilities I worked with the board to make a bid for Wales to host the 2018 Cadet and Junior Commonwealth Games, and though we lost out to England, the research and preparation will be helpful in the hosting of future events.

I have also been involved in establishing and delivering the youth development sessions, which aim to create opportunities for athletes, coaches, and clubs from across Wales to work together in developing the next generation of international representatives, sharing best practice, and creating a more cooperative fencing community in Wales.

Looking forwards, we are currently commissioning a new Welsh patch, which replaces the old Welsh stripes, bringing us in line with the other home nations. We will also be working to integrate referee education with our new coach and youth development programme, and create learning opportunities for aspiring referees at Welsh regional events.

Finally, I'm keen to see the Welsh language integrated where possible within the sport. Our social media content is already largely bilingual (thank you Gethin!) and I will be working with Welsh speakers in the community to compile a glossary of fencing terms which will be made accessible to all members.

Since being appointed to the board in November last year I have mostly been involved in the development and opportunities for our cadet and youth fencers.

This year Welsh fencing have set up Youth Development training days, replacing the Friday evening training, which has been led by Pete and myself. Our aim was to make the sessions as accessible as possible and be an opportunity for fencers and their coaches to meet up with others across Wales. The next one, held in Baglan on December 3<sup>rd</sup> will see a coach education seminar run alongside to bring coaches and fencers together. The sessions are a place to develop skills already put in place by coaches, with as much time devoted to sparring and working together as possible. I feel that the sessions could benefit from more integration from more coaches, but we are definitely heading in the right direction.

The board have also supported my motion to introduce an U15 international trip, to help with preparation for GB cadet representation as more and more Welsh fencers are being selected. It was planned, risk assessed and criteria set by myself, and I am looking forward to the first trip next year. We believe this was an important opportunity to offer our younger fencers which brings us in line with the other home nations, and allows our younger keen beans to thrive.

I also took up the role of Team Manager for the School Games, and was part of the selection panel for each cadet and senior team. We had a reasonably successful Games with each team coming home with bronze. The new format and fewer fencers was an interesting twist, which everyone seemed to enjoy. The Welsh Youth rankings are still calculated and published by myself, and the youth league continues in popularity with the young fencers.

After a few upsets at our Regional events this year, I volunteered on behalf of the board to write a Code of Conduct at Competition Policy, which has been shared with British Fencing (as they are writing one too) and is currently being reviewed by the safeguarding lead here at the Welsh Institute of Sport. The policy offers guidelines of expected behaviour from anyone that may be in the room, from organisers, coaches to fencers and spectators. It's important that everyone understands their role, and the roles of others, so not to lead to any misunderstandings.

Next year Welsh Fencing will be very busy indeed – with the first international U15 trips, and two rounds of commonwealth championships. We are also looking forward to continuing with the Youth Development sessions and hope to spread them across the country throughout the year.

The financial statements reflect the transactions of the year ended 31 March 2017 and include accrued amounts for the period.

The Boards intention is to continue to support all activities associated with the sport of fencing, this includes athletes of all levels from beginners to elite international competitors as well as the 'back room' teams of coaches, referees, armorers and administration officers. We are working to encourage all Welsh affiliated clubs to engage with the Board so that the support offered is fit for purpose and helps clubs to retain and increase membership. With this in mind the Board has supported a number of coach development days and youth development days. Currently these have been held in the South Wales region but our aim is to extend this program to include venues in North, Mid and West Wales.

Our income comes from grant aid, membership subscriptions, competition entry fees and payment for courses. This year our income from competitions and membership fees has reduced while our grant income has remained static.

We received grant aid support of £22,000 from the Welsh Sports Council, this level of funding has been the same for several years. This money is used to pay for coach and fencer development days and for first aid courses and safeguarding updates. The funds are also used to purchase equipment, to support Welsh teams representing the region at international and domestic events such as the Winton, Cadet Winton, 5 Nations, Commonwealths and UK School Games.

The Board also applies to the Welsh Sports Council for funds to support identified elite fencers. These funds are identified as 'talent cymru' and are distributed to the fencers subject to meeting training and performance criteria. This year we received £3,000 and distributed it in full to the eligible fencers.

Our membership subscriptions are received by British Fencing and then paid to us on an ad hoc basis through out the year after British Fencing has deducted their share of the subscription and charges for handling the money. Our membership subscriptions were £7,501, £435 lower than last year.

This year competition entry fees are £6,446 lower than last year, however this is because last year's figure includes fees relating to the Junior Commonwealth in South Africa. Domestic competition costs have increased to £26,623 compared to £16,699 in 2016. The increase is partly due to an additional charge of £2,042 from the WIS levied for cancellation charges (this amount is included in creditors) and payments for both the 2016 BYC and 2017 BYC arising in the 2017 year (the 2016 charge was raised by BF in July and the 2017 charge in March). The £26,623 includes £4,118 costs relating to the Winton Cup and £2,708 for the Cadet Winton.

The income and expenditure for the 2016 Welsh Open is included in the figures of competition income and domestic events, this was the first year that cash prizes were offered, the intention being to encourage a larger entry, I believe that this has paid dividends in the current year as entries were closed prior to the weekend. In 2016 the Open returned a small surplus of £180, in the past the income generated by this event was in the thousands. The Board will continue to monitor the financial position of the Open as we do not want the event to slip into a deficit position.

In the 2016 /17 financial year the Board has provided access to first aid courses, safeguarding updates, armorer training and team manager training as well as initiating the coach and fencer development days.

The Directors are not remunerated and the Company does not operate a PAYE scheme. Occasional out of pocket expenses are reimbursed to the Board executive members on receipt of a valid invoice. In the year ended 31 March 2017 the following amounts were paid:

Mark Ridsdale	£nil
Allan Banks	£nil
Caroline Wheeler	£nil
Peter Russell	£nil
Fran Russell	£nil

In addition to this when we meet we have tea and coffee which WF pays for, the total spent on the execs tea and coffee at the WIS for the year was £40.65p and is included in the administration total.

We also paid £2,522 net of contributions from fencers to support the UKSG. The Board has continued to support this event as it is one of the two opportunities for our younger fencers to take part in competition against the other UK regions.

Our costs for the year totaled £43,688 – Coaching costs £3,691 (this includes provision of first aid courses); cost of domestic events £26,623, other costs (bank charges, depreciation and general administration) £13,374. Other costs have increased as the depreciation charge this year was £9,743 compared to £2,501 last year, this reflects a full year of depreciation for the new pistes and boxes that were purchased last year and only depreciated for part of the year. General administration costs have also increased. The higher cost is due to the purchase of liability insurance to cover our closed competitions £996.20p, purchasing medals and trophies £1,128.19p and £252.00 for our Chairman to attend a seminar about sports funding and future strategies in Wales.

Overall for the year we have a surplus of £905.

Our balance sheet shows we hold funds of £61,919 in cash at the bank and £19,865 in assets so our overall member's funds have increased by the surplus of £905 to £79,422

The Board regularly reviews the financial position of our organisation and carefully considers how to allocate funds to obtain the best value and return for Welsh Fencing. It is important that we use our funds for our current fencers but must always retain sufficient reserves to allow the organisation to continue should our income streams cease or reduce. This balancing act of spending sensibly while also saving for a rainy day is difficult to achieve but the Board will continue to apply a risk averse prudent strategy to ensure that Welsh fencing can continue to operate for many years to come.