

## WRU Status Update – 18/03/20

This is the first of a planned weekly update to inform our stakeholders of progress against our contingency planning for Welsh rugby.

We are facing unprecedented challenges and accordingly have developed a transparent, robust plan, that will be strengthened over time, to ensure that we can emerge with confidence from this crisis.

Firstly, we would want to acknowledge that nothing is more important than your health and well-being. We are conscious these are uncertain times and as much as rugby is a significant part of the fabric of our society, we at the WRU will always prioritise your health over all else.

Given the fluid and fast changing nature of the pandemic, we wanted to outline where we are at the WRU. What we are working on, what factors we are taking into account, what we plan to do and what is still uncertain. We will be providing a weekly update going forward on Wednesday of each week.

What is clear is that the situation is changing on a daily basis. We do though have an initial plan and are building, reviewing and improving that plan every day.

### Our Goal

Our goal is simple. We plan to emerge from this crisis with the WRU and all teams and clubs, whether they be amateur, semi-professional or professional, intact and able to have a sustainable future.

### Current situation

Financially, the year was tracking to plan however circumstances have dictated that the current situation is abnormally challenging on and off the pitch. We have more unknowns than knowns. As you will be aware, all forms of rugby are suspended as are all the leagues and competitions in which we participate. It is not clear when we will be able to resume playing. The indications are that it will be months rather than weeks before we can resume.

From a financial perspective the WRU is forecasting a significant drop in revenue from international and club competitions. Our stadium events programme is also uncertain. As a consequence, we will make a substantial loss this year and we are forecasting a knock-on impact into the next financial year at least, as we expect it to take time for our operations to return to business as usual status.

We understand and acknowledge that the situation is the same for all rugby entities inside and outside Wales, as it is for many Welsh businesses and organisations. We will stand alongside key stakeholders and partners in Wales and in particular recognise our responsibility to play our part to bring stability.

We continue to work from our offices although clearly that is likely to change in the near term. Our contingency plan is in place to allow us to continue to operate should our offices close, although we expect it to take a little time to adapt to these changed working practices.



## What have we been doing?

Whilst the temptation is to jump to a knee jerk solution, we have taken time to assess the options available to us. We have human and financial resources that we will deploy as effectively as possible.

We also know that we cannot do this alone and we have been engaging with all stakeholders whether that be other Rugby Unions, Community clubs, Districts, Welsh Government, Regions, sponsors and broadcasters to ensure we have built an accurate picture as possible of the situation.

The immediate concern has been to work with all rugby stakeholders to take decisive actions in relation to on field matters and in competitions in particular. These actions are now largely complete and will be subject to ongoing dialogue and monitoring to determine if and when rugby can resume.

We have also been working with the WRPA (Welsh Rugby Players Association) to understand and shape a way forward. The WRPA have been positive and constructive in all matters for which we are grateful.

## What are we going to do?

### **By the end of the March**

- The WRU Board will approve the substantive elements of this plan on an ongoing basis
- We have taken all reasonable actions to reduce our costs at the WRU
- We are building forecasted financials for the remainder of this financial year to June 2020 and for the next financial year to June 2021
- We have a business continuity plan to minimize disruption should we need to vacate our offices
- In addition to the £100,000 already provided to flood affected clubs, we will provide additional funds to all clubs of £1,000 per club
- Subject to restrictions, mobilise our rugby development staff and vehicles to provide assistance for the more vulnerable within our communities
- Work with the boards of all international and club competitions to shape options for competitions as and when those competitions are permitted to resume. This will be ongoing.
- Work with the Community Game Board to assess options for the semi-professional and amateur game should we be permitted to resume the season. The next communication for this is planned for Monday 31 March which will set out next steps for the club game
- Work with our banks, Natwest and Barclays, to determine what assistance they can provide to Welsh rugby as a whole
- Continue constructive dialogue with all our commercial partners
- Provide advice to clubs on what financial relief could be available from local councils and authorities at local level
- Work with the Professional Rugby Board and WRPA to build an urgent and robust plan to manage the down period. The aim is to ensure that Wales and the four Regions can return primed and sustainably to competition as and when agreed



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- Interpret the various Government led state packages that are being proposed and provide advice to clubs on what aid is available to assist with ongoing operation including business rates, tax, HMRC etc
- Identify what additional funds can be made available for the amateur, semi-professional and professional game to be utilised as an emergency fund. These funds will be allocated on a case by case basis
- Provide ongoing and appropriate advice to clubs on the coronavirus where the guidance relates directly to rugby

### April

- We will make the club grant payments as normal at the end of April
- We will begin to allocate emergency funding to the high priority cases across the amateur, semi-professional and professional game. It is unlikely we will have the resources to meet all needs, but we will prioritise and make the tough choices to allocate any emergency funding and will build a process to help us
- We will provide guidance on what assistance our banks can make for clubs
- We will need help from Welsh Government if we are to deliver our primary goal. We are deliberately not approaching government at present as the nation's health and well-being is clearly more important. As and when the situation stabilises, and Welsh Government have capacity to meet us, we will work with Welsh Government to build a joint plan
- We will also be working with World Rugby to determine what, if any help is available
- Work with the Professional Rugby Board to assess options and ensure we are ready, willing and able to resume playing when possible
- Work with the Community Game Board to assess options for the semi professional and amateur game should we be permitted to resume the season
- Continually interpret the various Government state aid packages that are being proposed and provide advice to clubs on what aid is available to assist with the ongoing operation

### Summary

We are aware that these are unprecedented and uncertain times. Equally we know that the rugby family will pull together to deliver our goal for all teams and clubs to emerge from the other side of the crisis. Please be assured we will do all we can with the resources available to support the many stakeholders that we serve.

We are aware that clubs are already implementing their own plans and we will capture best practice for dissemination across the entire club game. We will also set up a helpdesk to coordinate our support to clubs as effectively as possible – details of which will be sent directly to clubs. We know that this plan isn't perfect and would welcome any form of constructive input from anyone with a solutions-based approach.

We will all have to make difficult choices and compromises. We also know that decisions made on a certain day will need to be changed as new information comes to light. We can assure you



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any made by the WRU will be made with the best of intentions and with the best information available at that point in time.

These are testing times and our commitment is to do everything possible to safeguard the future of our game in Wales and we would implore anyone who can help even in a small way to contribute.

