

JSG Cymru WRU Minutes April 2025

MEETING MINUTES

Date: 30th April 2025

Time: 17:30-18:40

Location: Parc Y Scarlets, Llanelli

Attendees:

- Abi Tierney (WRU)
- Simon Rimmer (WRU)
- Leighton Davies (WRU/Cardiff Rugby)
- Jon Daniels (Scarlets Rugby)
- Lance Bradley (Ospreys Rugby)
- Jamie Muir (Cardiff Rugby)
- Rhys Blumberg (Dragons Rugby)
- Barrie Jones (Crys 16)
- Charlie Evans (Crys 16)
- Sarah Collins-Davies (Ospreys Supporters Club)
- Lousie Collins-Davies (Ospreys Supporters Club)
- Cathy Green (Ospreys Supporters Club)
- Grant Berni (Ospreys Supporters Club)
- Lynn Glaister (CF10)
- Sarah Kirk (CF10)
- Hugh Campbell (CF10)
- Simon Harrington (Cardiff Blue and Blacks Supporters Club)
- Dan Hallett (Dragons Official Supporters Club)
- Ryan Price (Dragons Official Supporters Club)

1. Introductions

Following introductions, Barrie Jones commenced the meeting by noting JSG's concerns over delays to the meeting which was originally scheduled for November 2024. It was noted by Abi Tierney that future quarterly JSG-WRU meetings could resume and be aligned with PRB workshops that are rotated between the four at pro clubs.

2. Cardiff Rugby Ownership

Lynn Glaister added her thanks to the WRU for taking swift action to save Cardiff Rugby and sought assurances over future due diligence around terms of reference for any future sale of Cardiff Rugby by the WRU.

Abi Tierney acknowledged the delays and then, referring to Cardiff Rugby, noted that there was a legal requirement for contingency planning around finances of the professional sides that had enabled a quick reaction to be situation. Abi continued, noting that that the private share size would not be limited in any of the teams and that the level of due diligence would reflect the relative size of any potential future investments, going on to add that the process would have worked in the same way for any of other clubs. Lance Bradley referenced that more formal collaboration going forward would allow potential issues to be identified earlier in the due diligence process.

Members of all groups within JSG noted their support for the actions taken around Cardiff Rugby and Cathy Green added that JSG aimed to represent supporters of all the professional teams in Wales, not just members' individual organisations.

3. PRA & Funding

Abi Tierney explained that the PRA was close to completion when the Cardiff situation had to be dealt as an immediate priority & that the WRU and the 4 teams were working to find an updated solution.

Grant Berni stated that JSG wanted to see four professional teams with proper and fair funding for all clubs & asked about the impact of the Cardiff situation on the other three teams. Dan Hallett added that the clarity of funding reporting in the annual report needed transparency to avoid the disinformation that arose around Dragons "funding" and that should not happen with Cardiff. Abi Tierney explained that the updated PRA would take the Welsh Govt loans off the clubs and explained that the added uncertainties arising from the Cardiff situation needed to be managed properly, noting the other 3 clubs wanted guarantees of the future sale of Cardiff Rugby and that the WRU would guarantee transparency through the process in a difficult market. Leighton Davies and Lance Bradley both backed up Abi's statement around transparency with Leighton adding that there needed to be a "One Wales" approach.

Lance Bradley noted that the three independent teams had asked the WRU for a commitment to fairness and equality from the WRU and Sarah Collins-Davies asked what the sticking points were. Abi Tierney noted that ensuring fair funding agreements to both the community and professional game was needed and whilst there were difficulties, this was not insurmountable given trust and confidence between parties.

Leighton Davies commented on improved cashflow over the previous two years and an expected further improvement at the end of the current financial year that included three home 6 Nations games. Louise Collins-Davies asked about revenue streams apart from ticket sales. Abi Tierney explained that with the shift in how rugby is watched globally, it was difficult with both the 6 Nations as well as the URC when free to air was seen as important in Wales.

Lynn Glaister acknowledged plans to improve spend control through a "One Wales" strategy and made it clear it was important that the clubs still had their own identity. Abi Tierney strongly agreed with Lynn, noting that where there may be benefits in a joint approach around managing HR policies for example, but it was vital to keep five individual identities, with a joint and pragmatic approach to any area of spend.

Jon Daniels added that whilst five entities working together will be stronger, if any three parties wanted to work together in one area and that would benefit all of Welsh rugby, it was acceptable if all parties agreed. Jon added that this was very different to the way the clubs and the WRU had worked together in the past. Cathy Green reinforced JSG's desire to make Welsh rugby stronger as a whole, however, individual identities are vital to grow engagement between clubs and supporters. Cathy also informed the group that there is concern among supporters who don't want to see their own club disadvantaged by the Cardiff Deal. Jon reinforced the message that the three clubs had made representation to the WRU about fair funding guarantees and that nobody was in a position of refusing to sign a revised PRA.

Hugh Campbell asked about contingency plans if Cardiff Rugby could not be sold within two years & Abi Tierney replied whilst desirable to do it within that timescale it was not guaranteed and added it was vital it's done properly, was part of an ongoing debate and any guarantees in the PRA really have to be deliverable.

Jon Daniels stated that the “One Wales” strategy needs the support of JSG to grow the game and move forward and added that there was a need for a message from all stakeholders to encourage supporters to return to matches. Barrie Jones replied that winning matches will generate the most positivity. Jon acknowledged that whilst funding is limited, we need to do better with the resources available in Wales. Abi added that that the clubs are the supply chain into the Wales national team, and this had not been recognised properly over the last few years in the WRU, noting that this was key to a sustainable way to improving results on the pitch. Barrie Jones exclaimed that this was a positive and that it was the first time that JSG had heard that clear message during the time JSG had been meeting with the WRU.

4. Women’s game

Lynn Glaister asked if there was an appetite to have women’s teams associated with all four professional clubs. Abi Tierney explained that this wasn’t possible with current pathways and budgets, but the aspiration is to achieve this in a sustainable manner over the next 5-10 years.

Charlie Evans stated that the Scarlets had a proud history of a Ladies side and would love to see it return. Charlie then asked Abi if there would be transparency on the selection criteria for the two Celtic Challenge licenses, if that would be made public and to share the timeline for process. Simon Rimmer commented in the meeting chat that the expression of interest deadline is Friday 2nd May with the announcement of the two teams scheduled for late July.

Abi added that a further update on the women’s game would be shared with JSG following the meeting.

5. Judgement Day

Following a general discussion on how Judgement Day is an opportunity to grow the game , the loss of local derbies is perceived as a punishment to regular supporters and the merits of timings of the event in the season’s calendar.

Charlie Evans stated that the event was in need of a re-brand as it was unfairly perceived as a symbol for the problems in the game in Wales. Charlie added that scheduling late in the season and over Easter weekend (when many people were away), meant that any opportunity to engage or re-engage casual fans was minimal, with minimal home fixtures left to play. There was a consensus from the JSG member groups that having Judgement Day earlier in the season would help engagement with casual fans and encourage them back to grounds.

Jon Daniels acknowledged that there was a need for change.

6. AOB

Louise Collins-Davies asked if there were fixed timeframes to appoint a new national coach. Abi Tierney noted that it will be Dave Reddin’s first task and that if it takes time to get right there would be a contingency plan if the coach was not in place for the Japan tour.

Lynn Glaister suggested that it would be positive to have supporter directors in place and Abi requested that this should be put onto the agenda for the next WRU-JSG meeting. Cathy Green stated that she had raised this point several times with previous WRU representatives, but no discussions had followed, so it was good to hear that it would be added to the agenda for future meetings.

A discussion followed about the need for a safe and constructive space to debate Welsh rugby.

Lynn Glaister noted that although there were questions that needed to be answered in the future, CF10 were relieved and grateful that Cardiff Rugby were being rescued and made a conscious decision to take a positive stance in all public communications about that decision to support the new club's position. Rhys Blumberg added during his time involved previously with Cardiff and now with Dragons Rugby, he's seen previous WRU CEOs struggle to engage with the clubs in a similar way to JSG & added that the current relationship is the best he's seen during his time in Welsh rugby.

Abi expressed that she was grateful for the attendance of senior management from the four clubs at the meeting to demonstrate the positive relationship between the five organisations. Cathy Green noted that Abi had arrived at the WRU at a difficult point and hearing senior management from the clubs say that the relationship is working well as well as getting commitment from the WRU meet with JSG on a quarterly basis sounded positive, moving forward.

Meeting closed 18:40

NEXT MEETING

Quarterly Meetings to align with monthly PRB workshop days (specific date to be advised, locations rotating around the four professional club venues including attendance of representatives from each professional club).