

# ANNUAL REPORT

2019 / 20



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## WELSH NETBALL BOARD 2019/20

President	Merle Hamilton
Vice-President	Sheila Cooksley
Vice-President	Wendy Pressdee BEM
Chair	Catherine Lewis
Vice-Chair	Cath Hares
Elected Director (Performance)	Julia Longville
Elected Director (Development)	Melanie Hellerman
Elected Director (Compliance and Engagement)	Carol Anthony
Appointed Director (Finance and Risk)	Mike Bobbett
Appointed Director (Commercial)	Kerry McDonald
Appointed Director (Policy & Governance)	Rhian Edwards
Appointed Director (HR)	Zoe Grainger
Appointed Director (Legal)	Karen Meggit
Appointed Director (IT & Digital)	Rob Rees
Appointed Director (Communications & Marketing)	Lowri Williams

# 02

## CHAIR FOREWORD

This has been an exceptional season for Welsh Netball for lots of different reasons and as ever I thank the Welsh Netball Board, staff and the wider Welsh netball family for pulling together and driving forward.

Whilst we did not make the 2019 Netball World Cup, the Wales squad more than made up for it with some amazing performances in our 2019 Summer Tests in Cardiff. We welcomed netball nations from across the world and achieved fantastic wins against Malawi, Trinidad & Tobago and Grenada countries to ensure that our world rankings did not suffer. At the time of writing, we are 9th in the world and back in the global top ten. 2019's Summer Tests event was made possible by both staff and an army of volunteers who ensured that it ran both smoothly and professionally.

Our age group squads raised their performance at their respective Netball Europe tournaments garnering silver medals and reaping the rewards of hard work by the management teams and players alike. Our elite umpires have also all shown what they can offer, with great strength and depth now coming through in their ranks. All these achievements boded well for our Celtic Dragons whose season has now been sadly cut short.

COVID-19 has had a massive impact upon our community and elite support. It is a great threat to netball in Wales as participation in sport is impacted by this global health crisis. It will be for Welsh Netball, led by our CEO Sarah Jones, to work together to survive this crisis and help the game to rise out of the ashes into a prosperous future.

Catherine Lewis  
Chair Welsh Netball

## HIGHLIGHTS



**CELTIC DRAGONS**  
FAST5 SEMI-FINALISTS 2019



OVER  
**10,000** MEMBERS



**SILVER MEDALS**  
AT NETBALL EUROPE CHAMPIONSHIP,  
UNDER 21 AND UNDER 17



**WALES' SECOND EVER TEST NETBALL CENTURION: SUZY DRANE**

**45%** £ £

**LESS RELIANT ON PUBLIC FUNDING OVER LAST 4 YEARS**

RETURN OF UNDER



**21 19 17**

**CELTIC DRAGONS**  
AGE GROUP TEAMS

**WALES RETURNS TO WORLD'S TOP 10**

**AFTER 7 TEST MATCHES UNDEFEATED**



**UNPRECEDENTED BROADCAST DEALS FOR NETBALL IN WALES**



**1,919**

**COACHES AND UMPIRES WORKING IN WALES' NETBALL COMMUNITY**

**6 WELSH TEST MATCH DEBUTANTES**

# 04

## CEO SUMMARY

2019/20 saw Welsh Netball reach the end of its 4-year 2016-2020 strategy. It has been an incredible journey for the organisation in that time. Through our collective passion for our sport as well as a lot of hard work and determination, together we have positioned our organisation as one of the fastest growing sports in Wales. This period has seen us financially stabilise the organisation, grow its commercial revenues, reduce reliance on public funding by nearly 45% and reach a turnover of over £1 million for the first time. This was in addition to a 35% increase in membership, a return for Wales back into the INF Top 10, and huge progress being made by Celtic Dragons in that period.

The strategic plan for 2016-2020 was all about stabilising the organisation and growing our player base. This strategic plan was to be phase one of three. Phase 1 has been a success across all levels and now we are primed to embark upon Phase 2: our strategy for 2020-2024 which is to reach out and engage with our netball community, and to really become driven by the needs of the netball community here in Wales. Phase 2 will also see us drive continued international success and improve our standards within our elite performance operations. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that is affecting the whole world at present, we are having to apply the brakes to the launch of the 2020-2024 strategy. Right now, our sport is at risk and we now have to protect it to ensure we can come back quickly when the time is right and it is safe to do so. Our present challenges, however, should not detract from what was a landmark year for Welsh Netball in 2019-20.

The greatest highlight of the last year had to be the achievements of the Wales senior netball team. Last summer saw Cardiff host the 2019 Welsh Netball Summer Tests with test matches against South Africa, Malawi, Trinidad & Tobago and Grenada. Hosting these nations in advance of the 2019 Netball World Cup was a massive undertaking for the National Governing Body, but the joint efforts of staff, volunteers, coaches, athletes and sponsors made a fantastic fortnight of netball possible. Thousands tuned in live via BBC Wales Sport and S4C and attended the matches in person at the Viola Arena and Sport Wales and witnessed Wales recording wins over Malawi, Trinidad & Tobago as well as back-to-back victories over Grenada.

# 05

## CEO SUMMARY

A winning summer gave Wales the perfect platform for the 2019 Netball Europe Open Championships in Belfast. There, Wales recorded wins over Northern Ireland and Scotland and secured a dramatic final-quarter draw against England to make it seven test matches undefeated. Five of these victories came against higher ranked opposition and saw Wales storm back up the INF World Rankings to 9th with qualification for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham on the horizon. These achievements were testament to the hard work of our elite athletes and the vision and strategy of Head Coach Julie Hoornweg. Following the Netball Europe tournament, Julie Hoornweg finished her time with Wales and Assistant Coach Sara Hale has now taken the helm. This continuity will be vital for Wales as the youthful squad looks forward to the challenges that lie ahead.

Excellence on court went further than our Wales senior squad as in 2019 the Celtic Dragons netball franchise experienced its first taste of the British All-Star Fast5 tournament. Dragons made an incredible debut in the sell-out showpiece tournament, earning a string of victories and making it to the semi-final – just inches away from a spot in the final.

We also witnessed both of our Wales age group squads achieving excellent results in the last year. Silver medals for both our Under 17 and 21 squads at Netball Europe were fantastic to see and the Under 21 team also enjoyed a winning trip to the Isle of Man thereafter. Thanks go to Under 21 Head Coach Nikki Lloyd and Under 17 Head Coach Rhian Davies, and their respective management teams – all of whom are volunteers – for their work over the last year.

The last year has also seen a great deal of progress being made in terms of netball facilities in Wales. The redevelopment of Cardiff House of Sport to transform its netball facilities into an international specification netball court with seating for 1,500 spectators is underway. This development is critical for the continued growth of our sport. We are very grateful to Sport Wales for recognising the importance of this investment. We are also working behind the scenes on lobbying the build of several other netball facilities across Wales and hopefully brining these plans to fruition.

# 06

## CEO SUMMARY

It has also been a fantastic year of growth for netball in Wales at the community level. Our membership has continued to grow and the 35% increase we have seen over the last four seasons illustrates the sheer level of excitement, energy and innovation that there is in Wales' netball clubs and leagues.

Welsh Netball has shifted some of its focus this year to ensure alignment with the 'Vision for Sport' in Wales and to use netball's powerful appeal to connect with under-represented groups. This work is the first step in a longer-term plan which is part of Welsh Netball's 2020 -2024. Working in partnership external organisations, such as Local Authorities, the Women's Institute and South Wales Police to name a few, we have helped bring netball to women and girls whose lives might otherwise been untouched by sport. For instance, the inaugural Unity Shield tournament provided a fantastic opportunity for girls from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds and was a great platform for police engagement with under-represented communities. Likewise, our walking netball pilot scheme has helped women up and down the country re-discover a love of sport decades after they had last touched a netball. Added to this, we were very proud in the last year to have achieved the UK Equality Standard for Sport. This reflects our deep commitment to promoting equality through our work and widening access to our sport.

The last year has seen Welsh Netball offer more workforce development opportunities than ever before and further develop its current courses. Our new walking netball activator course saw over two dozen new walking netball leaders trained, we digitised our C Award umpiring theory exam and engaged in a programme of coaching course standardisation. The popularity of these opportunities is illustrated in a course capacity rate of over 80% and yet another year-on-year increase in the number of workforce opportunities accessed by our members.

As we moved towards the latter stages of the last reporting year, sport and society underwent a radical transformation in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic. As the virus moved into Wales, there were some stark choices to make and we responded decisively to protect its members,

# 07

## CEO SUMMARY

volunteers, staff and community. The subsequent suspension of all netball activity in Wales, cancellation of the 2020 Vitality Netball Superleague and wider lockdown has presented Wales' National Governing Bodies with severe financial challenges. However, as we move into the next year, we will continue to make the right decisions to protect our game and put people first, and we will endeavour to innovate and deliver netball to communities across Wales.

There will need to be change, but this change will be in our collective best interests and will be driven in full consultation and collaboration with our members, partners and stakeholders. In the year ahead, we plan to listen, connect and engage with as many of you as possible to help to shape our plans for the future and I am grateful for your anticipated support, and enthusiasm for what lies ahead.

Even though we aren't able to take to the court at the moment, the success that we have seen in 2019/20 has been significant and the growth of our sport continues. We now have to deviate from the intended plans in order to be agile and protect our sport. This will help safeguard our sport for current and future generations and it will ensure that we maintain the huge strides of progress that we have made over the last four years.

As ever, I would like to thank our volunteers and sponsors for all of their hard work and support over the last year. Together, we will come back stronger from this difficult time and resume our progress towards making Wales one of world netball's leading nations.

Best wishes,



Sarah Jones  
CEO Welsh Netball

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## SUMMER TESTS



In July 2019 Welsh Netball converted the VIOLA Ice Arena into an international netball competition environment and hosted a test series against some of the world's best netball nations.

The event saw South Africa, Malawi, Trinidad & Tobago, Northern Ireland and Grenada visit the capital as part of their preparations for the 2019 World Cup being held in Liverpool.

Wales saw 6 newly capped players alongside more experienced names to put on an exceptional display of high-performance netball. Wales were tested in the early stage of the competition against South Africa which proved to be an invaluable learning experience against 5th in the world team.

Following the first test against South Africa, Wales went on to dominate Malawi and Trinidad & Tobago, both of who were at the time ranked higher than Wales, but with superb home support from a 2000+ strong crowd over the course of the event, secured victories that accelerated our ranking and contribution to CWG 2022 and World Cup 2023.

As the week drew to a close, we headed back to the home of Welsh Netball and held the last two game test against Grenada at Sport Wales National Centre. This saw Wales once again dominate with a sell out crowd and come away as victors contributing further ranking points.

During the event we held several community activities for schools, clubs and coaches to get involved in, from training on the match court in the arena, meeting Wales players and coach education workshops from the Celtic Dragons head coach.

The event could not have taken place if not for the support provided by our staff team, the army of volunteers, VIOLA Arena and Sport Wales National Centre staff as well as our key partners Cardiff Metropolitan University, O'Neills and sponsors Centurion VAT, NPTC Group, Darwin Grey, Visit Wales and ProSteel Engineering.



6 figure investment secured to purchase Wales' first international wooden sprung floor  
**££££££**

JANUARY



Wales U17 NE Silver

MARCH



Launch of Women's Institute Walking Netball Project

APRIL



6 figure investment secured to develop new Cardiff netball facility in partnership with FAW

MAY

JUNE

Surpass the 10,000 - member target



Celtic Dragons VNSL finish 7th



JULY

AUGUST

10

Wales senior team rise in the World rankings to 10



SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

Wales Seniors secure Silver at Netball Europe



NOVEMBER



Launch of DragonMark - a quality accreditation scheme for Netball Clubs in Wales

DECEMBER

9

Wales Rise to 9 in the World Rankings

## GROWTH OF THE BUSINESS 2019-2020

# 09

42 courses delivered (April 18 - March 19)

Completion of 6-year loan repayment



Launch of Walking Netball programme



Completion of 6-year business recovery plan

Celtic Dragons qualified for Fast Five for first time ever



Successful Wales Summer Test series V South Africa, Malawi, T&T, Grenada

Historic broadcasting deal with S4C



Wales Seniors secure Silver at Netball Europe



Celtic Dragons make the semi-finals at Fast five



Wales U21s secure Silver at Netball Europe



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## COMMUNICATIONS

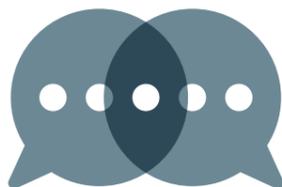


2019 was one of the most high-profile years netball has ever seen in both Wales and across the United Kingdom and Welsh Netball has sought to capitalise on an incredibly busy domestic calendar of netball to promote the game at all levels.

Summer 2019 saw Wales host the Welsh Netball Summer Tests and with this came enormous interest from across the Welsh media landscape. An unprecedented broadcast operation from two separate organisations took place at Cardiff's VIOLA Arena as part of this event and netball in Wales enjoyed its first ever domestic, free-to-air television coverage of its number one female team sport.

This was in addition to continued growth on our social media channels, increased direct member communications, Celtic Dragons' pulsating debut at Fast5 live on Sky Sports and increased coverage in the ever-growing netball media landscape.

We have also worked with external providers to help improve elements of our digital media – releasing all-new behind the scenes video content for Celtic Dragons – and this will be further developed to showcase a wider range of Welsh Netball's performance teams and community work.



### MEDIA, BROADCAST AND PRESS HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights of the last 12 months in coverage of the National Governing Body, its representative teams and the Celtic Dragons franchise have included:

- Live broadcast with bilingual commentary of the Wales v Trinidad & Tobago and Wales v Malawi test matches on S4C.
- Live streaming with commentary of the two Wales v South Africa test matches on BBC Sport's online platform.
- Live coverage of Celtic Dragons journey to the semi-final of the 2019 British Fast5 All-Stars Competition on Sky Sports.
- Despite the truncated 2020 Vitality Netball Superleague season, two Celtic Dragons matches were broadcast live on Sky Sports.
- Web video features of the Wales senior squad on BBC Sport Wales.
- An increased presence within the wider netball media landscape, including the Netball Show podcast, Sky Sports Netball's 'Off the Court', the BBC Netball Show and International Netball Federation communications.
- A strong presence in local and regional press as well as other third-party platforms, including Sport Wales, South Wales Argus, Daily Post and Dai Sport.



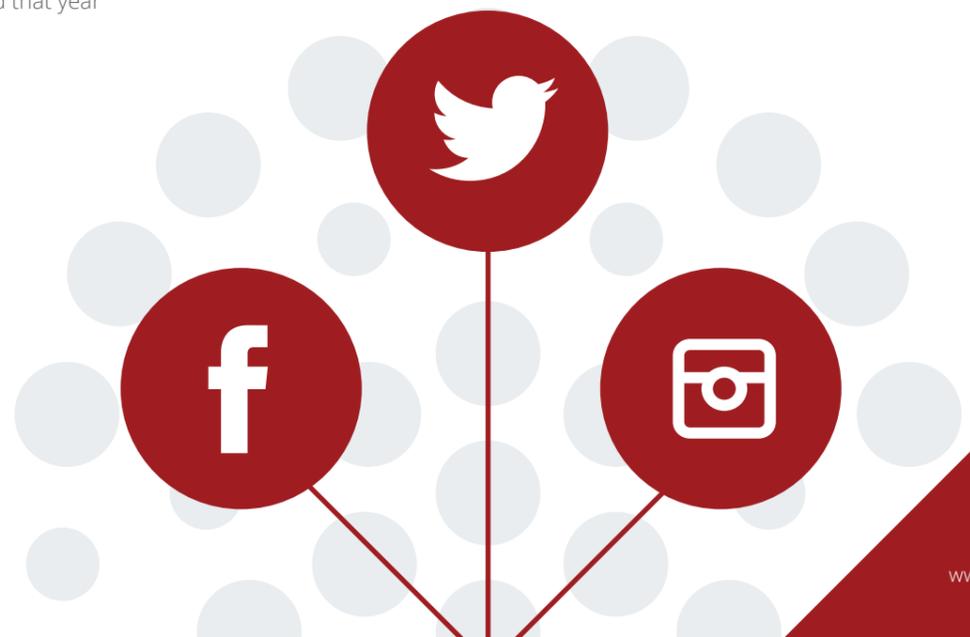
# 11

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media continues to be a growth area for Welsh Netball, allowing us to showcase the full range of our work and add value to our partner organisations. Moreover, as live coverage is still not always possible from all netball events/tournaments, our platforms allow us to keep members and fans across Wales and beyond up to date with games and results.

PLATFORM	MAY 2019	MAY 2020	% GROWTH
Welsh Netball Twitter	10,400	11,254	8.3
Welsh Netball Facebook	3,982	4,858	22
Welsh Netball Instagram	3,228	3,972	23
Celtic Dragons Twitter	8,572	9,261	8
Celtic Dragons Facebook	875*	1,255	43.4
Celtic Dragons Instagram	3,258	3,602	10.6

\* Newly created that year



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## DEVELOPMENT

Welsh Netball's membership continued on an upward trend this year with a 2.5% increase on the previous season. This culminated in Welsh Netball breaking through the 10,000 member mark for the first time in its history. Achieving our goal of surpassing the 10k mark was significant for the organisation and demonstrates the growth and publicity of the sport in recent years.

Over the past 4 seasons, we have seen each region in Wales grow by at least 23%, with one region almost achieving 40% growth over this period. It's fantastic to see netball thriving in our clubs across the whole of Wales, without whom none of this would be possible. A special mention to Gilfach Netball Club (South-East), Bridgend Bolts (Central-South), Rhosnesni Netball Club (North) and Maldwyn Netball Club (Mid & West) who have demonstrated the growth over this period through sustaining the largest member increase from their respective regions over the last 4 years. We also wanted to thank all of the coaches, officials and volunteers who give their time and energy to their netball clubs and communities on a weekly basis.

In October 2019, Welsh Netball launched its brand-new sports quality accreditation scheme for netball clubs in Wales called Dragon Mark. Dragon Mark (Marc y Ddraig) aims to support netball clubs, their administrators and volunteers in providing the best possible experience for its members and participants, operating with best practice. By ensuring that accredited clubs operate to a set of consistent, accepted and

adopted minimum operating standards, Welsh Netball can help clubs to grow and provide safe environments for participants. The Dragon Mark programme will underpin how we work with and support our clubs to be the best they can be.

We implemented some changes within our LA Hub Programme this season following an internal review in order to provide a better experience for our players and workforce in the pathway. The changes will allow us to focus our efforts on maximising the potential reach of our player development programmes through the creation of U11 Development camps. The camps, due to be launched in the spring 2020, has been postponed due to COVID-19 and will resume once netball activity returns. The demand for LA Hubs at U13 and U15 continued to be strong this season with over 1350 players trialling across Wales, and over 730 successful in gaining a place on the programme.

We are continuing to work with a range of new and existing partners to 'Grow the Game' and bring netball to people and communities across the whole of Wales. This November saw the first ever netball community cohesion cup run in partnership between Welsh Netball and the South Wales Police. The event, which was called the 'Unity Shield' saw over 100 women & girls participate from across South Wales, with over 50% coming from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community. The WI Walking Netball project has just passed its 1 year anniversary with sessions now running across Wales and

27 new Walking Netball Activators trained to sustain the sessions going forward.

There have been many other highlights over the past year that include both coaching & umpiring standardisation events, along with the development of the new Umpire Assessor Training Course and Walking Netball Activator Course. Netball Tots continues to grow across the country, and we're delighted to now be able to offer the programme in Welsh. We were also able to provide events for primary & secondary schools, and coaches at the International Test Series in July, whilst Sian Pointing of Llantwit Fadre Walking Netball Club was recognised for her efforts by being Wales' nominee for 'Community Coach of the Year' at the UK Coaching awards in December.

Welsh Netball were also successful in being awarded the Preliminary Equality Standard for Sport in April 2020. The Standard is a UK recognised framework for assisting sports Governing Bodies to widen access and reduce inequalities in their sport. Welsh Netball's achievement of the Preliminary level demonstrates the organisation's intent to continue developing our services to ensure there are opportunities for individuals from under-represented groups and communities can access and enjoy netball.



Total Membership

10,067  $\uparrow$  2.4%  
Increase

Adult Membership

3,685  $\uparrow$  2%  
Increase

Junior Membership

6,382  $\uparrow$  3%  
Increase

195  
affiliated clubs

# 14

## DEVELOPMENT

# 10k

members

### 2015-2019 Growth

#### Adults Increase



# 35%

(2,586)

#### Juniors Increase



# 53%

(2,218)

### Regional Increases



### Biggest Club Growth Per Region (No. of Players)



### LA Hubs (2019/20 season)



### Workforce Stats (2019/20 financial year)



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## WORKFORCE

### ONLINE UMPIRING C AWARD

- Worked with Netball Europe on the development of the Umpiring C Award online theory test which launched in September 2019.

- Tests are now more accessible to our candidates who can sit them at any time.

- 24 candidates have successfully passed the online theory test since its inception.

### WALKING NETBALL ACTIVATOR COURSES

- Developed a new Walking Netball Activator resource and course which allows candidates to deliver safe and fun Walking Netball sessions in the community.

- Launched the course in partnership with the Women's Institute with two closed courses in North and Mid & West Wales with 27 participants in total.

- Tutors now in place with plans to launch the course publicly in the coming season.

### COACHING AND UMPIRING STANDARDISATION

- Events for both coaching and umpiring were held in 2019-20 to ensure quality and consistency across the Welsh Netball workforce and share good practice.

- Coaching standardisation events, held across sites in North and South Wales in September 2019, also saw the tutors & assessors undertake Disability Inclusion Training to help facilitate inclusive practice of coaches across Wales.

- Umpire Assessor Standardisation event in January 2020, held in Cwmbran, marked the start of significant developments in the umpire development infrastructure that will continue in 2020/21.

# 775

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES ACCESSED

4% Increase from 18/19

# 81%

COURSE CAPACITY RATE

# 32

UMPIRES ASSESSORS ACROSS WALES

# 58

Course tutors / assessors

# 662

New coaches & officials

# 2

WALKING NETBALL ACTIVATOR courses delivered

# 27

trained

# 16

## REGIONAL REPORTS

### CENTRAL SOUTH: YOUNG AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME

In Central South Wales, we have worked with Active Merthyr to help tackle the lack of coaches in the Merthyr and Treharris area by launching a Young Ambassador programme for netball.

The programme was designed to get young people aged 13-16 involved in coaching netball. The programme was launched in two secondary schools: Merthyr Afon Taff HS and Penydre HS. Ten girls from each school were selected by teachers and attended the Netball Leaders course after which they would then volunteer as coaches in school and netball clubs for one hour a week each. Participants would utilise their new skills by assisting at local netball competitions to accrue additional hours. Participants would be able to achieve an increasing level of award based on the number of hours they had volunteered.



### NORTH: WALKING NETBALL SESSION. WELSH NETBALL IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GOGA (GET OUT GET ACTIVE, WREXHAM)

A new walking netball session was set up in Wrexham in partnership with Get Out Get Active. Starting in September 2019, the session is now well attended, ranging from 20 – 30 participants and gives people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to keep fit & healthy, enjoy exercise as well as a new social environment.

The group consists of people who had not played netball since school as well as some that had never played the sport previously. It also provided an environment for players who had suffered from injury assisting them with rehabilitation. The initiative led to a new Back to Netball Session as some of the participants had gained enough confidence and learnt new skills, which enabled them to play the game in its traditional format.

As well as providing opportunities to play, this walking netball session offered one of the participants an opportunity to become involved with coaching. As a result, this individual went on the pass her UKCC Level 1 coaching qualification in March 2020.

Moreover, one of the participants' daughter is a keen netballer herself, and attended the session to assist the coaches with setting up the session and umpiring. Lacking in confidence herself, it gave her the ideal opportunity to develop her skills and since September she has attended the Netball Leaders and Introduction to Netball Courses.

# 17

## REGIONAL REPORTS



### SOUTH EAST: NEWPORT PRIMARY SCHOOL NETBALL LEAGUE

Working alongside a Newport Live sports development officer, we identified a lack of participation in netball at primary level, and in particular competitions in the City & County of Newport.

With help from a number of parties, we have since set up a league that sees over 60 pupils from 11 schools involved in playing regular competitions against other schools within their area. Primary schools and teachers are heavily involved in the running, organisation and leading of the league structure. They have secured a venue and mutually agree on dates and times. The league keeps fixtures tables and records to show the progress of the schools involved. This year the schools will hope to compete with other areas and provide a better platform of competition.

There is already a huge amount of interest from other schools to be involved in the league next year, such has been the growth of the new league and its excellent reputation in the local area.

### MID & WEST: TWO NEW NETBALL CLUBS FOR RURAL WALES

Two brand-new netball clubs have been launched over the last year to serve some of Wales' most rural and isolated communities.

Llandysul Netball Club (which runs from Calon Tysul Community Centre) and Llandovery Netball Club (who are based out of Llandovery College's Sports Hall) have made a huge impact in a very short amount of time. Over the last season, Llandysul's ladies team have started to compete in the Ceredigion League and their junior section continues to grow. Meanwhile, Llandovery Netball Club's seniors have competed in the Llanelli League and its junior section have also taken part in the Carmarthenshire Netball Development Centre's league. Llandovery also has players who have successfully qualified for the Carmarthenshire LA Hub and onto the Welsh Netball pathway.

The emergence and growth of these clubs is testament to the ever-increasing popularity of netball in Wales. It is fantastic to see another two clubs emerging to provide opportunities through sport to women and girls who might otherwise not be able to access sport and the mental and physical benefits it brings.

2019/20 was all set to be yet another busy year of Competitions for clubs and area teams across the country.

We enjoyed a very promising start, with a great National Clubs Competition for the Under 19 age group followed by two competitive Inter Area tournaments. However, just as the competition season was about to hit full stride, the entire sporting landscape was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. With netball activity in Wales currently suspended, this also includes the remainder of the National Competitions. Postponing the competitions was a difficult decision as we know just how hard netballers, coaches and volunteers across our community have worked towards them, however, with participant safety at the front of our minds, it was and remains the correct decision.

More positively, last winter we were able to work in partnership with South Wales Police on the first ever Unity Shield tournament. You can read more about that over the page. As we look to 'build back better' from the pandemic, we will continue to liaise closely with our clubs, leagues and associations and look to innovate and engage to return to National Competitions as soon as it is safe to do so.

### NATIONAL U19 OPEN CLUBS COMPETITION

*Swansea LC2*

- 1st **Mold Netball Club**
- 2nd **Leckwith Netball Club**

### U18 INTER AREA COMPETITION

*Bangor University*

- 1st **North East Wales A**
- 2nd **Cardiff and Vale A**

### U16 A&B INTER AREA COMPETITION

*Cardiff House of Sport*

**A Team**

- 1st **Glamorgan Valleys A**
- 2nd **Cardiff and Vale A**

**B Team**

- 1st **North East Wales B**
- 2nd **Cardiff and Vale B**



## SPOTLIGHT: COMMUNITY COHESION CUP: **THE UNITY SHIELD**

In November 2019, Welsh Netball teamed up with South Wales Police to host the first ever Unity Shield Cohesion Competition. This was part of their initiative to encourage woman and girls from under-represented communities, particularly those from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds to get involved with netball. The initiative also sought to use netball as a tool to break down barriers between the police and the communities they serve.

South Wales Police tasked officers from across its regions to form local teams. Officers set up training sessions to bring the community together to learn or improve on their skills, in preparation for the final tournament in Swansea. Players were of a range of abilities and officers encouraged confidence building and socialising within the groups and themselves.

The competition had a total of 12 teams, with at least 50% of each squad's players coming from a BAME background. Over 100 women and girls were in attendance, playing alongside officers. The tournament illustrated just how successful the initiative had been, with barriers broken down and a range of communities enjoying a great day of netball.

The positive impact of the competition continued beyond November, with one of the teams, made up of refugees, arranging a Christmas party to which South Wales Police officers were invited. Also, the team from the Eastern region continue to train alongside officers after the competition had finished.

South Wales Police produced an excellent video summary of the initiative which to date has over 15,000 total views on social media and demonstrates the sheer power that netball has to connect our communities.





The last 12 months has seen significant improvement for the Wales senior squad programme in pursuit of Commonwealth Games 2022 and World Cup 2023 qualification. We started the year ranked 11th in the world and after a tremendous Summer Test Series and Netball Europe in the autumn, the players demonstrated their quality by achieving some spectacular results against teams ranked above them, ending the year with a move to 9th in the world.

In 2019, Julie Hoornweg stepped down having established exceptional performance standards developing 'the Welsh Way.' A testament to the quality of coaching around the senior team, Sara Hale was successfully appointed as the new Wales Head Coach, and her replacement as assistant coach has seen Sarah Lewis appointed to the 4 strong management team.



Sara Hale  
New Wales Head Coach

January 2020 saw the newly selected National side take on international competition against New Zealand and South Africa in their preparations for the Nations Cup. This provided invaluable exposure to the worlds very best, and gave new Head Coach, Sara Hale, and her team, the opportunity to present the players with a world class competitive environment.

There has been considerable progress within the performance department, from governance through to the development of a clear strategic intent for the next 4 years. This ensures we maintain a clear and consistent direction of travel along with guaranteeing that athlete health and wellbeing become a central focus for player development and support. We have improved processes and procedures that will support the person, athlete and performer in our pursuit of becoming a world leading netball nation. With the capability of the programme, players and team management, it promises to make for an exciting 18 months prior to Commonwealth Games qualification.

NEW  
World  
ranking

9<sup>th</sup>



### SENIORS

#### Wendy White Series vs South Africa

First Test:			
Wales	32	South Africa	84
Second Test:			
Wales	44	South Africa	79

### SENIORS

#### Malawi and Trinidad & Tobago Tests

4 Games won on the bounce  
(Malawi & Trinidad, both ranked higher at the time)

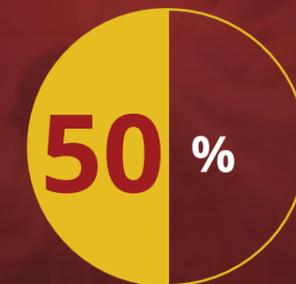
Wales	52	Malawi	47
Wales	72	Trinidad & Tobago	64

### SENIORS

#### Grenada Tests = Great training ground for newly capped players

First Test:			
Wales	72	Grenada	53
Second Test:			
Wales	81	Grenada	53

SENIORS  
Netball Europe Open,  
Silver Medallists



of the new 2020 senior squad have come from a combination of U21 & U17 squads

Netball Europe, Silver Medallists

75

Athletes across Wales Performance Programme (Senior, U21, U17)

175

players within Talent Centre performance development environments



100 CAPS  
Suzy Drane

Undefeated in 7 test matches in 2019

## WALES AGE GROUP TEAMS AND PERFORMANCE PATHWAY



### WALES UNDER 21

The U21 squad has gone from strength to strength under the leadership of Nikki Lloyd and her team Sarah Lewis (Assistant Coach) and Louvain Lake (Team Manager). The squad won silver at the 2019 U21 Netball Europe tournament in Worcester with wins over Northern Ireland and Scotland and then followed this up with two victories on the Isle of Man against both the Manx senior and U21 teams.

Under the current regime, several of the U21 athletes have been promoted to the senior squad for 2020. This is showing strength and depth of the squad and system as a whole.

### WALES UNDER 17

The U17 squad have again for another consecutive year. The stability of this programme led by Head Coach, Rhian Davies and her team management, Emma Meredith (Assistant Coach), Jo Ricketts (Assistant Coach) and Anni Williamson (Team Manager) has offered players an environment to prepare to become the very best athlete they can be.

### PATHWAY

We are about to embark on an exciting project in 2020, to bring the U21 and U17 squads closer together, provide a deeper level of support for volunteers and players.

We have undergone a review of the age group / pathway over the last 12 months, and it was recognised that we require greater alignment between squads, to guarantee technical, tactical and environmental consistency and continuity which ultimately aids an athlete's transition.

After its introduction into the player pathway in 2018, the Talent Centre programme saw a reduction in the volume of centres operating in 2020, to ensure that its evolution focuses on the quality within each centre as opposed to the number in existence. The focus for this programme as it continues to serve the purpose of providing an oversupply of athletes to the Wales Performance programme, is to have high quality coaching that is capable of providing an environment for the development of the Welsh Way at each relevant age and stage of a players development. As we embark on the delivery of the new performance strategy, this programme will see further improvements in 2020/2021, looking closer at development of high quality coaching, selection and confirmation of athletes with the potential to become a future senior athlete and appropriate geographical positioning to cater for the diverse make up of those that play netball.

We saw several players progress from these environments to the national age groups trials and in some cases squads. Further development to align this infrastructure is required, but essential to have a regionally based delivery.

COVID-19 has meant that the future performance programme for our pathway athletes is uncertain, however we are working closely with partners in INF, Netball Europe and the other Home Nations to deliver safe and secure programmes when the time is right.

## U17 NETBALL EUROPE



**NETBALL**  
Europe

March 2020 saw Welsh Netball play host to another major event with the arrival of the U17 Netball Europe Championships. The event was held at Ebbw Vale Sports Centre and was delivered in close partnership with Netball Europe.

The event is designed to provide athletes at this age group with the opportunity to experience high performance competition in preparation for future senior success.

Wales headed into the competition having secured a silver medal at the 2019 U17 Netball Europe Championships, and the Team Management were expecting nothing less this time round. The team, captained by Georgia Hellerman and Vice-Captain Catrin Roy, duly obliged and led the team to a silver medal once again with victories over Scotland, Northern Ireland and Switzerland.

There was a fantastic atmosphere over the course of the weekend, which saw newly promoted Switzerland bring a big following of fans to the South Wales Valleys. All of the young athletes in attendance were a credit to their nations and Welsh Netball was proud to host such a competitive and good-spirited European competition.

A huge thank you to Ebbw Vale Sports centre for their never-ending support, Netball Europe for the collaborative approach, and to local club volunteers young and old for the hours put in to helping make the event happen.





### ON COURT

In the 2019 Vitality Netball Superleague season, Celtic Dragons enjoyed its most successful year on court for a number of years. Finishing 7th in the league table, Dragons had recorded a number of home and away victories and some very creditable performances against top-level opposition.

These successes meant that Dragons had qualified for the British All-Stars Fast 5 competition for the first time in its history. Taking place in October 2019, Celtic Dragons performed very well in the tournament, making it past the group stages and all the way to the semi-final. Only a last second missed shot saw the team miss out on a place in the final, losing to tournament's eventual winners Loughborough Lightning.

The franchise then went into preparations for the regular season, with four pre-season matches scheduled including an in-house training game against Knights Men's Netball. The franchise undertook its traditional pre-Christmas trip to North East Wales to play Manchester Thunder and also travelled to Warwick to face England U21. Pre-season preparation culminated in the franchise hosting a tri-tournament featuring London Pulse and Team Bath in Ebbw Vale.

Prior to the postponement of the 2020 Vitality Netball Superleague season (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) Celtic Dragons had completed three matches. The first of these saw the franchise take to court in front of over 9,200 spectators in Arena Birmingham to face Surrey Storm where 7 new Dragons made their franchise debuts. The other two games were a home match (hosted at Cardiff Met) against Team Bath and a televised match away at London Pulse.



### OFF COURT

Away from the Superleague, it has been a busy twelve months for the franchise off-court. The franchise continued to grow commercially, welcoming a head coach sponsor in Centurion VAT and an official immigration and visa law partner in Newfields Law. This was in addition to the continuation of Celtic Dragons' ground-breaking partnerships with O'Neills and Cardiff Metropolitan University.

The franchise also re-established its Under 17, 19 and 21 age group squads which was met with great interest from the netball community. Applications were far in excess of places and the franchise was able to secure the services of some outstanding volunteer coaches, meaning that squads were able to hit the ground running and enjoy some excellent matchplay opportunities in their first season. Young athletes were also

excellently supported on their programmes by Cardiff Met's Strength and Conditioning coaches and were able to have opportunities to train with the Superleague squad. We would like to thank the teams' volunteer coaches and management for their fantastic work with the squads over the last year and we look forward to further future success with the age group sides.

Ahead of the 2020 season, Celtic Dragons' increasing popularity was evidenced by a 43% increase in season ticket sales compared with the year before. Moreover, the pre-season game in North East Wales sold out within hours of tickets going on sale. The last year has also seen over 250 children take part in Dragons Camps run by the franchise's players and coaches and ahead of the 2020 season, 14 matchday mascot packages had been sold.



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- Howden
- Centurion VAT
- Newfields Law
- NPTC Group
- South Wales Police
- National Federation of Women's Institutes Cymru
- Neon Arena Services



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