

## **Notes of the meeting of the regional Joint Supporters Group and Welsh Rugby Union**

**Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2016, 5pm**

**Principality Stadium**

### **Attendees**

Martyn Phillips, Chief Executive, Welsh Rugby Union

Gareth Davies, Chairman, Welsh Rugby Union

Cardiff Blues Supporters' Club , Sarah Hopkins and David Elsmere

Crys 16 Trust, Barrie Jones and Ian Lewis

Dragons Supporters' Club, Brad Hayward and Ryan Price

Ospreys Supporters' Club, Grant Berni and Melanie Maggs

### **Notes of the discussion topics**

JSG thanked MP for the opportunity for this latest meeting and confirmed that an agenda had been sent in advance with a note of the discussion topics, but that it was also an opportunity for a general discussion to raise issues and feedback on behalf of regional supporters.

JSG asked for an update on the WRU plans for the forthcoming season:

- Club and Regional engagement will be an ongoing focus, with the WRU seeking a more collaborative approach encompassing things such as coaching, skills, digital presence and sponsorship
- Judgment Day 5 was scheduled for Easter Saturday and the WRU had taken on board supporter feedback from past JD's and general fixture timings. JSG thanked MP for the work that the WRU had done alongside PRW to get a more sensible fixture list for season 2016/17. Consideration had been given to changing the JD fixtures with different teams facing each other but the regions had been keen to retain the local derbies over the Christmas period.
- MP confirmed that seating allocations for ST holders were within the control of the regions and feedback/requests regarding this would be better made to them directly. A discussion had also taken place about the possibility of a second JD event at Christmas but again the regions had decided that this would affect traditional derbies.
- JSG asked MP about the timing during the season and collectively they felt that moving it to start of the season would encourage new supporters to come to regional games - however the Principality Stadium doesn't have grass until October due to other events.
  
- The WRU digital strategy was progressing well with the WRU working with the regions to help them target new audiences. They are keen to develop and launch more of their own content rather than relying on local media, and consider content such as coaching videos.

JSH asked for an update in the strategy and engagement with the Board. GD confirmed that this was a complication with lots of stakeholders involved but that progress was being made.

JSG enquired as to WRU actions to bridge the income gap from TV between Pro12 & English/French leagues. MP confirmed that all options were being explored by all parties – WRU, Pro 12 and PRW. He said that he felt that a full B&I league was not an option at this stage due to the desire of other parties who are happy with their financial and commercial deals.

JSG asked about future plans for National Dual Contracts as some felt that they had not been equally distributed among the regions. MP said that during his tenure they had focused purely on retaining and repatriating the 'first 15'. He expressed his disappointment that Toby Faletau had not been successfully retained.

JSG asked what the WRU view on the current season structure was with regards to the balance of player welfare versus the requirement to generate income and honour commercial agreements.

MP said that the recent visit to NZ was very informative in this respect and that there is a real desire in Wales to improve the season structure. However, there are a number of key players and not all are in the same place. To move to a global season would be ideal – but it's just not that simple as it would require radical change.

JSG said that the recent use of Welsh Language by the FAW had been such a success which had been impressive and asked what the WRU was doing to improve its use of Welsh. GD said that the WRU Senior Team was full of Welsh speakers who were passionate about use of the language and that lessons could be learned from the FAW. MP said that this was under review, that WRU had probably produced more content than FAW but had not been as consistent and creative. He stated that a sustainable Welsh Language policy and action plan would be implemented as part of the wider digital strategy, and part of this would be resource and embed the policy consistently.

A question was asked about the on-going structure of the 4 professional teams and MP confirmed that there were no plans to suggest or move towards a merger or relocation of any of the existing teams.

MP thanked JSG members for their professionalism and ongoing support, and JSG thanks MP and GD for their engagement and time. A further meeting would be planned in approximately six months time.

Meeting ended at 6.40pm