

GYMUR



Transforming lives through rugby League

Wales Rugby League Strategy | 2025-2030



Introduction

We are the National Governing Body for rugby league in Wales, and we are proud that we developed this strategy through extended consultation with and for our **community**.

We are on a mission to **unite** communities through the power of rugby league. This strategy is different from different ones as it acknowledges the challenging times we face as a sport and as a **society**. It recognises that a change of mindset and thinking can have far reaching impacts on tackling inequalities and providing positive social outcomes now and in the future.

Those of us involved in rugby league know the strength it has in unifying us as one **family**, to strive to represent **Cymru** in the best light at every opportunity, and the **value** it can bring to the communities around us.

The **red** thread that courses through our veins and shirts embodies our Welsh dragon's fire and dedication in everything we do.

Our four overarching goals for this strategic cycle are to:

- Embed a safe, inclusive and sustainable culture
- Grow community participation and fan base
- National teams represented at the highest level
- Provide financial stability at all levels of the game.

James Davies | Chair

Richard Hibbard | Chief Executive Officer

Our History

Rugby league in Wales took off in the early 1900s, with Welsh players joining English clubs due to the professional opportunities afforded to them at that time.

With legendary players like Billy Boston MBE, Clive Sullivan and Gus Risman hailing from Cardiff, it was evident that the rugby talent was present, yet the resources, inclusive selections and infrastructures were not. It was a story later told in the BBC documentary, 'Codebreakers'.

There has been some impressive performances from clubs within Wales over the years, though financial challenges, and profile of our game continues to impact our ability to operate sustainably.

At international level, the performance at the 1995 World Cup lives long in the memory. Household names including Jonathan Davies and Scott Quinnell. Quinnell made rugby league the talk of the country.

We are proud of those players who have come before us and want to celebrate and support everyone in our sport, recognising their journeys, successes and their individualism, which is what makes rugby league so unique.





Our Purpose, Mission and Principles

Purpose

To foster success on and off the rugby league field

Mission

Rugby league is a thriving sport in Wales that enriches lives and creates a positive impact on our communities.

Principles

Community

Ambition

Responsibility

Excellence

What's going well?



Progressive Governance

- ✓ Improved Safeguarding protocols and achieved Child Protection in Sport Unit Level 2
- ✓ Began a data collection process of players and workforce
- ✓ A dedicated network of Board Directors with appropriate and diverse skills



Connecting with our communities

- ✓ More than 1 in 5 of our registered players live in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales
- ✓ One in 10 of our registered players live in the 10% most deprived areas of Wales
- ✓ More than 4,300 registered players in 2024 - a 201% increase on 2021
- ✓ Participation at a record high since records began



Reaching new heights

- ✓ Women's and Wheelchair qualified for 2026 World Cup
- ✓ Cardiff Demons striving for the Women's Super League
- ✓ The national teams within the Performance Pathways going from strength to strength



Financially fit

- ✓ Appointed CEO with strong rugby profile coupled with relevant commercial experience
- ✓ Rapport and connections have enabled the ability to leverage partnerships



SUMMER

Rugby league is primarily played in the summer, offering a great outdoor activity for players and fans

SOCIAL

The sport has a vibrant social scene, with events and gatherings that bring people together

SPECTATORS

Rugby league matches are exciting to watch, attracting a dedicated fan base

Opportunities

What makes rugby league special?

The unique elements that make rugby league an intense, fast-paced, and strategic game, with an emphasis on continuous play and open-field running distinguishes it from other contact sports and making it an **exciting** game to watch, with an average of 59 minutes of ball in play time.

What are the benefits to partners?

Rugby league fosters a strong sense of **community** and camaraderie among players and fans. With it being played in the **summer** months, it is a prime opportunity for families and friends to enjoy sport in the sunnier weather.

The atmosphere and captive audience at rugby league games provides a great opportunity for

potential partners or sponsors to tap into potential customers.

We know that our sport changes the lives of many players, but as we stand, we lack the resource to capture and fully understand the data of our players. We know with increased resource, talent and dedicated people working to demonstrate our **impact**, we will reach even more people and will become even more attractive to potential partners.

Why us?

Because we **care**. We care about our **community**. We have **ambition** to succeed. We are **responsible** for ourselves and others. And we want to nurture **excellence** on and off the field.



Our strategic approach

OUR GOALS

What do we want to achieve?

Here you will find the goals we are wanting to achieve during this strategic cycle. They are benchmarks for us to work towards becoming stronger, safer and more successful in everything we do.

OUR OBJECTIVES

How will we get there?

In this section, you can expect to see some of the broad actions we will take in a bid to achieve the goals. There will be more detailed actions within our operational plan.

SUCCESS INDICATORS

How will we know if we're winning?

When we reach the end of this strategy cycle in 2030, we aim to have achieved the key items within this box, in amongst lots of other things along the way.

GOAL 1

Progressive Governance



Key challenge:

Over-reliance on small number of volunteers

Key opportunity:

Understand our audiences' backgrounds, social status and motivations to become a sector-leading organisation that prioritises player mental health and well-being

GOAL 1 | PROGRESSIVE GOVERNANCE

To embed a safe, inclusive and sustainable culture

Goals

- 1 Everyone understands their role in promoting and enabling safe sport
- 2 Rugby league is established as an inclusive and diverse sport across all levels of the game
- 3 All governance and integrity standards are upheld and continuously improved
- 4 We are an organisation where continuous improvement and learning is embedded in our culture
- 5 To lead the way in embedding mental health support across the rugby league family
- 6 Club and community provision is well managed by competent on and off-field volunteers

Objectives

- 1 Establish a clear and confidential safeguarding reporting mechanism that supports all stakeholders within rugby league
- 2 Establish a network of safeguarding champions across Wales to lead and embed safeguarding practices
- 3 Devise and implement an EDI action plan in collaboration with relevant stakeholders
- 4 Develop support services for players, including counselling and mental health in conjunction with practitioners
- 5 Implement education and training programmes for all staff, volunteers and players
- 6 Implement a robust compliance framework and code of conduct that is understood and adhered to by all in line with the Governance and Leadership Framework for Wales
- 7 Continue to focus our efforts and resource into the most under-served communities

Success Indicators

- ✓ Achieve and maintain CPSU Level 2 safeguarding award
- ✓ Athletes, coaches and their wider networks are confident in reporting concerns via our system
- ✓ An agreed code of conduct is in place and adopted by all members
- ✓ We have a diverse representation of society across our game from the board room to our fans
- ✓ We have a functioning governance sub-committee with an appropriate action plan

GOAL 2

Connect with our communities



Key challenge:

Competition with other activities; volunteer-led provision

Key opportunity:

Increase the opportunities for female players; broaden reach across north and west Wales; create a home for WRL



GOAL 2 | CONNECT WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

Grow the number of participants, workforce and fan base

Goals

- 1 Every child has the opportunity to play rugby league
- 2 We are positioned as an attractive, appealing exciting form of entertainment for families
- 3 Our games from grassroots to competitive leagues are appropriately resourced with qualified officials
- 4 Our network of volunteers is constantly evolving, growing and feel appropriately supported
- 5 We have trusted partners, associates and advocates championing our sport in the media
- 6 We are in tune with our fans, providing high quality matchday experiences

Objectives

- 1 Work with priority clubs to increase provision for junior and youth age groups, particularly in underserved communities
- 2 Prioritise the development of clubs in north and west Wales to expose more people to the game across Wales
- 3 Develop our officials' pathway to introduce, develop and retain match officials across Levels 1-3 with appropriate resources and education tools
- 4 Develop a robust and transparent communications strategy that fosters community spirit, inclusivity and aspiration, capitalising on the success of our national teams
- 5 Establish a home ground for rugby league within Wales
- 6 Implement active feedback mechanisms to aid continuous data driven improvement with and for our stakeholders (fans, players, staff, volunteers)

Success Indicators

- ✓ Wales home games are regularly sold out due to high demand
- ✓ Our participation levels have doubled across our male, female, junior and youth age groups
- ✓ We have a robust mechanism for capturing, tracking and understanding our reach into targeted communities
- ✓ Our games and community provision is well equipped with appropriately trained officials, coaches and off-field volunteers

GOAL 3

Reach new heights



Key challenge:

Providing a fully professional approach with minimal resource and a reliance on grant funding

Key opportunity:

National team performances within international tournaments



GOAL 3 | REACH NEW HEIGHTS

All teams to be competing at an international level

Goals

- 1 The WRL brand is positively established, recognised and respected throughout our communities, locally and nationally
- 2 Our men's and women's national teams are considered the best small nation in the world, ranked in the top 10 and top 5 in the world, respectively
- 3 Our national teams are regularly competing in international fixtures
- 4 Our national team environments foster a high performance culture, promoting player development and wellbeing
- 5 We have East Wales and West Wales Academies that nurture and develops young talent and future workforce
- 6 We have Welsh domestic club representation within a semi-pro league

Objectives

- 1 Develop and publish an annual calendar of events with a strategic focus on international fixtures
- 2 Align our budgets to invest in appropriate coaching, facilities and technology to enhance our performances
- 3 Establish a player and coach development framework, fostering our values and high-performance culture
- 4 Develop a performance strategy that enhances team performance, whilst focusing on mental conditioning and resilience
- 5 Develop a robust talent identification and development programme that transitions players from club to pathway provision

Success Indicators

- ✓ Wales are recognised as consistent high performers on the domestic and international stage
- ✓ All players coming through the pathway are aligned in the Welsh standards and culture
- ✓ Wales has reached a quarter final in a major championship event

GOAL 4

Financially fit



Key challenge:

Securing consistent funding, impacting the ability to develop facilities and programmes

Key opportunity:

Position ourselves as an attractive partnership opportunity for long-term investment



GOAL 4 | FINANCIALLY FIT

Be commercially attractive to aid financial sustainability at all levels of the game

Goals

- 1** We are financially stable due to diverse revenue streams and a reduced reliance on grant funding
- 2** We are open and transparent about our financial status and ambition
- 3** We are recognised for the value we bring to partnerships
- 4** We receive strong media and broadcasting coverage of our value on and off the pitch
- 5** Our funding streams allow us to provide our workforce and players with the appropriate development
- 6** Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) standards play a significant role throughout all WRL partnerships

Objectives

- 1** Develop and maintain a comprehensive financial plan that's incorporated within a robust financial framework
- 2** Implement robust financial reporting systems that include frequent audit and review
- 3** Identify and pursue corporate opportunities and partnerships whilst exploring community and government grants
- 4** Ensure funds are allocated for training and development of our stakeholders, prioritising those in greatest need
- 5** Collaboration with local and regional partners on capital investment for long-term sustainability
- 6** Produce valuable storytelling content for our partners to advocate on our behalf on the value of rugby league
- 7** Recognise the unique ESG goals of potential partners and align our proposition to reach their needs

Success Indicators

- ✓ Over 50% of our revenue streams are self-generated and/or commercially driven
- ✓ We have a core set of partnerships that are aligned to our values
- ✓ We can afford to regularly send our teams to relevant international tournaments
- ✓ Our resources for the grassroots game enable growth of the game for all communities



Guiding principles

We are committed to growing our performance, participation and revenue, working tirelessly to improve our standards and reputation. We can't do it alone and will ensure we keep at the heart of our progress what is most special to our rugby league family – their communities and connections, whilst we build the commercial opportunities to enable more people to experience what rugby league has to offer. By achieving these things, we will be competitive on and off the field.

COMMUNITIES



CONNECTIONS



COMMERCIAL



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Measuring and Monitoring

To ensure we are staying on track and progressing against our objectives, we will measure and monitor our work in the following ways:

1. Board of Directors

Each strategic goal will have a lead board director assigned to driving the progress against the objectives. Scorecards will be completed each quarter to provide the Board Director with updates for check and challenge. Metrics such as participation growth rates, sponsorship revenue, and fan engagement levels will be included in quarterly scorecards.

2. Staff team

We are a small team at Wales Rugby league, but we will ensure that the relevant staff member is connected with their associated goal and form part of the sub-committee with the lead Board Director.

3. Sub-committees

There will be defined sub-committees, and where required, specific objectives, made up of Board Directors, staff and community members to ensure we are all aligned in our work to achieve the common goal.

4. Annual reports

We are committing to producing annual reports which will include updates on each strategic pillar as outlined in our strategy.

5. Operational plan

Our day-to-day operations will be captured in our operational plan which contains a detailed breakdown of the work involved to achieve the longer-term goals of the strategy. These items will form part of the Board scorecard each quarter.



Strategic Milestones



Check in Date	Milestones
2025	✓ Rugby league: Transforming lives' strategy launched ✓ Commercial strategy built ✓ Communications strategy built ✓ Website refreshed and renewed
2026	✓ Annual reports produced ✓ Monitoring and evaluation embedded in our existing programmes ✓ Data capture of existing players including demographic profiles
2027	✓ Secure long-term home venue for all national teams ✓ Improved diversity across our Board and leadership roles ✓ Targeted interventions in community settings
2028	✓ Secured partnership agreements in line with our ethics and values ✓ Digital transformation and presence of rugby league ✓ National league structure in place for all age groups
2029	✓ Increased our reach into under-served communities ✓ All national teams represented on the international stage
2030	✓ Wales home internationals are frequently sold out ✓ An increase of 50% income generated by diverse revenue sources



Appendices



APPENDICES

Appendix A | SWOT analysis



Strengths

1. Strong national identity and historical connection to Rugby League in Wales
2. Growing grassroots experiences within communities and schools
3. Accessible talent pool from a rugby-oriented Welsh culture
4. Passionate and dedicated player and fan base
5. A Board of skilled, passionate directors
6. Regular international representation (e.g., Rugby League World Cup)
7. Leveraging sponsorship for national teams

Weaknesses

1. Limited funding, sponsorships, and media coverage compared to competitors
2. Smaller fanbase and geographic concentration of popularity
3. High dependence on Rugby Union players transitioning to Rugby League
4. Lack of professional Rugby League clubs in Wales
5. Limited infrastructure to support full player pathway opportunities at all age groups and gender
6. The game is operating on a small number of dedicated volunteers creating a potentially fragile foundation

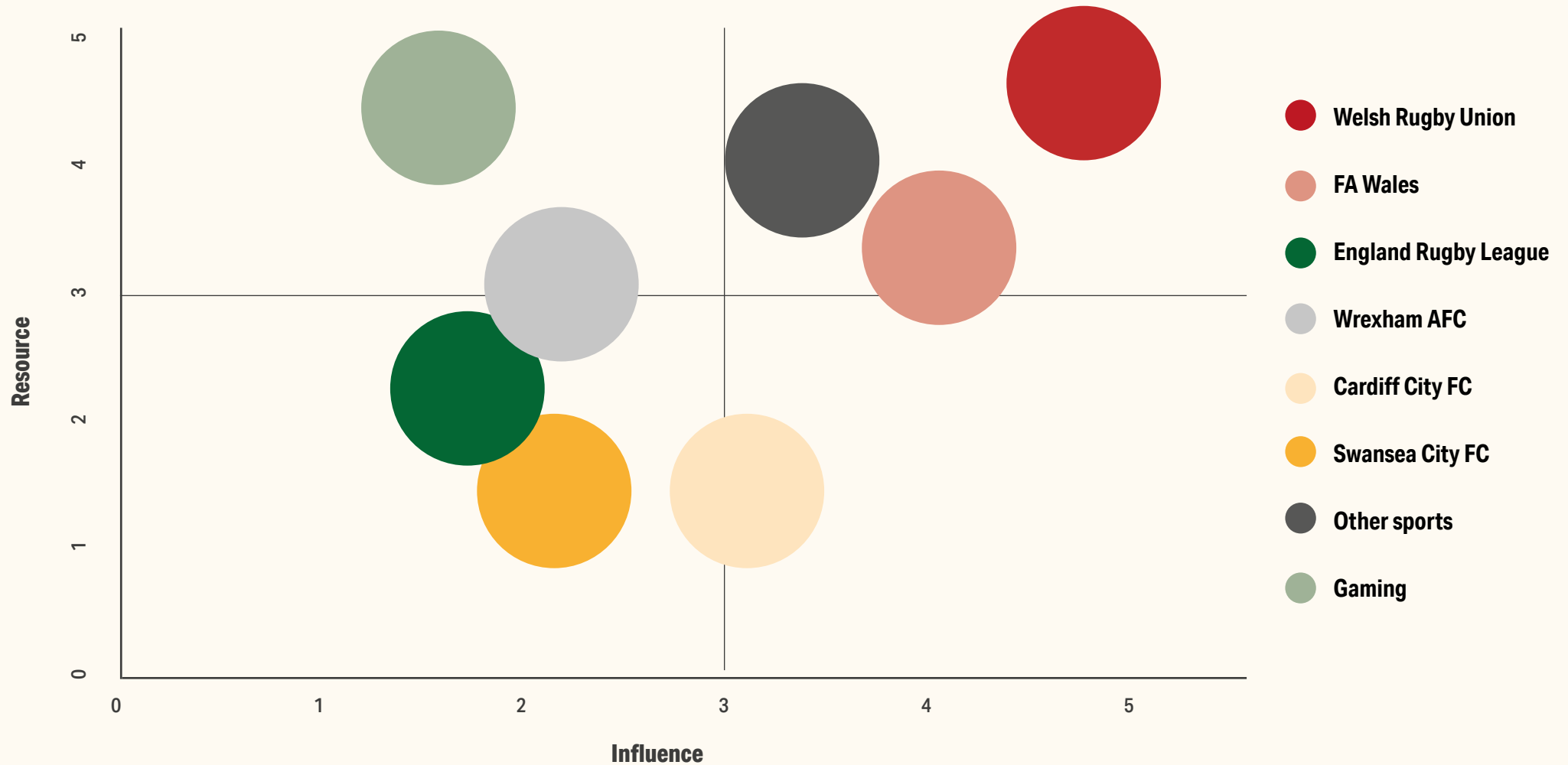
Opportunities

1. Expand grassroots programmes across Wales, especially in under represented areas
2. Focus on growing women's Rugby League to lead in this emerging area
3. Leverage social media and digital platforms to engage younger audiences
4. Targeting partnerships and collaborations with non-sporting bodies who foster similar values to WRL
5. Develop a strong communications strategy focusing on Welsh identity and potential media outlets celebrating Wales
6. Collaborate with football and Rugby Union clubs for shared audiences and resources
7. Host international and regional tournaments to boost visibility
8. Promote Celtic rivalries (e.g., with England, Scotland, and Ireland) to create a narrative for WRL
9. Attract sponsors aligned with Welsh identity and community initiatives

Threats

1. Rugby Union's dominance in Wales overshadowing Rugby League's growth
2. Increased popularity of football diverting fan attention and sponsorships
3. Limited funding and broader economic challenges impacting grassroots programmes
4. Competition from stronger Rugby League offerings across the UK
5. Limited resources to develop a dedicated Rugby League talent pipeline
6. The uncertainty of the changing landscape, society's interests and the financial climate
7. Society's perception and fears over the impact of contact sport

Appendix B | Computer analysis



Appendix B | Continued



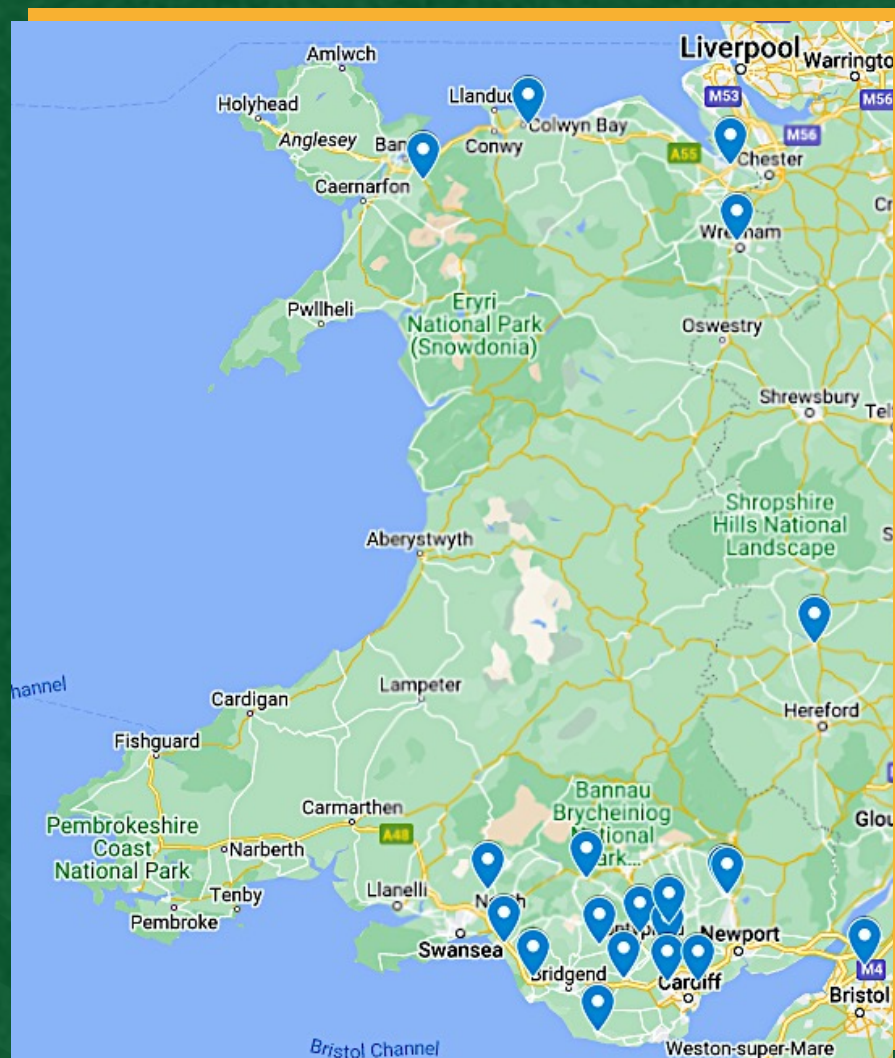
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The WRU are the biggest competitor with both high resources and a high influence within Wales from a media and societal cultural norm perspective.

The FA Wales has benefitted from increased profile, influence and resources since recent qualifications to the Euros, World Cup and the growth of the women's game in Wales.

E-sports and Gaming is a growing recreational and competitive activity for the younger population and should be considered as a genuine competitor for the youth age group.

Club Landscape | 2024



TEAMS	TOTAL
Senior male	10
Senior female	2
Junior male	14
University	3
Physical Disability	2
Wheelchair	5
Masters	3
College	1

We acknowledge that there are significant gaps in provision for both the female game and in the west Wales region.

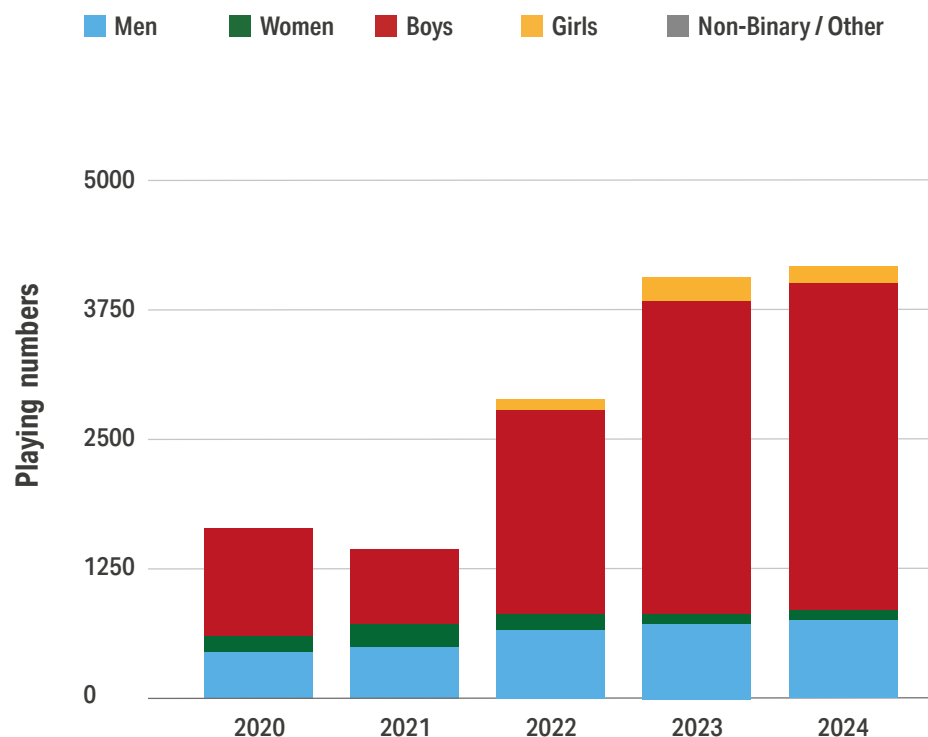
Despite the growing interest and enthusiasm among women and girls, access to local opportunities is still limited and the spread of club provision stems from the early evolution of the sport.

We are committed to working with local clubs and communities to create more accessible opportunities for everyone to experience rugby league in Wales.

Player Landscape | 2024

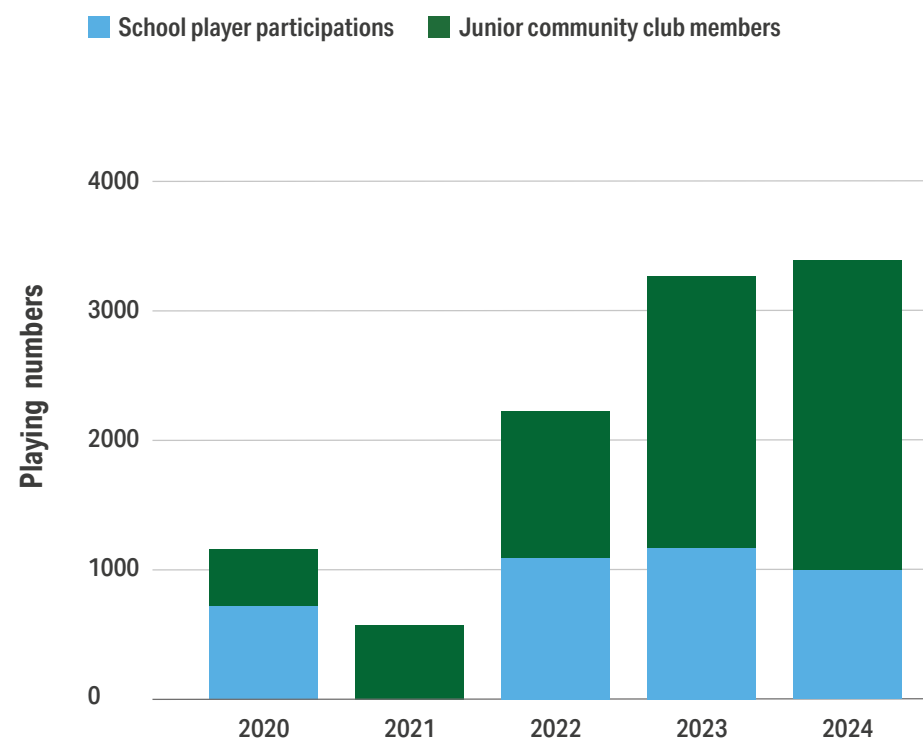


Who's playing our game?



It is evident from the above graph that the majority of our playing membership is made up of male players, both U18s and seniors. In more recent years there has been an increased focus on providing female opportunities, but this remains at a much lower participation level. We are proud of the programme offerings from seniors, U10s, wheelchair, students and Masters, but are aware we need to do much more to ensure that everyone can access our game.

Where are young people playing our game?



The opportunities we are providing within a school setting is proving popular with young people. Our challenge is to ensure once they have had a positive experience of rugby league, that there is a suitable outlet for them to continue playing in their local community. At present we know this is sporadic across the country and will be a priority of ours to focus on during this strategic cycle.

GYMURU RL

Together, we can
transform people's lives

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