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# BOARD MEETING MINUTES

## 13<sup>th</sup> January 2026

### 1. Welcome and Apologies

*Roll call and confirmation of quorum and apologies for absence*

• Attendance: James Davies, Adam Rowland, Richard Hibbard, Clive Griffiths, Phillipa Lang, Matthew Thomas, Mark Lovering, Matthew Porch, Joanna Thomas.

• Apologies: Adam Malcolm, Robert Deeney and Andy Morgan.

### 2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

*Review and approval of minutes from the last meeting*

• Cascaded via email as the output of the board meeting from January 2026 and will be added as an agenda item from the next board meeting as per action.

### 3. Matters Arising

*Follow-up on action items from previous meetings*

• Updates provided on ongoing actions (see Action Table below).

### 4. Chairperson's Report

*Overview of recent activities and developments*

#### **Chairman Overview**

• Chairman welcomed the attendees and gave brief purpose of the board meeting due to new attendees.

• All board members were **requested to submit "pen pics"** (including a photo, current role, and personal motivations) to update the "Who's Who" section of the WRL website

• Introduction to **New Board Members**

### 5. Financial Report

#### **Financial Position:**

◦ WRL ended December 2025 with an improved **cash position**.

◦ **Fixed Costs:** Monthly running costs (wages/IT/expenses) have been successfully reduced.

◦ **Reserve Policy:** The minimum cash reserve policy lowered to allow for more strategic investment in the game.

#### **Commercial Partnerships:**

◦ The board noted the successful discussions on lead sponsors for the Women's and Wheelchair World Cup programmes.



- Negotiations regarding community and youth programme sponsorship packages were reviewed and finalised
- **Credit Dinner:** WRL has the opportunity to present at a high-level dinner involving **FTSE 250 companies**, which could lead to significant future investment.
- **Annual Accounts (YE March 2025):**
  - Strategic cost-saving measures were implemented to ensure the long-term sustainability of the organisation..

## 6. Strategic Plan Update

*Progress on strategic objectives and discussion on upcoming initiatives*

- Discussion on the finalisation of the scorecards and quarterly strategy review are be introduced that KPIs linked to WRL 2030 strategy which will include stronger accountability and board oversight.

## 7. Governance and Compliance

*Review of governance policies and compliance updates and issues*

- **Sport Wales Framework Model:**
  - WRL is transitioning to the new model based on **five core principles**.
  - Demonstrable evidence (e.g., annual insurance policies, community game wordings) is now stored in a **structured folder system on Microsoft Teams** to ensure transparency.
  - The **Self-Declaration form** must be submitted for investment by the **23rd January** deadline.
- **Governance Improvement Plan (GIP) 2026:**
  - The Board formally approved the GIP as a **live document** to track "Amber" and "Red" risk items as they move toward "Green" status.
  - Specific focus for the next quarter includes **EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion)** policy drafting by Steve Jones and board succession planning.
- **Board Recognition:**
  - WRL successfully achieved the **Insport Silver Award** following a successful panel review.
  - The Board noted that the current composition does not yet fully reflect the **Articles of Association**, particularly the need for an **Independent Chairperson**.

## 8. Development and Performance

*Performance updates and reports on player development programmes*

- **National Teams & Pathways:**
  - **Senior Men:** Strong start under a new head coach with a victory over Ireland; the squad included six debutants, reinforcing the "World Cup Ready 2030" transition.
  - **Wales A:** Formally established as a curtain-raiser to senior games to bridge the gap between U18s and the first team.
  - **Pathway Depth:** Approximately **50 Welsh youngsters** are currently attached to professional academies in the North of England.
- **Inclusion & Disability Performance:**



- **Wheelchair:** Secured a win against the UK Armed Forces; a new **Strength & Conditioning (S&C) programme** by Chris Combs has been implemented.
- **PDRL World Cup:** A proposed application for a Physical Disability Rugby League World Cup was deemed financially unfeasible.
- **Commercial Opportunities:**
  - Discussions are opening with London based team regarding using their facilities and potentially integrating Welsh players into their reserve competition.

## 9. Community Game

*Performance update and key activities*

- **School & Youth Programmes:**
  - Successful launch of the **CHIC and WRL programmes** within junior schools of the **NPTC (Neath Port Talbot) borough**.
  - Re-establishment of the **Secondary School Championship**, with teams showing potential to progress to national finals at Wembley or Super League grounds.
  - Build-out of the **East Wales girl's origin programme** is underway to support the female pathway.
- **League Structure & Competition:**
  - Proposed **two-tier league structure for West Wales**.
  - The "Bronze" phase of this proposal involves established teams playing more fixtures while newer teams play taster sessions to grow sustainably.
- **Barriers to Growth:**
  - **Coach Education:** A critical challenge remains "unlocking" Level 1 and Level 2 accreditation for community volunteers due to financial and logistical hurdles.
  - **Touchline Management:** Concerns were raised regarding touchline conduct, DBS compliance, and the lack of first-aid-certified personnel at the community level.
- **Accreditation:** Unlocking Level 1 and Level 2 **coach education** remains a significant barrier due to financial and logistical challenges.

## 10. Marketing and Communications

*Update on marketing campaigns and Media/public relations activities*

- Discussions were held in the financial report section of this month's board meeting.

## 11. Any Other Business and date of next meeting

*Open floor for additional topics*

### Board and Executive Structure

- The board reviewed the distinction between **Executive Members** (responsible for day-to-day strategic direction and policy implementation) and **Non-Executive Members** (providing independent oversight and challenge).
- The board identified five "blue" roles to be formally recognised on **Companies House:** Chairperson, CEO, and Directors for People, Governance, and Finance.



- Chairman noted the goal of moving toward an **Independent Chairperson** to align with the Articles of Association, as this current role currently handles many executive duties.

#### **Review of Self-Declaration Form**

- The board reviewed the transition to the **Sport Wales Framework Model**, which is built on five core principles.
- Confirmation that folder structures have been created on Microsoft Teams to store evidence for compliance, such as insurance policies and community game wordings.
- The **Governance Improvement Plan (GIP) 2026** was formally **approved** as a live document to track progress from "Amber" to "Green" status.

#### **AGM Planning**

- The AGM is set for **28th January 2026** at 18:30 via Microsoft Teams.
- Despite three reminders, **no nominations** were received for the three member-elected director positions. This likely reflects the high pressure on club-level volunteers who lack the time for national board responsibilities.



## **Wales Rugby League**

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