

## **IFRCS01 Martin Finch, Acting Chair, Rhyl and District Hockey Club**

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Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

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[Effaith Gostyngiadau Cyllid ar Ddiwylliant a Chwaraeon | Impact of Funding Reductions for Culture and Sport](#)

Ymateb gan: Martin Finch, Cadeirydd Dros Dro, Rhyl and District Hockey Club |  
Evidence from: Martin Finch, Acting Chair, Rhyl and District Hockey Club

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### **Introduction**

Many see hockey as a middle-class sport played by people who can easily afford the costs. A new set of protective goalkeeping kit costs over £1000, decent quality sticks can cost £200, shoes for all-weather pitches and other protective gear such as hockey shin pads, gloves and facial protection are also very expensive.

Very many clubs are associated with independent schools who provide a source of young recruits. Many are wealthy foundations owning clubhouses and artificial pitches and can access grants to help them run these facilities.

Rhyl, the oldest hockey club in Wales, founders of the Welsh Hockey Union and hosts of the first ever hockey international, has none of these advantages. Run on a shoestring, entirely by volunteers, the Club funds most of its activities: pitch hire for matches and training, most playing kit, post-match refreshments, travel costs, umpiring and coaching from membership fees and subscriptions, supplemented by whatever grant funding is available. In the past, the club has, quietly, met most of these costs for our less well-off members.

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### **Increased Facility Fees**

Since 2018-9 post match food costs (league rules oblige us to provide food) and pitch hire have increased by over 60% while the club has increased its player charges by much less, to lessen the impact on members. We regularly revise operations to ensure viability. However, the future of the club is financially threatened.

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### **Deteriorating Facilities**

We are lucky to have access to a reasonably new pitch which is still in good condition although the goals have seen better days. We use the local authority all-weather pitch and facilities at Rhyl Leisure Centre and are grateful that when we were forced to leave our previous facility at St. Asaph we were, eventually, provided with this new pitch (though we had to cope for a while with an old pitch on which we regularly had to 'chalk-in' the fading pitch markings). However, being forced to leave St. Asaph broke our link with the school where the facility was based. Moreover, the decision to replace the all-weather pitch there with a new 3G surface undermined the ability of that school - the only state school in the county to take hockey seriously - to provide quality hockey. Despite the best efforts of the staff at Rhyl Leisure Centre we do occasionally find that our access to the all-weather pitch is compromised by local youngsters coming on to the facility without permission to play football. The Leisure Centre does not always have the staff on duty to help us remove these intruders. Moreover, the move from St, Asaph also meant that we had to abandon our senior training sessions as Rhyl Leisure Centre did not have time slots accommodate us - all the available slots were taken up by local football teams.

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### **Reduction in (Hockey Wales) Support Staff**

We are starting to see the impact of reductions in Hockey Wales support staff despite the best efforts of the remaining staff to help us - responses to requests for help and information tend to be slower. We also note the proposed dramatic increases in affiliation fees for 2025-6 designed to make good shortfalls in funding at Hockey Wales. We are deeply concerned that these substantial increases will drive club members away.

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### **Competition for Grant Funding**

Grant funding is still accessible although bid-specific criteria now make it more difficult to access funding for general running costs. We are grateful that bids can still be made via the 'Be Active Wales Fund' for specific costs, notably umpire and coach training, safety equipment and so on. We have also been grateful for grants made by ASDA and by Denbighshire Local Authority via what was the 'Levelling Up' fund. However, the main cost increases have come in areas mentioned above, specifically venue hire, post-match hospitality and so on which normally fall outside the criteria for funding bids. Currently, two members of the club spend

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substantial amounts of time searching for potential sources of grant income – only to find that we do not fit the criteria that the great majority of funds demand.

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### **Additional Club-Specific Issues**

Rhyl is still one of the most socio-economically deprived areas in Wales (and the UK as a whole). While most of our members can afford the costs associated with playing hockey some cannot and the club, as mentioned above, still quietly helps to cover their costs. However, the increasing costs of running the club are starting to infringe our ability to do this – part of our bid to Denbighshire Local Authority earlier this year was to help cover these costs. Moreover, despite our unfailing efforts we have not yet been able to find potential sponsors from local businesses or other organisations.

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