

## **IFRCS43 Issy Michelson, Public Policy Manager, LTA & Tennis Wales**

---

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

[Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee](#)

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

Ymateb gan: Issy Michelson, Rheolwr Polisi Cyhoeddus, LTA & Tennis Cymru |  
Evidence from: Issy Michelson, Public Policy Manager, LTA & Tennis Wales

---

### **1. What impacts has reduced funding had on your organisation and sector so far?**

The LTA is the National Governing Body for tennis in Britain. Our vision is “Tennis Opened Up” and our mission is to transform communities through tennis. To do this, we’re focussing on three areas - making tennis welcoming, enjoyable and inspiring to everyone. Last year alone, over 5.6m adults and 3.6 million children played tennis in Britain.

The LTA is also the national governing body for padel. Across Britain there 150,000 padel players and around 450 courts nationwide. This has grown significantly since 2020 when we were recognised by UK Sports Councils as national governing body for padel, when there were 50 courts and approximately 6,000 players. With padel being the second most popular sport in Spain, it is clear there is significant potential for the growth across Britain, including amongst new and diverse audiences.

Tennis Wales is the National Governing Body for tennis and padel in Wales and a member of the LTA. Tennis Wales shares the LTA’s vision of tennis opened up in Wales, and work in partnership with the LTA, Sport Wales and sponsors to make tennis more relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable. In Wales 172,000 adults and 163,000 children played tennis in the past year, and the Tennis Wales network includes:

- 86 registered tennis clubs
-

- 6 community indoor tennis centres
- 200 accredited coaches
- 500 volunteers
- 93 park sites with courts

LTA funding to Tennis Wales totalled £566,551 in 2023, a significant increase from 2022 LTA funding which totalled £524,965. In addition to the direct investment into Tennis Wales, the LTA also invests significantly on top of this to grow tennis in Wales, through a range of Britain-wide programmes and support. For instance, the LTA Youth Schools programme provides free resources and training to teachers as well as a £250 voucher for equipment or 10 hours of coach support. Further support for tennis in Wales includes coach accreditation and development, venue support, safeguarding resources and case management, and facility investment. Welsh venues have accessed £250,000 of LTA Tennis Foundation Quick Access Loans in recent years and over £2m of LTA Tennis Foundation and UK Government funding through the Park Tennis Project.

Tennis Wales also receives direct funding from Sport Wales in the form of Sport Wales Core Funding. In 2023 this was a total of £330,500, an increase from 2022 which totalled £284,000. This reflects a change in Sport Wales's funding model to a latent demand approach based on national-level statistics, placing greater significance on race, gender, disability and deprivation. The LTA and Tennis Wales support the new model of funding for national governing bodies, allowing sports to grow participation and increase opportunities for less active groups.

In addition to core funding from Sport Wales, in 2023 Tennis Wales also received a £46,000 Sport Wales Cost of Living Grant and £8,047 of Sport Wales Development funding. Through the Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Culture, Heritage and Sport Fund, Tennis Wales has also received approximately £75,000 to grow the LTA SERVES programme amongst diverse ethnic communities in Wales.

With the reduction in funding for sport, however, has come a curb on Sport Wales's ambitions to invest in both Tennis Wales's "Tie-Break Fund" providing small grants to grow the sport with a particular focus on meeting unmet demand in geographical areas of Wales and amongst diverse and underserved communities, and Tennis Wales's individual grants which support players on the performance pathway. These funds are designed to help people from underserved communities' access and progress in tennis, who otherwise would not be able to. A reduction in funding would negatively impact participation

---

amongst the least active groups and could limit the progression of players on the performance pathway due to financial difficulty.

Tennis venues and other organisations involved in delivery of the sport in Wales also received £363,309 in National Lottery funding in 2022-23 from the Sport Wales, Be Active Wales Fund which offers grants from £300 to £50,000 for projects in Wales that intend to reduce inequality; create long-term sustainability or introduce new or different ways of operating. The Be Active Wales Fund directly benefits the grassroots of tennis in Wales, supporting clubs and community organisations.

Over the past three years, Sport Wales has also delivered c.£8m of Welsh Government capital investment in sport. The capital investment fund has, in many cases, successfully leveraged additional funding from partners such as the LTA Tennis Foundation, UK Government and local authorities. It has also significantly benefitted tennis facilities across Wales including:

- £300,000 contribution to the redevelopment of Wrexham Tennis Centre alongside UK Government Shared Prosperity Funding
- £177,000 match funding to transform park tennis courts in Cardiff, alongside LTA Tennis Foundation and UK Government Park Tennis Project funding
- £117,000 for court resurfacing and LED light conversion at Arfon Tennis Centre.
- £94,000 contribution to a £150,000 air hall for two new covered courts at Bridgend Lawn Tennis Club
- £137,000 for court resurfacing, LED lighting and court fixture replacements at Newport Tennis Centre, in addition to LTA Tennis Foundation and UK Government Park Tennis Project funding
- £1,150,000 to support 13 “Court Collaboration” schemes over two years to renovate multi-sport courts across Wales for Tennis, Netball and Basketball.

The Sport Wales capital investment scheme is due to end this financial year, which is a significant risk to the sustainability of tennis and sport facilities in the future, risking the growth participation in tennis and other sports in the future. For tennis participation to continue growing in Wales, high-quality facilities, including

---

more covered and indoor facilities are crucial to providing a place and opportunity to play.

Alongside the reduction in Welsh Government funding for sport, has come challenges from a recruitment perspective both within Tennis Wales, and across the Welsh sport sector. There has been an increasing trend of individuals within the sector moving to English sports organisations or out of sport completely over the past 12-18 months, with people citing better pay and conditions as a reason for leaving sport in Wales. Reduced funding for the sport is likely to exacerbate this situation – leaving sports organisations less likely to create new roles, and unable to recruit top talent.

While the LTA and Tennis Wales are grateful for the ongoing financial support of our sport by the Welsh Government and Sport Wales, in recent years there has been significant growth in participation with very similar levels of funding support available. Should this trend continue and spending per head decrease, then there is a real risk that growth may slow or even existing participation levels may not be sustained, due to a decrease in quality of provision.

## **2. What measures have you taken in light of it, such as changing what you do and how you do it?**

The reduction in Welsh Government funding for sport has presented challenges for Tennis Wales as an organisation and tennis as a sport in Wales, as there is a greater reliance on securing investment through private sponsors and partner investment. With the difficult economic situation, Tennis Wales's experience is that opportunities to secure commercial funding in sport are increasingly limited.

As a result of this, Tennis Wales has taken a number of measures including:

- Putting in place tougher and more stringent investment and support criteria for individuals and projects who receive Tennis Wales funding to develop our sport – this year alone Tennis Wales has had applications to twice the value of the funding available.
  - Managing expectations of securing grant funding for tennis venues in need of refurbishment work but without sinking funds, including deprioritising some works to maximise the chance of a grant being awarded.
-

- Compromising on Tennis Wales's ability to raise revenue for reinvestment due to our commitment to maintain the same level of bursary support for individuals from under-served communities to access education and training
- Increasing reliance on volunteers to support the further growth and sustainability of key venues including community indoor tennis centres, this risks overburdening volunteers, many of whom have limited time or lack experience in running facilities, and potentially decreasing the quality of provision.
- Existing Tennis Wales staff taking on even greater workloads and broader priorities to deliver business as usual, and investment in consultants to support with task and finish project-base work instead of recruiting permanent members of staff.
- Delaying Tennis Wales plans to launch a tennis business course, to better train and support people to work in our sport and help it grow on a sustainable footing.

**3. To what extent will these impacts be irreversible (e.g. venues closing, or specialist skills being lost rather than a temporary restriction in activities)?**

Over the past 18 months, Tennis Wales and the wider Welsh sport sector has seen a loss of staff to English sports organisations and out of the sport sector completely, often citing better pay and conditions as reasons for seeking new employment. This is a loss of skilled and often highly experienced sports sector staff which is irreplaceable like-for like and likely irreversible.

Our community indoor tennis centres in particular, are facing staff retention challenges, whilst experiencing increasing business and operational costs. The rising cost of construction and capital works have been crippling to aspirations to develop and improve existing tennis facilities, but most worryingly undermine the sustainability of sites due to businesses not holding sufficient sinking funds to maintain their existing facilities. While the impact on tennis facilities is not yet irreversible, many hold minimal reserves and future risks to their sustainability are real.

---

#### **4. What interventions would you like to see from the Welsh Government, beyond increased funding?**

The benefits of investment in sport are well known, from physical and mental health benefits to community cohesion. Sport Wales's Social Return on Investment Study of Sport found that for every £1 invested in sport in Wales there is a £4.44 return. The sport sector contributes £5.89bn in social value to Wales including £621m in healthcare savings. With less than half of adults in Wales doing physical activity on 2-4 days a week and 10% having done no physical activity in the last three months, there is significant potential to increase this healthcare saving through increasing participation in sport.

The case for continued investment in sport is clear, and Tennis Wales and the LTA agree that existing funding for sport must be protected. In particular;

- Sport Wales's existing core funding model for National Governing Bodies (NGBs), should continue to provide NGBs with funding based on data demonstrating latent demand, and placing greater significance on race, gender, disability and deprivation. The LTA and Tennis Wales believe that this approach will enable NGBs to grow participation in sport, and increase access to the least active groups in society.
- The Sport Wales capital investment scheme, due to end this financial year, should be extended and expanded to ensure investment in community sports facilities for years to come. To date the investments have delivered a huge positive impact on the quality and provision of sports facilities across Wales, both ensuring their sustainability for future generations and improving their offer to the local community. For tennis participation to continue growing in Wales, high-quality tennis and padel facilities, including more covered and indoor courts are crucial to providing a place and opportunity to play.

In addition to protecting funding for sport, the LTA and Tennis Wales are keen to work with Sport Wales and the Welsh Government to shape clearer and well-defined priorities for facility investment in sport across Wales and across sports. The increased Welsh Government capital investment through Sport Wales in recent years has been very welcome, but this could deliver even better outcomes with a sharper rationale for strategic investment. For example:

- Tennis Wales and the LTA has already carried out an audit of tennis and padel facilities across Wales to determine gaps in provision. The Welsh Government could use this alongside data from other sports to fully
-

capture existing provision and highlight areas which need strategic focus across Wales.

- Additional consideration could be given to how the Welsh Government can play a role in better leveraging the capital investment fund to unlock partner and private investment into sports facilities, to ensure that its own investment goes further.

We would also like to see increased cross-government working to enable sport organisations to work with other sectors to deliver shared outcomes, particularly amongst the education and public health agenda. This could be delivered with a cross-government taskforce including the sector, to better capitalise and coordinate opportunities.

With better advocacy for the power of sport, Welsh Government could create opportunities for sports bodies and organisations to support the delivery of shared outcomes through existing grant funding streams. Just one example of this, is the opportunity to coordinate the Welsh Government school building programme with NGBs, to ensure that new school sport facilities cater for the demand for specific sports facilities in that area. Furthermore, additional focus could be given to opening up existing school sports facilities for public use outside school hours – providing additional funding streams for school and access to sports facilities for local community.

## **5. To what extent do the impacts you describe fall differently on people with protected characteristics and people of a lower socioeconomic status?**

Inclusion sits at the heart of the LTA and Tennis Wales's shared vision of tennis opened up, and we work hard to maximise the opportunities for people with protected characteristics and from lower socio-economic groups to play tennis. We have a number of different schemes and programmes which target specific groups who are less likely to be active including:

- LTA SERVES – our industry leading sport for development programme aimed at children and young people aged 4-18. LTA SERVES takes tennis into the heart of local communities through training trusted community leaders to deliver tennis to those who may never have had the opportunity to play before, or thought the sport was for them. Through the Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Culture, Heritage and Sport Fund, Tennis Wales is deliver an accredited online anti-racist training course to 80 leaders across 40 current and new SERVES venues, provide
-

access to tennis for 360 young people from diverse ethnic communities, support 18 young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds to gain their Level 1 and Level 2 tennis coaching qualifications, and work with 12 grassroots community-based organisations to co-design and deliver 12 tennis festivals.

- LTA Open Court - our national scheme which actively promotes and delivers opportunities for disabled people to get involved in tennis and padel, providing venues with a range of resources including adaptive equipment, access to disability development experts, funding, marketing and communications support and more. LTA Open Court delivers learning disability, wheelchair, visually impaired, deaf and sensory tennis. We're also expanding our programme to support those with long-term health conditions such as mental health and dementia. There are 43 LTA Open Court venues in Wales.

With less investment in sport, however sports organisations are forced to take difficult decisions about what they can continue to invest in. While Tennis Wales and the LTA are committed to increasing the accessibility of tennis, there is a risk that opportunities for those from under-served communities or experiencing systemic disadvantage are reduced, if funding from the Welsh Government cannot be sustained.

**6. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?**

Improving opportunities to access tennis in underserved communities and amongst less active groups sits at the heart of the LTA and Tennis Wales vision of tennis opened up. We are very grateful to work closely with and have the support of the Welsh Government and Sport Wales to increasing participation in tennis so that everyone can access its benefits, and are committed to continuing to do so.

---