



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a **Llywodraeth Leol** **The Communities, Equality and Local Government** **Committee**

Dydd Mercher, 9 Mai 2012
Wednesday, 9 May 2012

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Peter Black	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Janet Finch-Saunders	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Mike Hedges	Llafur Labour
Mark Isherwood	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Gwyn R. Price	Llafur Labour
Kenneth Skates	Llafur Labour
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Gareth O. Jones	Cadeirydd, CPD Tref Caerfyrddin Chairman, Carmarthen Town AFC
Gwynfor Jones	Ysgrifennydd y Clwb, CPD Dinas Bangor Club Secretary, Bangor City FC
John Loosemore	Cadeirydd Annibynnol Corff Trwyddedu Clybiau Uwch- gynghrair Cymru Independent Chairman of the Licensing Body for Welsh Premier League Clubs
Mel Thomas	Ystadegydd Pêl-droed Football Statistician

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Rhys Iorwerth	Ymchwilydd Researcher
Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.29 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.29 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee. Full marks to everyone who remembered that we were in committee room 4 today. Well done. I remind Members around the table to switch off their mobile phones and pagers, as they interfere with the broadcasting equipment and can sometimes interfere with the translation feed. As we will be having a video-conference, I suggest that everything remains off so that the video-conferencing technology works. The committee operates bilingually, and there are headphones available for translation. Channel 0 provides the language of the floor and channel 1 provides the translation from Welsh to English. We are not expecting the fire alarm to operate, but if it does we will take our directions from the ushers outside who will take us to the safest point.

[2] There are no apologies, so we are a full committee. Do any Members wish to declare any interests before we start? I see that no-one does.

9.30 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i Uwch-gynghrair Cymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into the Welsh Premier League—Evidence Session

[3] **Ann Jones:** We will now continue our inquiry into the Welsh Premier League. We are being joined by Mel Thomas via video-conference, who is a football statistician. Mr Thomas, you are very welcome. Can you hear us?

[4] **Mr Thomas:** Yes, I can hear you fine, thank you.

[5] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Thank you for joining us and for your paper. Do you have any opening remarks to make before we go into questions?

[6] **Mr Thomas:** Not really. I have said everything that I feel to be important in the paper, so I am open to questions.

[7] **Ann Jones:** You state in your paper that there has been a vast improvement in the standard of football in the Welsh Premier League over the past 20 years. How have you reached that conclusion?

[8] **Mr Thomas:** Having watched the matches in the early seasons and monitored them all the way through over the 20 years, I can see quite a remarkable improvement in quality. You must remember that we are going back to 1992, when the league was formed, and things have developed both from a coaching point of view and in the standard of players that the clubs are signing. The coaching qualifications for the managers and their assistants these days have improved considerably, and that has been transferred to the play on the pitch.

[9] **Peter Black:** The Football Association of Wales acknowledged to us that more work needs to be done to improve the playing standards in the WPL in the future. In your view, what are the main steps that need to be taken for that to happen?

[10] **Mr Thomas:** Not all the coaches in the Welsh premier are as highly qualified as they could be. I realise that this would be quite an expensive move for these individuals to take but, as soon as possible, the clubs should get the highest quality qualifications for their coaches in order to maintain and improve the standards within the league.

[11] **Ann Jones:** Okay, we will move on to the competition format with questions from Rhodri Glyn and Bethan.

[12] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yn eich barn chi, a fu newid y fformat i 12 clwb yn 2010-11 yn llwyddiant?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: In your opinion, has changing the format to 12 clubs in 2010-11 been a success?

[13] **Mr Thomas:** Mae wedi bod yn llwyddiant hyd yn hyn. Y tymor diwethaf oedd y tymor cyntaf i'r fformat newydd gychwyn ar y caeau, felly. Roedd diddordeb mawr drwy gydol y tymor oherwydd bod tair cystadleuaeth wahanol. Mae'r cam cyntaf, sy'n mynd â ni at y Nadolig a'r flwyddyn newydd, wedyn, mae'r ail gam, lle mae pethau'n ailgychwyn, ac yna ar ddiwedd y tymor, mae'r gemau ail gyfle ar gyfer lle yng Nghynghrair Europa UEFA. Mae hynny'n creu diddordeb eto ar ddiwedd y tymor. Felly, mae cefnogwyr y gêm yn gallu gweld cystadleuaeth sy'n rhedeg drwy gydol y tymor.

Mr Thomas: It has been a success so far. Last season was the first season for this new format to be in use on the pitches, as it were. There was great interest throughout the season because there were three separate competitions. There is the first phase, which takes you up to Christmas and the new year, then there is the second phase, where things restart, and then, at the end of the season, there are the play-off matches for a place in the UEFA Europa League. That generates interest again at the end of the season. So, a supporter of the game can see a competition running throughout the whole of the season.

[14] Pan oedd dim ond 18 o glybiau yn y gynghrair a phawb yn chwarae ei gilydd ddwywaith, erbyn tri chwarter y ffordd drwy'r tymor, roedd y gystadleuaeth drosodd. Yr oedd rhwng y ddau neu dri o glybiau ar y brig a phedwar neu bump ar y gwaelod. Roedd y rhai yn y canol yn gwneud dim mwy na chwarae eu gemau tan ddiwedd y tymor. Felly, o ran hynny, mae wedi bod yn welliant, yn fy marn i.

When there were only 18 clubs in the league and when everyone played each other twice, three-quarters of the way through the season, the competition was over. It was just between the two or three clubs at the top and the four or five at the bottom. Therefore, those clubs in the middle of the table were just playing out their fixtures for the rest of the season. So, in that sense, it has been an improvement, in my opinion.

[15] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Mae peth o'r dystiolaeth yr ydym wedi'i derbyn yn awgrymu bod rhai pobl yn bryderus oherwydd gall clybiau fod yn chwarae yn erbyn ei gilydd hyd at wyth gwaith y tymor, os ydych yn cynnwys cystadlaethau cwpan, a bod hynny'n golygu bod pobl yn colli diddordeb. Dywedodd y gymdeithas bêldroed wrthym fod yr ystadegau'n dangos bod y niferoedd sy'n gwyllo wedi gostwng y tymor hwn. A ydych yn credu bod sail i'r pryderon hynny?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Some of the evidence that we have received suggests that some people are concerned because it means that clubs can be playing against each other up to eight times a season, if you include cup competitions, and that means that people lose interest. The football association told us that the statistics show that spectator numbers have fallen this season. Do you think that those concerns have any foundation?

[16] **Mr Thomas:** Rwy'n amau bod. Rhaid inni gofio bod cystadleuaeth y gynghrair ei hun yn golygu y bydd clybiau yn chwarae ei gilydd bedair gwaith, ond dim ond yn yr ail ran, os ydych yn deall yr hyn rwy'n ei feddwl. Hynny yw, mae pawb yn chwarae ei gilydd ddwywaith gyntaf, ac wedyn mae'r chwech isaf yn chwarae ei gilydd ddwywaith

Mr Thomas: I suspect that they do. We must bear in mind that the league competition itself means that sides play each other four times, but only in the second phase, if you understand what I mean. That is, everyone plays each other twice, and then the bottom six play each other twice again and the top six play each other twice again. The chance

eto a'r chwech uchaf yn chwarae ei gilydd ddwywaith eto. Dylid rhoi'r siawns o chwarae yr un clybiau eto mewn cystadleuaeth gwpan i'r naill ochr, achos cystadleuaeth gwpan yw honno a mater o lwc ydyw pwy yr ydych yn chwarae. Mae ffordd o amgylch hynny, wrth gwrs, drwy newid fformat y cwpanau a thrwy ddod â chlybiau o tu allan i'r gynghrair i mewn fel bod mwy o siawns o chwarae clybiau na fyddwch yn eu chwarae yn yr ail ran. Hwyrach y byddai hynny'n gwella pethau. Wrth edrych ymlaen, mae'n bosibl newid y fformat ond byddai hynny'n golygu cael 16 clwb yn chwarae ei gilydd ddwywaith a chynnal y gemau ail gyfle wedyn, ond mae i fyny i'r gynghrair ac i'r FAW ddatrys y broblem honno.

[17] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** A oes angen adolygiad ffurfiol nawr ein bod wedi cael dau dymor o hyn? A yw'n amser cynnal adolygiad o'r fath?

[18] **Mr Thomas:** Mae'n bosibl ei bod hi dipyn bach yn rhy fuan i wneud hynny. Byddwn i'n amau bod rhaid mynd ymlaen am tua dwy flynedd arall i weld beth sy'n digwydd. Rhaid inni gofio, wrth gwrs—ac nid wyf yn gwneud esgus wrth ddweud hynny—na all pobl fforddio mynd i weld cynifer o gemau ag yr oeddent oherwydd yr hyn sy'n digwydd gyda'r economi. Nid wyf yn credu bod hynny'n cael andros o effaith ar y gynghrair, ond mae'n rhywbeth y mae'n rhaid inni ei ystyried. Credaf mai'r peth gorau i wneud fyddai cynnal adolygiad ar ôl dwy flynedd arall, a cheisio penderfynu wedyn beth fydd yn digwydd ar ôl hynny, beth fyddai'r ffordd allan ohono, os oes rhaid, neu sut i newid.

[19] Rhaid cofio mai'r FAW ei hun oedd yn gwthio amdani pan ddaeth y gynghrair i lawr i 12 o glybiau. Roedd nifer o'r clybiau yn anhapus gyda hynny oherwydd colli chwe chlwb ar unwaith. I ddechrau, roedd yr FAW eisiau dim ond 10 clwb yn y gynghrair a datryswyd y broblem drwy setlo ar 12. Felly, rwy'n amau y bydd rhaid cynyddu nifer y clybiau yn y gynghrair i symud ymlaen o'r fformat hwn i fformat newydd.

[20] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yn Iwerddon, mae tymhorau gwahanol, ac maent yn chwarae yn yr haf. Mae John Deakin a Jonathan Ford

of playing the same clubs again in a cup competition should be put to one side, because that is a cup competition and who you play is just the luck of the draw. There is a way around that, of course, by changing the format of the cup games and by bringing clubs in from outside the league so that there is much more of a chance of playing clubs that you will not be up against in the second phase of the season. Perhaps that would improve the situation. Looking ahead to the future, it would be possible to change the format but that would mean having 16 clubs playing each other twice and then going to the play-offs, but it is up to the league and the FAW to solve that problem.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Is there any need for a formal review now that we have had two seasons of this? Is now the time to hold that kind of review?

Mr Thomas: It may be a little too premature to do that, and I think that we would need to continue for another two years or so to see what happens. We need to bear in mind, of course—and I am not making excuses here—that people cannot afford to go to watch as many games as they did in the past in light of the situation with the economy. I am not saying that that is having a huge impact on the league, but it is something that we need to bear in mind. I think that the best thing to do would be to hold a review after another two years, and try to decide then what will happen after that, what the way out of it would be, if necessary, or what needs to change.

You must remember that it was the FAW that pushed for it when the league came down to 12 clubs. Many of the clubs were unhappy with that because six clubs were lost in one fell swoop. Initially, the FAW wanted only 10 clubs in the league but the issue was resolved by settling on 12. So, I suspect that the number of clubs in the league will have to be increased if we are to move on from this format to a new format.

Bethan Jenkins: In Ireland, there are different seasons, and they play in the summer. John Deakin and Jonathan Ford

wedi dweud y byddent yn ffafrio treialu fformat o chwarae yn yr haf. Beth yw eich barn am hynny?

[21] **Mr Thomas:** Hwyrach ei bod hi'n werth trio hynny am ryw ddwy i dair blynedd, ond mae problemau yn dod o hynny o ran y cynghreiriau is, o dan y gynghrair genedlaethol. Ar y funud, credaf y byddai'n rhaid i'r rheini hefyd symud i chwarae yn yr haf oherwydd mae'n rhaid i glybiau ostwng a dod i fyny o'r ail reng er mwyn peidio â gadael i bethau aros yn yr unfan yn y gynghrair genedlaethol. Felly, byddai'n rhaid dod o hyd i ffordd o gloi i mewn y *promotion* a'r *relegation*, os gallaf ei ddweud felly.

[22] **Bethan Jenkins:** A oes gwaith wedi'i wneud i edrych i mewn i'r effaith ar y cynghreiriau eraill? Ni chafodd hynny ei grybwyll yn y dystiolaeth gan Jonathan Ford yr wythnos diwethaf.

[23] **Mr Thomas:** Nid wyf yn credu bod gwaith wedi'i wneud. Wrth gwrs, er mwyn symud tuag at chwarae yn yr haf, byddai'n rhaid i bob clwb yn y gynghrair fod o blaid hynny. Nes i hynny ddigwydd, nid wyf yn gweld llawer o bwynt trio datrys y broblem a fyddai'n dod wedyn. Mae'n broblem anferth i'w datrys.

[24] Rhywbeth arall sy'n mynd yn erbyn chwarae yn yr haf yw y cynhelir, bob hyn a hyn, bencampwriaeth Ewrop—a gynhelir eleni—a Chwpan y Byd yn yr haf. Felly, er nad oes cystadleuaeth o du'r uwch-gynghrair o ran y teledu a'r papurau newydd, bydd cystadlaethau mawr yn cael effaith ar faint o bobl fydd yn gwyllo'r gynghrair yn yr haf.

[25] Bydd yn anodd. Mae'r rhan fwyaf o chwaraewyr yn y gynghrair yn chwaraewyr rhan amser, a bydd eu teuluoedd eisiau mynd ar wyliau yn yr haf. Dim ond am gyfnod mae'r ysgolion ar gau. Felly, mae'n rhaid inni ofyn sut y bydd y chwaraewyr yn teimlo am hyn hefyd. Wrth symud i'r haf, efallai y byddwch yn colli chwaraewyr da oherwydd nad ydynt eisiau chwarae yn yr haf. Mae'n fwy o broblem na symud y dyddiadau; mae llawer o bethau i'w hystyried.

[26] **Mike Hedges:** From an answer that you gave earlier, I take it that you fully support

have said that they would be in favour of trialling a format of playing in the summer. What is your opinion on that?

Mr Thomas: I think that perhaps it would be worth trialling for about two or three seasons, but that would cause problems for the lower leagues, those below the national league. As it stands, I think that they would also have to move to playing in the summer because clubs have to be relegated and promoted from the second division so that you do not get stagnation in the national league. So, you would have to find a way of locking in the promotion and relegation, if I can put it in those terms.

Bethan Jenkins: Has any work been done on looking into the impact on the other leagues? That was not mentioned in the evidence from Jonathan Ford last week.

Mr Thomas: I do not think that any work has been done. Of course, to make that move to summer playing, all the clubs in the league would have to be in agreement. Until that happens, I do not see much point in trying to solve the problem that would arise. It is a substantial problem to solve.

Another factor against summer football is that, every now and again, the European championships—as is the case this year—and the World Cup are held in the summer. So, while there is no competition from the premiership for television and newspaper coverage, major tournaments will have an effect on the number of people watching the league in the summer.

It will be difficult. The majority of players in the league are part-time players, and their families will want to go on holiday in the summer. The schools only close for a certain period of time. So, we also need to ask how the players will feel about this. By moving to summer football, you may lose good players because they do not want to play in the summer. It is more of a problem than simply changing the dates: there are many issues to consider.

the money spent by the Welsh Football Trust on supporting managers and coaches to gain their UEFA licences. As regards the academy system, I know that the football league clubs and the premier club in Wales have academies, as do Welsh premier league clubs, but what more needs to be done to make the academies more successful and should more be done to liaise with colleges?

[27] **Mr Thomas:** The Welsh premier academies will benefit because the big clubs in England will snap up the highly talented players at a very young age—some of them before they are of secondary school age—as they have always done, for as long as I have been following football. Those players will then be taken into their systems, there they will be assessed and brought along, or rejected if they do not reach the required standard. The Welsh premier academies can snap up late developers—those that the clubs over the border, as well as Wrexham, Swansea and Cardiff, would not have been interested in at the time. The Welsh premier academies can develop the players through the high coaching qualifications that you mentioned earlier, and bring along this talent—not only for Welsh premier clubs, but also for them to improve their careers and possibly move on to professional football. That would enhance the strength of the national team in future years. Funding is a problem: it is becoming more expensive every year to run academies. In addition to the FAW and the Welsh Football Trust supporting the academies, we need funding from elsewhere to support what is, in effect, a community project, based on the local club.

[28] **Gwyn R. Price:** Good morning, Mel. You say that coverage by S4C is the best ever, and that coverage in north Wales by the *Daily Post* is excellent. However, you also say that the BBC's coverage is abysmal and that the *Western Mail* concentrates on Cardiff City and so on. Could the FAW or the Welsh Premier League do anything to address the general lack of coverage in the Welsh media? Can the WPL do anything to address low attendance at matches?

[29] **Mr Thomas:** I will address the question on the media first. I know for a fact that the Welsh Premier League has tried to persuade the *Western Mail* and the BBC to improve their coverage of the Welsh Premier League. Programmes like *Wales Today*, which feature mostly Cardiff, Wrexham and Swansea football clubs, should perhaps devote even a few seconds to the Welsh Premier League on Friday evenings, for instance. These programmes could just display a caption stating which matches are being played on the Friday night and on the Saturday. That sort of minimal coverage would be a great step forward.

9.45 a.m.

[30] As far as the *Western Mail* is concerned, its agenda is to supply information and news in relation to what its readership requires. I do not, for one minute, believe that the *Western Mail* is the national newspaper for Wales, as it purports to be. Its main selling area is along the south Wales coast, from Gwent to Carmarthen. It predominantly has a rugby emphasis, so we are competing against what some people would call our national sport—I would contest that view, but that is another story. The *Western Mail* has to cater for that readership. It would be an idea, perhaps, to try to encourage it to provide more previews rather than reports of matches. However, the Welsh Premier League has done all that it can to persuade these people, and I cannot see what more can be done without a change in policy by the BBC news department and by the *Western Mail*.

[31] As far as attendances are concerned, we are in a position where we have constantly, since the league started in 1992, been in the shadow of the English premier league. I do not know what it is like in south Wales, which has its own big clubs in Cardiff and Swansea, but in north Wales, truckloads of people go every weekend to watch Everton, Liverpool, Manchester City and Manchester United. Coachloads of these people disappear over the border. That is not going to change. We need to try to get those supporters not only to maintain their interest

in their chosen club but to take an interest in their local Welsh Premier League club as well. Perhaps we could do this by providing some financial incentive for them to attend Welsh Premier League games when they are not going to watch their preferred club.

[32] The issue of attendances, in general, is perhaps a bigger problem. We have to recognise that, when we are looking at average figures for a club over a season, we have to take into account—in comparison with towns and cities over the border—the fact that the populations of some Welsh towns are not that big. For instance, when Caersws Football Club was in the Welsh Premier League, its average attendance might be 310, which would probably equate to about 15% to 20% of the population of the area. If you did a similar breakdown of figures relating to the attendance of a match in Liverpool, the percentage would be much lower. So, we have to give context to the size of attendances at Welsh Premier League matches, based on population.

[33] We also have a situation at weekends of a lot of people playing and watching local football on Saturdays. From my own experience in north-west Wales, I know that there are local leagues that only have fixtures on Saturdays. Players, fans, club officials and match officials in those leagues would relish the chance of going to watch a Welsh Premier League match played on a Sunday or Friday. For last season, I conducted a quick survey of attendances on the three weekend days. Attendances at Friday night matches exceeded the average for Saturday and the average for the league as a whole throughout the season. That proves to me that, wherever possible, clubs should be encouraged to play—and should look at playing—Welsh Premier League matches on a Friday, where geography allows. Obviously, Port Talbot Town Football Club will not travel up to Broughton to play Airbus UK Broughton Football Club on a Friday night. However, it might be possible to play those matches on a Sunday. The average for Sunday games is slightly lower than that for Friday, but it far exceeds the Saturday average.

[34] **Ann Jones:** We move on to the issues of club resources, infrastructure and community contribution with Mark.

[35] **Mark Isherwood:** Bore da. Good morning. Given your statement that massive strides have been made in improving facilities at grounds, how do you respond to Tomi Morgan's statement in evidence to us that many grounds are pretty dilapidated? If you agree, what should be done about it?

[36] **Mr Thomas:** I am not really sure where Tomi's opinion that some of the grounds are dilapidated comes from. If you look at the majority of clubs' facilities these days, you will see that there has been a vast improvement, but the improvements should continue, and that depends on finance. At the moment, improvements to facilities at the grounds should be put on hold and we should be concentrating on making playing surfaces much better over the next two or three years before possibly returning to improving the overall facilities at the grounds themselves.

[37] A number of clubs have been toying with the possibility of putting in all-weather pitches. Newtown Football Club and Prestatyn Town Football Club are two clubs that have recently looked at this. Of course, funding for this is a problem. It is quite an expensive outlay at the beginning, but I believe that, with its pitch, The New Saints Football Club will get a full return on its outlay within the first seven years by using it as a community pitch, hiring the pitch out for local events and so on. Turning clubs into community-based clubs is a very important factor in this. Third generation pitches could help clubs financially and by improving playing standards. Not all players like to play on 3G pitches, but, looking forward, a break from the traditional grass pitches, particularly given our wet climate, should be considered. However, again, this should be part of a community-based programme. Clubs should be given some financial assistance to install these pitches in future should they so

desire. I think that they will probably lead to an improvement in playing standards, because the weather would not govern the state of the pitch.

[38] **Mark Isherwood:** Your comments about pitches have been endorsed by many witnesses who have commented on the poor quality of pitches. You referred to funding many times there. I am particularly interested in your comments about the community asset ultimately paying for itself over seven years. Where do you think the funding should come from? Do you have in mind any financial packages or structures that could meet the objectives you describe?

[39] **Mr Thomas:** One thing that has always irked me a bit—and, of course, this is my personal opinion—is that, in England, the Football Foundation gets high levels of funding from various sources, including the Westminster Government and the English Premier League itself. The money from the English Premier League comes from its very lucrative television deals. Although subscribers in Wales to the pay-per-view channels watch these and pay towards the money that Sky gives to the English Premiership for its coverage, it irks me a bit that none of that money comes back to Wales. We must also remember that matches, including Welsh Premier League matches, being played at times other than 2.30 p.m. and 3 p.m. on Saturdays can be affected by live games shown on Sky channels, ESPN and other pay-per-view channels. There is no compensation for this. That is something that the Welsh Government could take on board. It could make representations on the league's behalf.

[40] **Mark Isherwood:** Do you feel that the FAW itself should have a wider role to play, given its comments to us in evidence that it is cash-limited? Do you see a wider role for local commercial sponsorship or community fundraising to meet the community objectives you described?

[41] **Mr Thomas:** Community fundraising is something that can be arranged locally. Sponsorship is difficult these days because of the economic climate. We have seen what happened at Neath this season, where the company of the main sponsor hit some financial trouble and it was forced to pull out mid-season, which resulted in Neath losing its licence and being demoted. Over the next two or three years, commercial sponsorship is not going to be something that can be totally relied upon, not only from a national point of view, but from a local point of view. It depends upon which part of the country your club is based in. If it is in a very rural community, your chances of finding a big sponsor are quite remote and you need to rely on smaller sponsors giving smaller packages of money. It is difficult to judge where the money could come from, but I think that some form of co-ordination—perhaps as a joint venture between the FAW and the Welsh Government—could try to sort some of this out.

[42] **Mark Isherwood:** To what extent do you believe that FAW initiatives such as Grow Your Club and attempts to ensure that clubs become community hubs themselves have been successful?

[43] **Mr Thomas:** I think that success is beginning to show. It is quite a new initiative from the FAW. Most clubs are now beginning to take it on board. I know that Gareth Jones, who will be speaking to you later, has been pushing this at Carmarthen Town AFC, and it is becoming quite successful there. He will probably be able to give you more of a first-hand account from that point of view. I think that it is a good initiative. These days it is becoming commonplace for clubs to use Facebook, Twitter and so forth, both in Wales and over the border; therefore, it is a massive step forward, whereby people who are interested in the club, or who follow the club, can keep up to date with what is happening at the club.

[44] **Ann Jones:** Do you want to take the question on licences, Ken?

[45] **Kenneth Skates:** I have a double-barrelled question on this. Has the requirement for domestic and UEFA licences contributed in any way to improving the infrastructure of Welsh Premier League clubs, and, if so, how has it done so? Also, you mentioned earlier that corporate sponsorship will be very difficult to come by in future years, but public spending is also very tight. Am I right in assuming that you were proposing that the Welsh Government should spend additional sums on Welsh Premier League clubs?

[46] **Mr Thomas:** Yes, it was a double-barrelled question. I will take the second question first. Co-ordination is what we would be looking for. Any community projects being run by the Welsh Assembly Government could be keyed in, in part, to the local Welsh Premier League club, which would, itself, be adding money to the pot. That is one way that the Welsh Government could help. In terms of licensing, this licensing system is operated throughout Europe. The English premier league does not really use it to the letter, probably because most of its clubs are in severe debt and half of them would lose their licences. I know for a fact that in the Bundesliga in Germany—it also applies to their second league—this licensing system, whereby clubs are assessed on their financial status, has been in place since the late 1970s. Clubs have been demoted from the Bundesliga and from the second league, not on a regular basis, but when required. The fact that we continue with that keeps the clubs on the ball as far as their finances are concerned. What has happened to Neath is quite sad, but the need to monitor its finances is very important. With regard to overspending on players, a proposed cap is on the table. Licensing has improved the facilities and the way that the clubs are run. The clubs are much more professional in their administration at the moment and they are perhaps—I would not say ‘forced’, but they know which way to direct the funding that they have in order to maintain their licence, and this is a good idea. Part of the licensing involves coaching and academies. I think that licensing is a good idea, it works and it should be maintained for the future.

10.00 a.m.

[47] **Ann Jones:** On licensing, do you think that it is right for football clubs to be relegated because they do not have the domestic licence for financial reasons? For example, Neath finished mid-table this season, but has been sent out of the Welsh Premier League. Should it be based on footballing ability, if we are to improve the standards of football in the Welsh Premier League?

[48] **Mr Thomas:** The licensing applies to all the clubs in the league. It is the same playing surface for all of them. If 11 clubs can achieve that and one does not, we should not bow to the failed club.

[49] **Ann Jones:** Okay. So, are you saying that the licensing comes first and that footballing ability comes second?

[50] **Mr Thomas:** I am saying that the licensing is very important indeed. If a club wants to stay in the league, it has to gain that licence. Neath had a remarkable squad, which was very entertaining, but also very highly paid. Neath took a gamble, perhaps a dodgy one in this economic climate, by buying in expensive players and making a go of it. Had everything gone okay, it would still be in the league. Unfortunately, as I said, the main sponsor hit financial problems and was forced to remove some of the funding that had been allocated to the club. I am afraid that that is the be-all and end-all of it.

[51] **Ann Jones:** We will move on to the last section, and Janet and Joyce will take the questions.

[52] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Do you have any views on the FAW strategic plan, published in January 2012, and the way in which it relates to the WPL?

[53] **Mr Thomas:** The plan, overall, is an excellent strategy. The FAW's attitude towards the Welsh Premier League is improving every year and the strategy reflects that improvement. There was considerable opposition at the beginning from certain people on the FAW council to the formation of the league. I put this down to the fact that, at that time, we had one league in the north and one in the south of Wales. The formation of a Welsh Premier League virtually demoted those leagues to a second level. During the last 20 years, the possibility of a second division to the Welsh Premier League was mooted, but, again, that was voted out because it could mean the destruction of the top leagues in the north and south of Wales. These internal politics have eased considerably over the last five or six years and the support from the FAW as a body and as the elected council towards the league is improving. The strategy will keep this momentum going. It is important that the league is fully supported by the FAW. This strategy, which I believe was a five-year plan, is the first that has been put forward to cover Welsh football in general and I fully applaud it.

[54] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** You say that the Welsh Government should do its bit in supporting our premier league. What would be the most effective form of support that it could provide? What would you wish to see the Government doing in this respect?

[55] **Mr Thomas:** As was pointed out earlier, funding is at a premium. I think perhaps the Welsh Premier League could be supported in some of the ways that I have mentioned, especially as regards the pitches—some already-allocated money could be channelled into providing either the 3G pitches, as part of a community project part-funded by the clubs themselves and the local community, or, for those clubs that do not wish to go down the synthetic pitch road, perhaps various offices of the Welsh Government could assist from a consultation point of view on how to improve the grass pitches, drainage, and so on. I realise, as was said earlier, that funding is at a premium these days, where cuts are forced on us from all angles. I respect the fact that the Welsh Government is restricted in what it can provide, but, by possibly looking at what is already set up under the Welsh Government, the clubs themselves could be involved in some of those projects.

[56] **Ann Jones:** Joyce, will you take the next couple of questions?

[57] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. Good morning. I will ask about clubs playing in the English leagues. Can you expand on your comments that the Welsh Government should support Wales's independent position within FIFA? What specific actions should it be taking in this regard? What role does the WPL have to play in safeguarding this status?

[58] **Mr Thomas:** To me, the threat of the UK losing its privileged status of having the four countries represented independently with FIFA is constant. There was an instance, I remember, in 1990, before the formation of the Welsh Premier League, when it was actually voted on at the forty-seventh FIFA congress, and, as a result, the need to form our own premier league became paramount. The late Alun Evans took that on board and created a flagship competition for the Welsh FA. The fact that we have a Welsh Premier League shows that we are an independent nation in the world of football. Threats will continue to come from Africa and Asia regarding the privileged status of the UK countries. I am not saying this from any sort of bias, but England, for instance, contested the FIFA administration, shall we say, over various corruption issues, and the Welsh FA did not support England on that, and that sort of thing is very important indeed. Attention is drawn to the independence of the four countries by England creating, shall we say, problems—although they were justified in the corruption situation—and it is really something that we have to maintain. If we lose our national league through any circumstance that may arise in future, then I think that there is a threat of a FIFA congress voting us out of FIFA—one has to remember that, these days, for admission to FIFA, you have to be politically recognised by other countries. Now, whatever the Welsh Government is doing—I am fully supportive of devolution, and think that it should

be expanded—we are still not an independent country.

[59] The rules are there to be bent by people intent on destroying our independence and the independence of Northern Ireland and Scotland. If Scotland gains independence following a referendum, as may be the case, it will be a lot easier for these countries in Africa and Asia—and Asia itself is now becoming a very powerful voice in FIFA, and the countries there will want to get more control over the governance of FIFA—to get rid of Northern Ireland and Wales by grouping us with England than it would be for the four countries including Scotland. So, we have to look ahead.

[60] In that regard, the Welsh Government could do a great deal politically to enhance or support our independent status by really bringing it out when Ministers and various others working for the Welsh Government go to other countries. They can emphasise the independence that Wales already has, and not just in football matters. The Government needs to recognise the independence that we have and that we need to cherish it; otherwise, we will lose our national team and become just another area association of the English FA.

[61] **Joyce Watson:** Finally, I want to hear your views on the work that the Football Association of Wales and the WPL are undertaking to tackle racism and homophobia in football, and in reaching out to more diverse footballing communities, such as women, black and minority ethnic people and lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

[62] **Mr Thomas:** This is a very important matter. The Welsh Premier League has, for a number of seasons, been involved with the Show Racism the Red Card campaign and in events held at grounds and local schools by all Welsh premier clubs. We have recently seen how important stamping out racism in football is through various high-profile incidents in the Welsh Premier League and throughout Europe, too, where racist chants and other forms of racist abuse are quite prevalent. Fortunately, we have not really experienced that in Wales. The link with Show Racism the Red Card, with its continued involvement with individual Welsh premier clubs, goes a long way towards preventing this from happening in the future.

[63] **Joyce Watson:** Would you like to mention anything about women in football? The FAW referred to a significant development in women's football for next season, when a 12-team national league will be contested for the first time.

[64] **Mr Thomas:** That is an excellent idea, and the FAW has been looking at that over the past couple of seasons, with the northern and southern sections taking the initial step forward in forming a premier league for women. We need to remember that the local academies of Welsh premier clubs are open to both sexes and all ages. Again, that is an ideal move, linking the creation of a premier league for women with the existing Welsh premier academies.

[65] I cannot recall, but there may be one club currently in the women's premier league that is attached to a Welsh premier club. However, that could result in something like the Arsenal ladies' club, which is one of the strongest sides in England. It is a very positive move, and one that I applaud. We should remember that the late Alun Evans, the instigator of the Welsh Premier League, was fully supportive of this, and played a strong part in establishing a women's side at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, which is in the final against Wrexham next weekend. So, we should encourage and develop that. It is on a good course at the moment.

10.15 a.m.

[66] **Ann Jones:** We have run out of time, Mr Thomas, but I thank you for your evidence this morning. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of this evidence session to check it for

accuracy. Thankfully, the video-conferencing worked. Diolch yn fawr.

[67] The committee will now take a break until about 10.20 a.m. to clear the video-conferencing equipment. That gives us time for a quick coffee.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.15 a.m. a 10.21 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 10.15 a.m. and 10.21 a.m.*

Ymchwiliad i Uwch-gynghrair Cymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into the Welsh Premier League—Evidence Session

[68] **Ann Jones:** I reconvene this meeting of the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee. If you have switched your mobile phone on during that brief break, could you please switch it off again, as it affects the translation and broadcasting equipment?

[69] I welcome our guests for this second session in our inquiry into the Welsh Premier League: Gareth Jones, chairman of Carmarthen Town Association Football Club, and Gwynfor Jones, club secretary at Bangor City Football Club. You are both very welcome. I thank Carmarthen Town for its paper, and I thank you both for agreeing to come to talk to us to answer some of the questions that the committee might have. I do not know whether you have any brief opening remarks, or whether you want to go straight into questions to get it over and done with. Do you want to make a brief opening statement?

[70] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** It is an honour to have been invited here today. I have been secretary of Bangor City for the past four years, and a supporter since the age of four, which was about 40 years ago. It is an honour to be in this position today. We have seen the league develop over the past 20 years, and we are hoping that this inquiry will help us to move the league forward even further.

[71] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Diolch yn fawr ichi am y gwahoddiad. Rwy'n falch iawn bod y Cynulliad yn dangos diddordeb yn Uwch-gynghrair Cymru. **Mr Gareth Jones:** Thank you very much for the invitation. I am very pleased that the Assembly is showing an interest in the Welsh Premier League.

[72] **Ann Jones:** You touched on the standard of football and on moving the league on, and I wonder whether you think, as the people at the sharp end, as chairmen and club secretaries, that the standard of football in the Welsh Premier League has improved over the 20 years in which the league has been formed.

[73] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** We had this debate while we were waiting in the room next door. I think it depends on where the clubs have come from. Bangor City came from the English non-league system, and we took a decision to come into the Welsh system 20 years ago, and we saw an immediate dip in the quality of the football and the facilities that we were playing with, but, over those 20 years, the facilities have improved greatly across the board. In north Wales, we have the honour of having a new ground at Nantporth in Bangor, which housed the Welsh cup final on Saturday. I do not think that we would have been in that position had we stayed in the English system. So, after an initial dip in the quality of the football, the standard of the facilities improved, and the standard of the football is improving as well. From Bangor City's point of view, we dropped down from the English non-league system to what we thought was a worse level of football, but it is on a par now, I would say, with the English conference league. We have played pre-season friendlies against the likes of Chester City and beaten them, so I think that the standard has improved, and we look forward to improving it further. You need the bigger clubs to be in. The likes of Rhyl and Caernarfon Town need to be in the league to make the league stronger—so that we can beat them,

basically. [*Laughter.*]

[74] **Ann Jones:** You are testing my patience there, Mr Jones.

[75] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** Generally, for the league to improve, we have to have the so-called bigger clubs in the league to improve not only the standard, but also the infrastructure.

[76] **Ann Jones:** Gareth, do you have anything to add?

[77] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Fel y dywedais, rydym yn dod o gyfeiriad gwahanol. Rydym wedi gweithio ein ffordd lan y cynghreiriau, ac rydym wedi gwella yn raddol dros y blynyddoedd ac wedi cyrraedd y safon uchaf posibl yng Nghymru. Rydym wedi gweld gwelliannau mawr i gyfleusterau ac ati. Mae safon y chwaraewyr a'r hyfforddi wedi gwella. Mae'n drueni nad ydym yn gallu denu torf i ddilyn y gêm. Mae hynny'n broblem. Tan ein bod yn datrys y broblem honno, bydd yn anodd i'r clybiau gynnal eu hunain.

Mr Gareth Jones: As I said, we have come from a different background. We have worked our way up the various leagues and we have improved gradually over the years and we have reached the highest standard possible in Wales. We have seen major improvements to facilities and so on. The quality of players and the coaching has improved. It is a shame we cannot attract a crowd to follow our team. That is a problem. Until we solve that problem, it will be difficult for clubs to sustain themselves.

[78] Rwy'n cytuno â'r hyn a ddywedodd Gwynfor. Pe baem yn gallu perswadio tîm fel Merthyr, sy'n ganolbwynt i bêl-droed ac yn frwdfrydig iawn, i ymuno ag Uwch-gynghrair Cymru a chwarae yn erbyn Rhyl, er enghraifft—i weld sut byddai'r *fans* yn dod ymlaen gyda'i gilydd—byddai hynny'n codi safon pêl-droed a chynyddu'r sylw a roddir i'r gynghrair.

I agree with what Gwynfor said. If we could persuade a team such as Merthyr, which is a football hotbed and very enthusiastic about the game, to join the Welsh Premier League to play against Rhyl, for example—to see how the fans get on—it would raise the standard of football and improve coverage of the league.

[79] **Ann Jones:** There could be some Bangor and Rhyl football banter here, but I will resist and try to be neutral. Peter, would you like to carry on with the questioning?

[80] **Peter Black:** In your view, has the WPL clubs' performance improved over the seasons? If not, what needs to be done to assist them to raise standards and do better?

[81] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** Bangor City, with all due respect to Carmarthen, is in Europe for a fifth consecutive season.

[82] **Ann Jones:** Would you like to repeat how many consecutive seasons again, just to make sure that it is on the record? [*Laughter.*]

[83] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** Pump.

Mr Gwynfor Jones: Five.

[84] We have been fortunate in some seasons to go through from the first qualifying round to the second. Last season was a bit of an embarrassment, to say the least. We went to Helsinki and faced a different level of football to what we had played before. While we continue with the current structure, I cannot see how things will improve. I was speaking to Neville Powell, our manager, last night about arranging pre-season friendlies before we go to Europe. The draw for the UEFA competition is on 25 June and the first leg will be played 10 days later on 5 July, which gives us very little time for pre-season friendlies before then. The clubs we would like to play do not return from their pre-season break until 1 July, so they are

not going to be ready for games. Irish teams play summer football and we would look for support from the WPL or the FAW to financially assist us to get a Celtic competition going with Irish clubs. We could go over there and play a couple of games, and they could come over here and play a couple of games.

[85] We have problems with the infrastructure of our facilities. We are fortunate in Nantporth to have a brand-new stadium and pitch with a full irrigation system with sprinklers and so on. However, teams in the lower leagues in Wales play on rock-hard pitches, which, in some cases, is more dangerous than playing on icy pitches. From Bangor City's point of view, the problem is that we will not play any friendlies before the big European game, which means that our chances of going through, to be honest, will be pretty slim. We will have been in pre-season training for three to four weeks, but we will not have played any games. If we sign any players in this pre-season period, they will not have a chance to play together in order to gel. The only way forward that I can see is assistance to fund a Celtic tournament.

[86] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Mae'r ddau ohonoch wedi awgrymu bod timau a allai ymuno â'r gynghrair, gan gryfhau'r gynghrair o ganlyniad. Rydym wedi derbyn tystiolaeth oddi wrth Gymdeithas Bêl-droed Cymru fod nifer y gwylwyr wedi lleihau yn ystod y tymor hwn. Gareth, soniaist am dystiolaeth yn codi o ymchwil a wnaed gyda chefnogwyr Caerfyrddin sy'n awgrymu nad yw'r fformat o 12 tîm yn gweithio. A yw'n bryd newid y fformat hwnnw? Beth fyddai'r fformat delfrydol?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Both of you have suggested that there are teams that could join league, thereby strengthening the league. We have received evidence from the Football Association of Wales that spectator numbers have reduced this season. Gareth, you mentioned evidence from research conducted with Carmarthen supporters, which suggests that the 12-team format is not working. Is it time to change that format? What would be the ideal format?

[87] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Pan gyflwynwyd y fformat 12 tîm, roeddwn yn cytuno, i raddau, a'r egwyddor oherwydd roedd timau yn y gynghrair ar y pryd nad oeddent yn ddigon uchelgeisiol. Nid oeddent yn gwella eu cyfleusterau. Roeddent yn cadw i fynd, yn cadw mas o'r *relegation zone* ac yn ddigon cysurus. Roedd angen gwneud rhywbeth am y rheini, ac fe lwyddwyd i wneud hynny drwy'r fformat 12 tîm. Roeddem yn fodlon rhoi tri thymor i weld sut y byddai'n mynd. Mae dau dymor wedi bod ac mae'r cefnogwyr yn bendant wedi cael digon o weld yr un tîm pedair gwaith.

Mr Gareth Jones: When the 12-team format was introduced, I agreed, to some extent, with the principle because there were teams in the league at that time that were not ambitious enough. They did not improve their facilities. They kept going and kept out of the relegation zone and were comfortable enough. Something needed to be done about those, and that was done through the 12-team format. We were willing to give it three seasons to see how it went. We have had two seasons and the supporters have certainly had enough of seeing the same team four times.

10.30 a.m.

[88] Eleni, gwnaethom chwarae Port Talbot, er enghraifft, chwe gwaith. Rwy'n gwybod bod Port Talbot wedi chwarae Afan Lido saith gwaith. Felly, mae 12 yn rhy fach, ac rwy'n credu bod Gwynfor yn cytuno mai 16 yw'r nifer ddelfrydol. Rwy'n edmygu timau'r gogledd, a dweud y gwir, am eu bod dipyn yn fwy uchelgeisiol na'r timau yn y de o safbwynt cyfleusterau. Mae hynny'n broblem hefyd, am fod y timau nad ydynt

This year, we played Port Talbot, for example, six times. I know that Port Talbot has played Afan Lido seven times. So, 12 is too small a number, and I think that Gwynfor agrees that 16 is the ideal number. I admire the north Wales teams, to be honest, as they are quite a bit more ambitious than the south Wales teams when it comes to facilities. That is also a problem, because the teams that do not want to come up to the WPL stop teams

eisiau dod lan i Uwch-gynghrair Cymru yn rhwystro timau fel Hwlfordd, sydd wedi cael y cyfleusterau ac wedi gweithio tuag at wneud hyn, rhag dod yn ôl i mewn i'r uwch-gynghrair. Mae arnom eisiau timau fel Hwlfordd, y Rhyl ac, fel roeddwn yn ei awgrymu, Merthyr. Felly, mae eisiau edrych ar hyn eto.

[89] Yr hyn sy'n anodd yw nad ni sy'n penderfynu. Mae pleidlais euraidd gan y gymdeithas bêl-droed, ac os ydym ni'n awgrymu rhywbeth nad yw ei eisiau, dyna ddiwedd arno yn syth. Felly, nid oes gobaith gennym i symud ymlaen. Fodd bynnag, byddwn yn codi'r pwynt eleni—ac rwy'n credu y bydd cefnogaeth gan y timau—fod eisiau mynd i o leiaf 16 tîm.

[90] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** Rwy'n cytuno â Gareth ar hynny. Nid oeddem o blaid 12 tîm. Dywedasom ar y dechrau y dylai fod 16 tîm, yn ddelfrydol. Yn fwy na hynny, mae gennym y chwe thîm sy'n chwarae y tu allan i Gymru. Yr hyn sy'n siom i ni, er enghraifft, yw'r ffaith bod Merthyr, a wnaeth, hyd y gwn i, chwalu flwyddyn yn ôl, wedi cael yr hawl i ailddechrau yng nghynghreiriau Lloegr, pan ddylai'r gymdeithas fod wedi dweud, 'Na, dydych chi ddim yn cael. Rydych chi'n dod i chwarae o dan strwythur Cymru. Dyna'r ffordd ymlaen.' Mae timau fel Bae Colwyn a Wrecsam wedi cael siawns i brofi eu hun, ond maent wedi methu symud ymlaen i'r gynghrair. Dylai'r gymdeithas ddweud, 'Rydych wedi cael hyn a hyn o flynyddoedd i wella'ch safon, ond dydych chi ddim wedi gwneud. Y ffordd ymlaen, er mwyn cryfhau'r gynghrair, yw i chi chwarae yng nghynghrair Cymru'.

[91] Yn ogystal, fel y dywedodd Gareth, mae gennych dimau yn chwarae ei gilydd chwech neu saith o weithiau yn y tymor. Nid yw'r cefnogwyr yn mynd i dalu £7 neu £8 i fynd i wyllo gêm yn erbyn yr un tîm wythnos ar ôl wythnos. Mae gennych gwpan y gynghrair, ond nid oes gan neb ddiddordeb ynddo. Pam na ellid ei wneud yn fwy a'i wneud yn fath o *invitation cup*, gan ddod â chlybiau fel y Rhyl, Caernarfon, Hwlfordd a Phen-y-bont—sydd â goleuadau—i'r gystadleuaeth i ddangos y safon y mae angen ei chyrraedd? Drwy beidio â chyrraedd y safon honno, maent yn nadu i dimau fel

such as Haverfordwest, which has the facilities and has worked towards the move, from re-entering the league. We need teams like Haverfordwest, Rhyl and, as I suggested, Merthyr. So, we need to review this system.

What is difficult is that the decision is not ours to take. The FAW has a golden vote, as it were, and if we suggest something that it does not want, that puts an end to it straight away. So, we have no hope of moving forward. However, we will certainly be proposing this year—and I think that there will be support from the teams—that the number needs to go up to at least 16 teams.

Mr Gwynfor Jones: I agree with Gareth on that. We were not in favour of having 12 teams. We said from the outset that it should be 16 teams, ideally. Furthermore, we have the six teams playing outside Wales. What is disappointing for us, for example, is that Merthyr, which, as far as I know, was liquidated last year, was given the right to start again in the English leagues, when the FAW should have said, 'No, you can't do that. You're coming to play in the Welsh structure. That's the way forward.' Teams such as Colwyn Bay and Wrexham have had the chance to prove themselves, but they have failed to progress into the league system. The FAW should now say, 'You've had so many years to improve, but you haven't done so. The way forward, in order to strengthen the league, is for you play in the Welsh league'.

In addition, as Gareth said, you have teams playing each other six or seven times a season. The supporters are not going to pay £7 or £8 to go and watch a game against the same team week after week. You have the league cup, but no one has any interest in it. Why not expand that and make it a kind of invitation cup, bringing in clubs such as Rhyl, Caernarfon, Haverfordwest and Bridgend—which have floodlights—to demonstrate the standard that needs to be reached? If teams do not aspire to reach that standard, they prevent teams such as Haverfordwest and Rhyl from going up to the

Hwlffordd a Rhyl fynd i fyny i Uwch-gynghrair Cymru, a dylai'r lleill fynd i lawr. Os oes tîm yn dechrau'r tymor yn yr Huws Gray Alliance nad yw'n dymuno symud ymlaen i Uwch-gynghrair Cymru o ganlyniad i ennill y gynghrair wreiddiol, dylai gael ei gosbi am hynny a mynd i lawr i gynghrair is. Dyna fy marn i, achos maent yn stopio'r clybiau hyn rhag datblygu.

[92] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Pe bai cynnig yn mynd ymlaen i newid y fformat a'i fod yn derbyn cefnogaeth y mwyafrif o glybiau a bod y gymdeithas bêl-droed yn gwrthwynebu hynny a defnyddio'i phleidlais euraidd er mwyn ei atal, a ydych yn meddwl y byddai'n bryd cael gwared ar y bleidlais euraidd honno?

[93] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Yn bendant. Un o'r pethau y soniais amdanynt yn y papur oedd bod diffyg parch, mewn ffordd, gan y gymdeithas bêl-droed at Uwch-gynghrair Cymru. Mae pobl dda yn y gymdeithas bêl-droed, ond roeddent yn rhan ohoni cyn i Uwch-gynghrair Cymru ddechrau nid oes ganddynt brofiad yn rhedeg clybiau Uwch-gynghrair Cymru ac felly rydym yn colli mas gan nad oes gennym lais digon cryf yn y gymdeithas bêl-droed. Tan fod hynny'n digwydd, ni allwn wella'r hyn sydd gennym. Mae eisiau ei wneud yn llawer mwy deniadol, a'r clybiau sy'n gwybod orau sut mae gwneud hynny, nid y gymdeithas bêl-droed, yn fy marn i. Efallai fod Gwynfor yn anghytuno â rhai pethau.

[94] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** Na, rwy'n cytuno â'r hyn a ddywedodd Gareth. Y broblem sydd gennym yn y gymdeithas, o'm profiad i, yw bod gennych bobl yno sydd â buddiant mewn mwy nag un gynghrair. Dylai fod rheol sy'n dweud taw un gynghrair yn unig y ceuch chi ddelio â hi. Fel arall, bydd gennych *conflict of interest*. Yn y gogledd, er enghraifft, mae gennym berson sy'n gweithio gyda chynghrair Môn, cynghrair Gwynedd, cynghrair y Welsh Alliance, a chynghrair Cymru—un person yn gweithio gyda'r pedair cynghrair hynny. Mae gwrthdaro buddiannau yno. Bydd rhywun yn y sefyllfa honno yn pleidleisio dros y clybiau a fydd yn ei gefnogi fwyaf. Rhaid i bobl ddechrau sylweddoli mai Uwch-gynghrair Cymru yw'r brig—yno yr ydych eisiau bod. Rhaid ymadael â phobl y

WPL, and therefore they should be relegated. If a team starts the season in the Huws Gray Alliance but does not want to progress to the WPL should it win that league, it should be penalised and be relegated to a lower league. That is my opinion, because they are stopping these clubs from developing.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: If a proposal to change the format goes ahead, gets the support of the majority of clubs and the FAW opposes that and uses its golden vote in order to prevent that from happening, do you think it would be time to get rid of that casting vote?

Mr Gareth Jones: Certainly. One of the things I mentioned in the paper was that there is a lack of respect, in a way, from the FAW towards the Welsh Premier League. There are excellent people in the FAW, but they were there before the WPL was established they have no experience of running clubs in the WPL, and so we are losing out because we do not have a strong enough voice in the FAW. Until that happens, we cannot improve what we have. We need to make it much more attractive, and it is the clubs that will know how best to do that, not the FAW, in my opinion. Gwynfor may disagree with certain things.

Mr Gwynfor Jones: No, I agree with what Gareth said. The problem that we have with the FAW, from my experience, is that there are people there who have an interest in more than one league. There should be a rule that you can only be involved with one league. Otherwise, you will have a conflict of interest. In north Wales, for example, we have someone who is involved in the Anglesey league, the Gwynedd league, the Welsh Alliance league and the Welsh league—one person is involved with those four leagues. There is a conflict of interest there. Someone in that position will vote for the clubs that will support them most. People have to start realising that the Welsh Premier League is the zenith—that is where you want to be. We have to move away from the

suit brigade yn y gymdeithas—pob parch iddynt—sydd yno er eu mwyn eu hunain, a chael pobl sydd yno er mwyn Uwch-gynghrair Cymru, ac er mwyn pêl-droed yng Nghymru yn fwy na dim byd arall.

[95] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Fe edrychwn ymlaen â diddordeb i weld beth sy'n digwydd i'r cynnig y byddwch yn ei gyflwyno i Gymdeithas Bêl-droed Cymru.

[96] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rydych wedi sôn eisoes am y cysyniad o gynnal twrnament Celtaidd yn yr haf. Gofynnais i Mel Thomas ac i'r FAW ynglŷn â threialu fformat haf. Gwn y byddai hynny'n anodd o ran cystadlaethau mwy, ond a fyddai diddordeb yn hynny i geisio gweddnewid pêl-droed? A fyddai'n helpu drwy gael pobl i ddod mas i wyllo am fod y tywydd efallai'n well, neu a fyddai hynny'n dda i ddim i chwaraewyr a fyddai am fynd i ffwrdd ar eu gwyliau?

[97] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** Yr ateb syml o ran Clwb Pêl-droed Dinas Bangor yw 'na' i bêl-droed yn yr haf. [*Chwerthin.*] Mae gennym resymau dros hynny. Mae'r rhan fwyaf o'n chwaraewyr yn dod o ochrau Caer, Lerpwl a Manceinion—mae gennym hogiau lleol hefyd. Pe baem yn symud i bêl-droed haf yng Nghymru, ble bydd hynny'n gadael yr is-gynghreiriau? Byddai'n rhaid iddynt wneud yr un peth. Fel arall, cewch chi rai'n chwarae i ni dros yr haf ac yn chwarae i glybiau eraill drwy'r gaef.

[98] Y peth arall yw'r strwythur. Sut y byddai hynny'n effeithio ar symud i gynghrair uwch neu is? Nid yw'n rhywbeth y gallwch ei wneud dros nos i Uwch-gynghrair Cymru yn unig.

[99] Hefyd, mae safon y caeau i'w hystyried. Fel y dywedais gynnau, Airbus a ni yw'r ddau glwb yn unig sydd â system *irrigation* a *sprinklers*. Efallai fod y tywydd yn braf ond, pedair blynedd yn ôl, cafodd gêm a oedd i'w chynnal yn Llangefni yn yr haf ei gohirio am fod y cae'n rhy galed. Hyd nes y cewch yr arian i wneud y caeau'n well a chael system *irrigation*, ein hateb syml ni fel clwb yw 'na'.

[100] Nid hynny'n unig ydyw. Rydych yn

association's suit brigade—with all due respect to them—who are out for themselves and have people who look out for the WPL, and for football in Wales more than anything else.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: We look forward with interest to seeing what happens with your proposition to the Football Association of Wales.

Bethan Jenkins: You have already mentioned the concept of holding a Celtic tournament in the summer. I asked Mel Thomas and the FAW about trialling a summer format. I know that that would be difficult in terms of bigger competitions, but would there be interest in that to try to transform football? Would it help by getting people to come out to watch because the weather would perhaps be better, or would it be unhelpful for players who may want to go away on their holidays?

Mr Gwynfor Jones: The simple answer from Bangor City FC is 'no' to summer football. [*Laughter.*] We have reasons for that. Most of our players come from the Chester, Liverpool and Manchester areas—we also have local lads. If we were to move to summer football in Wales, where will that leave the lower leagues? They would have to follow suit. Otherwise, you would have some of them playing for us over the summer and for other clubs through the winter.

The other thing is the structure. How will that affect promotion and relegation? It is not something that you can do overnight to the Welsh Premier League alone.

Also, there is the condition of the pitches to consider. As I said earlier, Airbus and we are the only two clubs with irrigation and sprinkler systems. The weather may be fine but, four years ago, we had a summer game against Llangefni postponed because the pitch was too hard. Until you get the funding to improve the pitches and install irrigation systems, the plain answer from us is 'no'.

It is not just that. You are talking about

siarad am drafaelio o'r gogledd i'r de. I ddod o Fangor, rhaid mynd drwy Borthmadog, sy'n dref brysur yn yr haf. Mae mwy o draffig ar y lonydd yn yr haf; mae pobl ar eu gwyliau, a hyn a'r llall. Mae dod o Fangor i Hwlfordd yn cymryd pum awr, a gallwch adio hanner awr neu awr, os nad mwy, at hynny yn ystod yr haf. Felly, mae gennym resymau dros beidio â chwarae yn yr haf.

travelling from the north to the south. To get from Bangor, you have to go through Porthmadog, which is a busy town in the summer. There is far more traffic on the roads in summer, with people on their holidays among other things. Getting from Bangor to Haverfordwest can take five hours, and you can add a good half hour or hour, if not more, to that during the summer. So, we have reasons for not playing in summer.

[101] Rwy'n draddodiadol; wedi gwyllo pêl-droed ers fy mod yn bedair oed, i mi, mae'r tymor pêl-droed yn mynd o fis Awst i fis Mai. Nid wyf yn hapus nad oes gennym bêl-droed i'w gwyllo o ail benwythnos mis Mai yng Nghymru, gan fod y tymor wedi gorffen ers tair wythnos yma. Iawn, cawsom Gwpan Cymru'r penwythnos diwethaf, ond mae'r tymor yn gorffen yn rhy gynnar, ym mis Ebrill. Dylai'r tymor pêl-droed fynd o fis Awst i fis Mai, achos un traddodiadol ydw i—rwy'n dangos fy oed. [*Chwerthin.*]

I am a traditionalist; I have followed football since I was four years old, and the football season runs from August to May. I am not happy about there being no football to watch in Wales from the second weekend of May, because the season ended three weeks ago. Okay, we had the Welsh Cup last weekend, but the season has finished too early, in April. I believe that the football season should run from August to May, because I am a traditionalist—I am showing my age. [*Laughter.*]

[102] **Ann Jones:** There we are: Bangor and Rhyl agree.

[103] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Byddai Clwb Pêl-droed Tref Caerfyrddin yn cytuno â'r rhan fwyaf o sylwadau Gwynfor. Rydym wedi holi ein gwirfoddolwyr—dyna air pwysig—gan mai hwy sy'n rhedeg ein clybiau pêl-droed yn bennaf. Mae'r rhan fwyaf ohonynt yn mynd ar eu gwyliau yn ystod yr haf—er y byddai'n ddoethach iddynt fynd yn y gaeaf, oherwydd ei bod yn rhatach, ond nid oes gan hynny ddim byd i'w wneud ag ef.

Mr Gareth Jones: Carmarthen Town AFC would agree with most of Gwynfor's comments. We have asked our volunteers—there is an important word—as it is they who mostly run our football clubs. The majority of them take their holidays in the summer—although it would be wiser for them to go in the winter, when it is cheaper, but that has nothing to do with it.

[104] O edrych ar ein torfeydd, maent yn is ym mis Awst nag ydynt ym mis Rhagfyr. Mae'n dibynnu, wrth gwrs, ar bwy yr ydych yn ei chwarae.

Looking at our gates, they are lower in August than in December. It depends, of course, on who you are playing against.

[105] O ran y traffig, roedd sôn am Borthmadog, ond mae ffordd osgoi yno—mae'n amlwg dy fod di heb fod yno ers sbel, Gwynfor.

As for traffic, Porthmadog was mentioned, but there is a bypass there—you clearly have not been there for a while, Gwynfor.

[106] O ran y Drenwydd, hyd yn oed ganol gaeaf, mae mynd drwyddi'n dipyn o broblem. Rydym yn tueddu teithio drwy'r Drenwydd ar gyfer pob gêm; ni fyddem yn ffansio gwneud hynny ganol mis Awst—bydd y caeau'n galed hefyd.

Where Newtown is concerned, even in the middle of winter, getting through the town is a bit of a problem. We tend to travel through Newtown for every game; we would not fancy doing that in the middle of August—the pitches will be hard, too.

[107] Rydym yn cynnig fformat o ran

We are proposing a format to play games

cynnal gemau o amgylch gŵyl y banc ym mis Awst. Rwy'n gwybod fy mod yn sôn am draffig eto, ond mae'n gyfle da inni hysbysebu'r gynghrair drwy gael gemau ar y nos Wener, y dydd Sadwrn a'r dydd Llun. Mae eisiau inni edrych ar sut mae'r tymor yn cael ei strwythuro, nid pryd rydym yn chwarae. Sut mae addasu'r strwythur sydd gennym yn awr?

[108] Yr hyn sy'n anffodus i dimau megis Bangor yw'r busnes Ewrop. Ni allaf weld ateb i hynny. Mae sôn am gystadleuaeth Geltaidd, a gallai timau Ewrop chwarae yn erbyn ei gilydd. Gallai Cymdeithas Bêl-droed Cymru roi cefnogaeth a thalu iddynt aros yng Nghaerdydd fel bod y timau yn gallu mynd. Gwn fod problem o ran chwaraewyr sy'n gweithio, ond mae'n rhaid inni edrych ar hynny.

[109] Soniodd Gwynfor am gwpan y gynghrair. A ydym yn defnyddio ein gwyliau banc yn effeithiol? Nid oes gemau ar nifer o wyliau banc. Daeth 700 o bobl i weld ein gêm yn erbyn Aberystwyth Nadolig diwethaf; nid wyf yn credu y byddam yn denu 700 o bobl i wylio'r gêm ym mis Mehefin.

[110] **Bethan Jenkins:** Pam mae'r FAW mor gryf o blaid newid y tymhorau? A yw wedi ymgynghori gyda chi? Roedd yn ffyrnig o blaid gwneud hwn, er eich bod gennych chi bersbectif hollol wahanol a'ch bod chi a Mel Thomas wedi gwrthwynebu'r cynllun.

[111] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Mae ambell glwb yn gefnogol. Mae wedi holi ac rydym wedi trafod hwn sawl gwaith dros y blynyddoedd. Pan oedd 18 clwb, roedd barn wahanol; yn awr mae'r nifer wedi gostwng i 12, mae barn wahanol unwaith eto. Credaf mai dau neu dri chlwb yn unig sy'n cefnogi'r syniad. Nes ein bod yn unfrydol, ni all ddigwydd. Yr unig ffordd y gall y gymdeithas bêl-droed gael ei ffordd yw ein gorfodi, ond credaf y byddai'n colli nifer fawr o glybiau wrth wneud hynny.

[112] **Ann Jones:** We need to move on. We have to make some progress, even though this is interesting. Mike, you have a question on the development of players and coaches, including those at grass-roots level.

[113] **Mike Hedges:** I have been at Stebonheath Park when there have been over 1,000

around the August bank holiday. I know that I am bringing traffic into it again, but it is a good opportunity for us to advertise the league by having games on the Friday night and on Saturday and Monday. We need to look at how the season is structured, not when we play. How do we adapt the structure we currently have?

What is unfortunate for teams such as Bangor is this business with Europe. I cannot see an answer to that. There has been mention of a Celtic competition, and European teams could play against each other. The Football Association of Wales could support them in that and pay for them to stay in Cardiff so that teams could take part. I know that there is a problem with players who work, but that should be considered.

Gwynfor mentioned the league cup. Are we using our bank holidays effectively? There are no games on several bank holidays. When we played against Aberystwyth last Christmas, 700 people came to watch; I do not think that we would attract 700 spectators to watch the game in June.

Bethan Jenkins: Why is the FAW so strongly in favour of changing the seasons? Has it consulted you? It was vehemently in favour of doing this, even though you have a different perspective and you and Mel Thomas have objected to the plan.

Mr Gareth Jones: A few clubs are supportive. It has asked the question and we have discussed this several times over the years. When there were 18 clubs, there was a different opinion; now that the number has reduced to 12, there is a different opinion again. I believe that only two or three clubs support the idea. Until we are unanimous, it cannot happen. The only way that the football association can get its own way is to force us to do this, but I believe that it would lose a number of clubs were it to do that.

people watching a game against Carmarthen on Boxing Day. So, I think that you are right to say that choosing the right days can have a big effect. I have two questions. First, a lot of money has been spent on training coaches. Has this made a substantial improvement? Is more money needed? If so, where will it come from?

[114] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Mae safon hyfforddi wedi gwella'n aruthrol dros y blynnyddoedd diwethaf. Yr wythnos hon, mae Neil Smothers, ein hyfforddwr ni, yn dechrau ei gwrs trwydded ac yn cymryd rhan ar gwrs gyda Patrick Vieira—mae'n gwneud yr un cwrs gyda Chymdeithas Bêl-droed Cymru. Mae safon y cyrsiau mae'n eu cynnig yn arbennig o uchel; mae'n rhaid parchu hynny. Fodd bynnag, mae'r cwestiwn yn codi: pam mae Patrick Vieira yn gwneud ei gwrs yng Nghaerdydd yn hytrach na'i gwneud yn ei wlad ei hunan neu gyda chlybiau y mae'n ymwneud â nhw ar hyn o bryd?

Mr Gareth Jones: The standard of coaching has improved considerably over the last few years. This week, Neil Smothers, our coach, has started his licence course and is taking part in a course with Patrick Vieira—he is undertaking the same course with the Football Association of Wales. The standard of courses that it offers is incredibly high; that must be respected. However, the question arises as to why Patrick Vieira would undertake a course in Cardiff rather than doing it in his own country or with the clubs with which he is involved at the moment.

[115] Mae'n gostus iawn i gael rhywun ar drwydded—ychydig dros £3,000. Mae trwydded broffesiynol, os cofiaf yn iawn, yn £8,000, ac mae'n rhaid codi'r arian hwnnw naill ai fel clwb neu unigolyn. I ddefnyddio Neil Smothers fel enghraifft, nid ydynt yn gallu fforddio gwneud y cyrsiau hyn. Rydym wedi bod yn ffodus ein bod wedi gwneud cais sydd wedi ei dderbyn ac felly mae cost y cwrs yn cael ei dalu. Gyda'r academi, mae safonau i gyrraedd ond mae angen inni wella cymwysterau ein hyfforddwyr yn y maes hwn hefyd. Felly, mae'r gost yn cynyddu drwy'r amser. Pan rydych yn defnyddio arian ar gyfer hyfforddwyr a llogi cyfleusterau, mae'r arian grant rydym yn ei dderbyn yn diflannu'n gyflym iawn.

It is very expensive to get someone on licence—a little over £3,000. A Pro licence, if I remember correctly, costs £8,000 and that money has to be raised either by the club or the individual. To use Neil Smothers as an example, they cannot afford to undertake these courses. We have been lucky that we have submitted an application that has been accepted and therefore the cost of the course has been paid. With the academy, there are standards but we need to improve the qualifications of our coaches in this field as well. Therefore, the cost increases all the time. When you are using money for coaches and to hire facilities, the grant money that we receive disappears very quickly.

[116] Mae cefnogaeth wedi bod, ond hoffwn weld sefyllfa lle nad y gymdeithas bêl-droed neu'r ymddiriedolaeth sy'n penderfynu pwy sy'n mynychu'r cyrsiau, ond bod is-bwyllgor o glybiau a bod yn rhaid i bobl wneud cais i'r is-bwyllgor fel bod y clybiau yn cael y cyfle i ddweud pwy sy'n haeddu mynychu'r cyrsiau. Byddai hynny'n gam ymlaen. Mae'r defnydd a wneir o hyfforddwyr yn bwysig hefyd. Mae gennym Mark Aizlewood, sy'n cael ei gyfrif yn un o hyfforddwyr gorau Cymru, os nad Prydain. Mae Mark yn fwy na pharod i fynd allan i glybiau i hyfforddi'r hyfforddwyr. Mae'n teimlo mai dyna yw ei rôl. A ydym yn defnyddio'n hyfforddwyr yn y ffordd gywir?

There has been support, but I would like to see a situation where it is not the football association or the trust that decides who attends the courses, but that there is a sub-committee made up of the clubs to which people have to submit applications and then the clubs would have the opportunity to say who deserves to attend the courses. That would be a step forward. The use made of coaches is also important. We have Mark Aizlewood, who is counted among the best coaches in Wales, if not in Britain. Mark is more than happy to go out to clubs to train the coaches. He feels that that is part of his role. Are we using coaches in the best way?

[117] O ran ffynonellau arian, efallai mai chi yw'r bobl i ateb y cwestiwn hwnnw yn hytrach na ni. Dyma'r tro cyntaf i mi ymweld â bae Caerdydd a chlywed bae Caerdydd yn dangos diddordeb yn Uwch-gynghrair Cymru. Gobeithiaf y bydd budd yn dod o'r cyfarfodydd hyn a'n bod yn gallu cydweithio i edrych nid yn unig ar strwythur hyfforddi ond strwythur cyffredinol y gynghrair i weld yn union beth sydd ei angen ac i symud ymlaen o'r fan honno.

With regard to sources of finance, you might be best placed to answer this question, rather than us. This is the first time that I have visited Cardiff bay and heard Cardiff bay expressing an interest in the Welsh Premier League. I hope that some benefit will result from these meetings and that we can co-operate to look not only at the structure of coaching, but also at the general structure of the league to see exactly what is needed and to move forward from there.

10.45 a.m.

[118] **Mike Hedges:** Moving on to the issue of the academy system, what more needs to be done to improve the system, and could more be done to work with local colleges to improve it?

[119] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** Yes, to touch on what Gareth said in answer to the previous question, we are getting funding from the Welsh Football Trust to improve our coaches. For our club, that is primarily to improve the academy coaches. Our academy director has gone out to coach in New York on a three-month sabbatical. I spoke to him the other day and he is hoping to stay on there. When you see coaches like that improving themselves you know that they are doing something right. That is Ioan Llewelyn; he is obviously doing something right. We pride ourselves on bringing our academy players up from the age of seven so that they stay with the clubs. We have the under-19s structure now. The only problem that we have with the academy is bridging from the under-16s to the under-19s. Clubs from the lower leagues will offer 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds £20 or £30 a game, which introduces the element of money. We have the structures in place with the academy. As a club, we have a few players who have come through our academy who are in our first team now. I am sure that the same is true for Carmarthen. The quality of coaching that they are getting is excellent, to be fair.

[120] For my sins, a few years ago, I ran a junior league club for under-7s to under-11s. I have been involved at the grass-roots level of football. We are doing it for the Welsh Premier League clubs, but what is happening below that with the clubs that do not have an academy structure? What is happening with the small village teams of under-9s and under-11s? Should the Football Association of Wales be funding them so that you get players coming from them to the Welsh Premier League academies?

[121] **Mike Hedges:** Some clubs lower down the leagues have them. Garden Village Football Club has an academy system. It has helped both Llanelli and Carmarthen, I understand.

[122] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** Yes. I am sure that Rhyl Football Club has an academy. However, look at Anglesey, for example, which is on its own. When it was in the Welsh Premier League, Llangefni Town Football Club had to have an academy because of the structure that it needed to get the licence, but since it has left the premier league there has been no academy in Llangefni, as far as I am aware. I am not sure whether there is an academy on Anglesey. Osian Roberts, who was the football development officer for Anglesey, has, as we all know, gone up to the highest level. He was assistant to the late Gary Speed and now to Chris Coleman. Gareth Williams, better known as Gus Williams, is following in those footsteps. Living on Anglesey, I do not hear of any footballers coming through from Anglesey to the highest level in Wales.

[123] While we are dealing with this issue, the one thing that I would like to pass comment on is the fact that, in Nigel Adkins, we groomed a manager who is now going to manage in the English Premier League. He was manager of Bangor City when we won the Welsh Premier League in 1994-95. Unfortunately, we sacked him the following season. [Laughter.] That shows you what we know. However, it just goes to show that you can move on from the Welsh Premier League. We are fortunate enough to have Neville Powell as our manager. He proved himself at Connah's Quay before he came to Bangor City. Neville is a big supporter of academy football. He goes out to watch these young children play.

[124] The coaching in the academy that we have at Bangor City is excellent. To be fair, we get a grant from UEFA to help us with that. We need to look beyond the Welsh Premier League so that we can go to the likes of Moelfre on Anglesey to see whether there is an under-7 player there who might make the grade. We need the football development officers to be going out there, but the only way that they can do that is by having this funding, if that makes sense.

[125] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Hoffwn ychwanegu yno mai un o wendidau system yr academi yw ei bod yn cael ei rhedeg gan berson sy'n gwneud pethau eraill. Mae eisiau swyddog llawn amser arnom i gydweithio â'r clybiau ac i dynnu gwaith yr academi at ei gilydd. Mae hefyd eisiau ymestyn y tимоedd yr ydym yn chwarae yn eu herbyn. Mae eisiau cyfle ar glybiau'r de yn bendant i chwarae yn erbyn tимоedd Abertawe a Chaerdydd, a'r unig ffordd o gael hynny i ddigwydd yw cael swyddog i weithio arno, yn hytrach na'n bod yn ffonio i ofyn, 'Siawns am gêm rywbryd?' Mae eisiau strwythur. Nid yw'r strwythur yn hollol iawn eto gennym yn yr academi. Mae'r hyfforddi yn iawn; yn awr mae angen gwella safon y gemau a hefyd mae arnom angen mwy o gemau.

Mr Gareth Jones: At that point, I would like to add that one of the weaknesses of the academy system is that it is run by someone who does other things. We need a full-time officer to work together with the clubs and to co-ordinate the work of the academy. We also need to extend the teams that we play against. The clubs in south Wales need an opportunity to play against Swansea and Cardiff, and the only way to achieve that is to have an officer working on it, rather than us phoning up to ask, 'Any chance of a game sometime?' We need a structure. We have not got the academy structure completely right yet. The coaching is fine; the standard of the games now needs to improve and also we need more games.

[126] **Gwyn R. Price:** Could the FAW or WPL do anything in your view to address the general lack of coverage in the Welsh media and to improve the low attendances at matches? We have taken evidence that the coverage by S4C and Rondo Media Ltd is good, but that the coverage by the *Western Mail*, ITV and the BBC is shameful. Indeed, according to the evidence that we have received, team such as yours do not exist for them. What is your view on that?

[127] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** Those of us who are fortunate to live in lovely north Wales have Dave Jones from the *Daily Post*, who is absolutely superb in covering the Welsh Premier League—I am sure that Ann will endorse that. He covers not just the Welsh Premier League but Welsh football in general. He is unique in what he does and he does a lot of it in his own time. I speak to him quite often on a Sunday afternoon; he wants to know about fixtures that I know of in the local area and stuff like that. He also has his blog. So, Dave is an exception. However, it is embarrassing, when you are watching *Wales Today* and see the results from Cardiff, Swansea, Wrexham and Newport, there is no mention of the Welsh Premier League teams. That is really frustrating. The same goes for the national papers; there is no interest whatsoever in the Welsh Premier League. Let us be honest about that.

[128] So, the onus should be on the FAW to try to sell the Welsh Premier League, not just

to the media but to sponsors as well. We were in the embarrassing position last year of having no sponsor for the premier league in Wales until the week before the season started. I was vociferous in my disappointment about that. The money that we got in sponsorship this year is less than we got the year before from the Principality Building Society. I know that we have been in a recession, but that is not the way forward for Welsh football. The coverage from Rondo in *Sgorio* is superb. There is no doubt about that. However, where does the funding from that go? We are talking about media coverage, but surely questions must be asked. There is a signed deal between the FAW and S4C, but we as clubs do not see a penny of that. So, not only should it be selling to the media what the Welsh Premier League is all about, it should have us as clubs endorsing and backing that. However, at the moment, there seems to be a rift between the clubs and the league when it comes to sponsorship and the media. The only way that we can sell our club in the media is through the likes of Dave Jones. We have no contact with the BBC. It really frustrates me when I watch *Wales Today* on BBC and *Newyddion* on S4C and I see the results coming up for Cardiff, Swansea, Wrexham and Newport, but no mention of the Welsh Premier League. It is very disappointing.

[129] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Hoffwn ofyn cwestiwn. A yw hynny wedi'i glymu â phwy bynnag sy'n cael y contract i ddarlledu gemau yng Nghymru? A yw wedi pwdu gan nad yw wedi cael y contract? Sut ydym i hybu cydweithio gyda'r gorfforaeth, er enghraifft, gan mai'r BBC ddylai fod yn darlledu'r canlyniadau pan maent yn digwydd? Pan edrychwch ar Ceefax, gwelwch fod y dyddiadau yn anghywir; nid oes diddordeb ynghylch yr hyn sy'n digwydd yma.

Mr Gareth Jones: I would like to ask a question. Is that tied in with who gets the contract to broadcast matches in Wales? Is it sulking because it did not get the contract? How do we encourage more collaboration with the corporation, for example, because it is the BBC that should be broadcasting the results as they happen? When you look at Ceefax, you will see that the dates are wrong; there is no interest in what is happening here.

[130] Un o'r problemau yw nad oes tîm yn y de-ddwyrain. Mae popeth wedi'i ganoli o amgylch Caerdydd—os edrychwch yn ddaearyddol, gwelwch fod popeth yn digwydd lle mae craidd y boblogaeth—a'r pellaf yr ydych yn mynd o'r craidd, tuag at yr ymylon, y lleiaf o sylw a gewch. Mae hynny'n digwydd ym mhob maes, ac mae'n bendant yn wir o ran yr uwch-gynghrair yma.

One of the problems is that there is no team in south-east Wales. Everything is centred around Cardiff—if you look at it geographically, you will see that everything happens where the core population is located—and the further you go from the core, towards the periphery, the less coverage you will get. That is true in general and it is certainly true in relation to the WPL.

[131] Aethom ar gwrs cyfryngau yng Nghaerdydd y llynedd, lle roedd Chris Wathan, prif newyddiadurwr pêl-droed Cymru, yn sôn am bwysigrwydd Uwch-gynghrair Cymru. Er hynny—ni allwn gredu'r peth—y penwythnos wedi'r cwrs hwnnw, nid oedd adroddiad yn y *Western Mail* am y gemau. Roeddwn yn eithaf balch, mewn ffordd, gan ein bod ni wedi colli chwech i un ym Mhrestatyn; nid oedd eisiau tynnu sylw at hynny. [*Chwerthin.*] Fodd bynnag, mae hynny'n crynhoi'r hyn sy'n digwydd. Nid yw'r sylw yno ac, er y gallaf ddychmygu eu bod yn gwerthu mwy o bapurau ym Merthyr, pwy sy'n darllen y *Western Mail* y dyddiau hyn? Mae'r

We attended a media course in Cardiff last year, where Chris Wathan, the chief football correspondent in Wales, talked about the importance of the WPL. However—I could not believe it—the following weekend, there was no report of the matches in the *Western Mail*. I was quite pleased, in a way, because we lost six to one to Prestatyn; there was no need to draw attention to that. [*Laughter.*] However, that encapsulates what is happening. The coverage is simply not there and, although I could imagine that more papers are sold in Merthyr, who actually reads the *Western Mail* these days? The readership is pretty small. So, we need some means of attracting this attention back, and

niferoedd yn go denau. Felly, mae angen ffordd o ddenu'r sylw hwn yn ôl, ac efallai mai defnyddio'r cyfryngau newydd yw'r ffordd honno. Mae'r arfer o ddarllen papur newydd yn diflannu, yn enwedig ymysg pobl ifanc. Rhaid inni edrych fwy ar sut y gellir tynnu sylw at y gynghrair ar ein cyfryngau newydd. Dyna'r ychydig sylwadau sydd gennyf ar hynny.

[132] **Bethan Jenkins:** A yw *Golwg 360* yn adrodd ar y gemau hyn o gwbl? Mae *Golwg 360* yn gweithredu ar-lein, wrth gwrs, ac efallai y gallai'r wefan honno llenwi'r bwlch lle mae'r *Western Mail* a'r BBC mor wael.

[133] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Mae *Golwg 360* yn rhoi sylw i un gêm benodol bob dydd Sadwrn, a cheir adroddiad ar bob gêm a'r holl ganlyniadau yn syth ar y nos Sadwrn. Felly, rhoddaf bob clod i *Golwg 360*. Dylem fod wedi sôn amdani yn y papur, ond anghofiais ei chynnwys. Mae'r sylw i'r gemau yn arbennig o dda ar y wefan honno.

[134] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** Dylai gwefan y gymdeithas fod yn arwain y ffordd, ond, yn aml iawn, nid yw'r wefan honno'n cael ei diweddarau tan y dydd Sul neu'r dydd Llun. Mae Mel, i fod yn deg ag ef, yn gwneud gwaith gwyb, ond dylid cyflogi rhywun o fewn y gymdeithas sy'n i baratoi adroddiad ar bob gêm. Dylai rhywun fynd i bob gêm ac wedyn yn adrodd yn ôl i'r gymdeithas. Dylai'r adroddiadau hynny wedyn gael eu dosbarthu i'r cyfryngau. Dyna yw fy marn i.

[135] **Ann Jones:** I know that we are short on time, but I just want to tease something out from you as clubs. Your press officers obviously build relationships with reporters, but that fails in relation to the BBC. When Rhyl was in the same position as Bangor of going through to the second qualifying round, there was no-one there—apart from me, who was there screaming and I rang the *Daily Post* the next day to say that we had won. There was no-one there to cover it. Yet, when Llanelli played its very first European game, there was a BBC reporter on the coach with the supporters going over and the reports came back. Is there a bias against clubs from north Wales in the Welsh Premier League?

[136] **Bethan Jenkins:** That is a loaded question, is it not?

[137] **Ann Jones:** No, I do not think that it is loaded at all. [Laughter.] We have representatives here from Carmarthen in south-west Wales and from the north, so I just want to hear their views on that.

[138] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** I am just thinking about my words carefully.

perhaps using the new media would be the correct approach. The practice of reading a newspaper is disappearing, particularly among young people. We must look more at how we can get coverage of the league on our new media. Those are my few comments on that.

Bethan Jenkins: Does *Golwg 360* cover any of these matches? *Golwg 360* operates online, of course, and perhaps that website could plug the gap where the *Western Mail* and the BBC are so poor.

Mr Gareth Jones: *Golwg 360* covers one match every Saturday, and there is a report on each match and all of the results straight away on a Saturday evening. So, I give all credit to *Golwg 360*. We should have mentioned it in the paper, but forgot to include it. The coverage is particularly good on that website.

Mr Gwynfor Jones: The FAW's website should be leading the way, but, very often, that website is not updated until the Sunday or Monday. Mel, to be fair to him, does excellent work, but someone should be employed within the association to provide reports on every match. There should be someone at every match to report back to the association. Those reports should then be distributed to the media. That is my opinion.

[139] **Ann Jones:** The BBC may cover your European trip now.

[140] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** As Gareth said in his previous response, it may be because there is no Welsh Premier League club in south-east Wales. Is that where the bias lies? With all due respect, the BBC sort of exists for south-east Wales. Perhaps that is the wrong comment to make, but I take on board Ann's point that coverage from the BBC is poor. The *Daily Post*, to be fair, funded Dave Jones to come out with us when we went out to Helsinki last year. However, all that we got from the BBC was an arrangement for me to do a report live on the news on my mobile phone. I am no press officer, so I had to choose my words even more carefully that night. That is the sort of contempt with which we are treated by the BBC. It shows very little interest. However, to be fair, Rondo's *Sgorio* is on a different level. Our game against Helsinki was shown live. So, we had full involvement on *Sgorio*. So, why does the BBC not work with Rondo and S4C to get the information off them? It could get clips of the games to show on the news and stuff like that. That would promote the coverage and the fact that the Welsh Premier League exists.

[141] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Mae Caerfyrddin wedi chwarae yn Ewrop ac wedi ennill yno, rhag ofn eich bod yn meddwl nad ydym wedi gwneud unrhyw beth dros y blynyddoedd diwethaf. Eto i gyd, nid oes ffilm o'r gêm honno ar gael oherwydd nid oedd neb yno yn ei ffilmio. Pan fu inni ennill o bum gôl i ddwy yn erbyn Longford Town Football Club yn y Drenwydd, nid oedd gennym ddim i ddangos amdano. Pam nad oedd neb yno? Roedd pobl yn gwybod bod y gêm ymlaen. Er inni gollir gêm gyntaf o ddwy gôl i ddim, roedd y gêm honno'n fuddugoliaeth arbennig. Dyna oedd y tro cyntaf i un o'r timau fynd trwy i'r rownd nesaf. Ble oedd y bobl y noson honno? Nid ydynt wedi cael eu gweld wedyn, Gwynfor.

Mr Gareth Jones: Carmarthen has played in Europe and won, just in case you think that we have not done anything over the past few years. Yet again, there is no film of that match available because there was no-one there filming it. When we won five goals to two against Longford Town Football Club in Newtown, we had nothing to show for it. Why was there not anyone there? People knew that the game was on. We lost the first match by two goals to none, but that game was a great victory. It was the first time that one of our teams had gone through to the next round. Where were the people that night? They have not been seen since, Gwynfor.

[142] Credaf fod hyn yn mynd yn ôl eto at y contract. Petaent yn darlledu gemau Cymru, efallai byddai'r BBC gennym yn ein gêmiau. Byddai hynny'n annheg, fodd bynnag, oherwydd mae cwmni Rondo yn gwneud gwaith arbennig o dda wrth gydweithio gyda'r clybiau. Rwy'n falch gweld bod y rhaglen yn dychwelyd i nosweithiau Llun a'i bod yn rhaglen hirach, oherwydd eich bod yn colli allan os ydych ond yn gweld y goliau. Rydych yn cael mwy o storïau, sy'n gam ymlaen. O ran sut yr ydych yn denu mwy o bobl iddo, mae'n debyg fod gan Gymdeithas Bêl-droed Cymru swyddog marchnata, ond nid wyf erioed wedi gweld y dyn. Nid yw erioed wedi bod yn agos at y clybiau, felly nid wyf yn gwybod beth yw ei rôl, ond dylai wneud rhywbeth i'n cefnogi.

I think that this goes back to the contract again. If Wales matches were broadcast, then perhaps the BBC would be at our games. That would be unfair, however, because Rondo is doing extremely good work in working collaboratively with the clubs. I am glad to see that the programme is returning to Monday nights and that it is a longer programme, because you miss out if you see only the goals. You get more stories, which is a step forward. In terms of how you attract more people to it, the FAW is meant to have a marketing officer, but I have never seen him. He has never been anywhere near the clubs, so I do not know what his role is, but he should do something to support us.

11.00 a.m.

[143] **Mike Hedges:** Briefly, I remember when we used to have regional versions of the Sunday newspapers and Carmarthen Town AFC was on the back of the *News of the World*. My other point is that *Wales on Sunday* does provide reasonably good coverage of the Welsh Premier League. As someone who has been involved in Welsh league football for a long time, I think that that is to the detriment of the Welsh league these days.

[144] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Nid wyf yn darllen yr *Wales on Sunday*, i ddweud y gwir. Mae rhai pobl gweithgar iawn. Rydym yn cysylltiad â'r Mid Glamorgan Press Agency ar ôl pob gêm ac mae'n rhaid i mi dalu teyrnged iddo. Mae'n ffonio a gofyn am grynodeb byr o'r gemau. Mae hwnnw'n cael ei drosglwyddo i'r *Wales on Sunday*. Unwaith eto, mae hynny'n deillio o'r clybiau yn hytrach na'r papur ei hun—rhywun o'r tu mewn i'r clwb sy'n darparu'r wybodaeth. Gwn mai o'r clybiau y dylai'r wybodaeth ddod er mwyn sicrhau cywirdeb ac yn y blaen, ond byddai'n braf gweld rhywun yn dod i lawr i wyllo'r gêm weithiau yn hytrach nag eu bod yn dibynnu ar y clwb ei hun i glywed beth sy'n digwydd.

Mr Gareth Jones: I do not read the *Wales on Sunday*, to be honest. There are some very hardworking people. We get in touch with the Mid Glamorgan Press Agency after every match and I must pay tribute to it. The agency phones and asks for a brief summary of the matches. That is then passed on to the *Wales on Sunday*. Again, that emanates from the clubs rather than the paper itself—someone from within the club provides the information. I know that the information should come from the clubs to ensure accuracy and so on, but it would be nice to see someone coming down to watch the match sometimes rather than them depending upon the club itself to hear what happens.

[145] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Mae'r diffyg sylw yn rhannol yn adlewyrchu yr hyn sydd wedi digwydd i'r wasg a'r cyfryngau yng Nghymru a bod llawer mwy o ganoli adnoddau yng Nghaerdydd. Mae presenoldeb y gorfforaeth ddarlledu a Media Wales ledled Cymru wedi lleihau yn sylweddol. Mae hynny'n wir nid yn unig am bêl-droed, ond am rannau eraill o fywyd Cymru. Mae mwy a mwy yn tueddu i fod wedi'i ganoli yng Nghaerdydd. A oes trafodaethau yn cael eu cynnal a phwy sydd yn eu cael? A oes unrhyw un yn trafod gyda'r BBC y diffyg sylw y mae'n ei roi i bêl-droed o ran y gynghrair neu a yw'r gymdeithas pêl-droed yn hapus ei fod wedi cael ei gytundeb â S4C a dyna hi?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: The lack of coverage partly reflects what has happened to the press and media in Wales and that there is much more centralisation of resources in Cardiff. The presence of the broadcasting corporation and Media Wales throughout Wales has reduced greatly. That is true not only of football, but of other parts of Welsh life. More and more tends to be centralised in Cardiff. Are discussions being held and who is having them? Is anyone discussing with the BBC the lack of coverage that it gives to football in terms of the league or is the FAW happy that it has got its agreement with S4C and that is that?

[146] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** Fel y dywedodd Gareth, mwy na thebyg, mae BBC wedi pwdi am nad oedd wedi cael y cytundeb i ddangos gemau Cymru. Fodd bynnag, fel y dywedodd, dylai rhywun o'r gymdeithas pêl-droed siarad â'r BBC a dweud wrtho, 'Dyma'r hyn sydd gennym, felly beth allwch ei wneud i roi cyhoeddusrwydd i'r gynghrair?'

Mr Gwynfor Jones: As Gareth said, more than likely, the BBC is sulking because it did not get the contract to show Welsh matches. However, as he said, someone from the FAW should speak to the BBC and tell it, 'This is what we have got, so what can you do to publicise the league?'

[147] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Felly, nid yw hynny'n digwydd ar hyn o bryd.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: So, that does not happen at the moment.

[148] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** Na, dim o'r hyn a welwn ni. **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** No, not from what we see.

[149] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Nid yw'r clybiau yn rhan o'r trafodaethau. Rwyf yn siŵr eu bod yn digwydd, ond nid ydym yn rhan ohonynt. Maent, unwaith eto, yn cael eu cadw'n ganolog. Nid oes gennym gyfraniad mewn unrhyw fath o drafodaethau. **Mr Gareth Jones:** The clubs are not part of the discussions. I am sure that they are happening, but we are not a part of them. They are, again, retained centrally. We do not have a contribution to any kind of discussions.

[150] **Ann Jones:** We will have to move on, I am afraid. We will now look at clubs' resources, infrastructure and community contribution. Mark, you have the first set of questions.

[151] **Mark Isherwood:** We should remember that 'gogledd Cymru' is at the top of Wales. [*Laughter.*]

[152] **Ann Jones:** Well done.

[153] **Mark Isherwood:** You have already commented extensively on the problems and inconsistencies applying to infrastructure facilities and pitch standards across the premier league clubs. Where do you think that the investment to deal with that should come from? How have your own clubs addressed that? You have a new ground, so how do you propose to address that in the future?

[154] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** We are fortunate to have had a new ground, as you mentioned, which has been funded by the developers who took over our old ground. We have had no investment at all from the Welsh Football Trust or from the FAW into that ground. We are now fortunate enough to be able to play the first stage of the European game at home, but we are looking for funding to try to improve that so that we can get an extra 400 seats into the ground. We have put in an application to the Welsh Football Trust. However, it seems to me that the Welsh Football Trust at the moment, and Gareth will correct me if I am wrong, has said that there is currently no funding for the Welsh Premier League clubs and that it is all for the lower leagues. That does not make any sense to me. For example, would it be worth us being relegated for a season so that we can get funding to improve our ground? Where is the logic in that? There is no logic to that. The way forward for clubs is to use the club as a community base.

[155] Gwyn Derfel, who has taken over as the new secretary of the Welsh Premier League from John Deakin, is a big advocate of 3G pitches, which I am dead against. I had this conversation with Gwyn yesterday. To me, that is not football. However, you need that sort of facility to bring the community in to be part of the club. We are fortunate in Nantporth—Ann Jones was there on Saturday—in that we have the room to put a 3G pitch alongside, or next to, the grass pitch, so we are looking at funding for that. We do not know where we will get that funding from. It would be nice if the Welsh Government could turn around and say that it will assist Bangor City by giving us the funding for a 3G pitch, because we are then going to bring the community in to do it. Gareth and I had this debate on the way down here today: we are both dead against the 3G pitches as pitches for our football teams, but that is the only way that you can bring the community in; you can use 3G pitches whatever the weather conditions. The funding needs to come from somewhere for the clubs to be able to improve that facility. I do not know where it will come from. As a football club, we are hoping to get funding from somewhere to help us build the 3G pitch and bring the community in, but not to replace the grass pitch. As a traditionalist, I think that football should be played on grass.

[156] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Rydym ni yng **Mr Gareth Jones:** We, in Carmarthen, are

Nghaerfyrddin yn mynd i gyfeiriad ychydig yn wahanol. Yn gyntaf, mae dylanwad y Rhufeiniaid yn dal i fod yn gryf ar Barc Waundew. Bob tro rydym am wneud unrhyw beth ar Barc Waundew, mae Cadw yn cadw llygad gofalus iawn ar yr hyn rydym yn ei wneud. Rydym i fod i adeiladu ystafelloedd newid newydd, diolch i Gymdeithas Bêl-droed Cymru sydd wedi rhoi £0.25 miliwn inni am gynnal y gemau Euro 2013 flwyddyn nesaf. Fodd bynnag, mae £10,000 wedi mynd yn barod i dalu Cadw i dorri un ffos i weld beth oedd oddi tani. Llawer o sbwriel oedd yno a oedd wedi cael ei daflu yno dros y blynyddoedd—ar ôl y Rhufeiniad, gallaf eich sicrhau. [*Chwerthin.*]

[157] Felly, rydym wedi mynd i gyfeiriad arall. Mae partneriaethau yn bwysig y dyddiau hyn, yn enwedig ym maes addysg. Yn ddiweddar, rydym wedi bod yn cydweithio gydag Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin, yn ogystal â chlwb rygbi'r Quins a Chyngor Sir Caerfyrddin. Rydym hefyd yn gobeithio denu Coleg Sir Gâr a Phrifysgol Cymru y Drindod Dewi Sant i mewn i'r cynllun hwn, lle mae'r ysgol yn rhoi darn o dir yn y gobaith o godi maes 3G. Byddai'r maes hwnnw'n cael ei ddefnyddio gan yr ysgol ac ysgolion cynradd yn y dydd, a byddai ystafelloedd newid ac ystafelloedd dysgu yno—oherwydd mae prinder adnoddau gan yr ysgol. Byddem yn gallu chwarae ein gemau academi a gemau'r ail dîm yno, gan arbed Parc Waundew. Byddai safon y parc yn gwella gan fod llai o gemau'n cael eu chwarae arno ac felly byddem yn gallu symud ymlaen. Mae hwnnw'n gynllun cyffrous iawn. Rydym yn gobeithio gwrthio ymlaen ar hwnnw yn y dyfodol agos, gan obeithio cael ffynonellau arian o wahanol leoedd—nid gan y gymdeithas bêl-droed yn unig, ond hefyd drwy edrych am arian codi wrth ffynonellau gwahanol. Gobeithio y daw rhywbeth o hynny yn y dyfodol.

going in a slightly different direction. First, the influence of the Romans remains strong on Richmond Park. Every time we want to do anything in Richmond Park, Cadw keeps a close eye on what we are doing. We are supposed to build new changing rooms thanks to the Football Association, which has given us £0.25 million for holding the Euro 2013 games next year. However, £10,000 has already gone to pay Cadw to cut one trench to see what was underneath it. We found a lot of rubbish that had been thrown there over the years—after the Romans, I can assure you. [*Laughter.*]

Therefore, we have gone in a different direction. Partnerships are important these days, particularly in the field of education. Recently, we have been collaborating with Bro Myrddin Welsh Comprehensive School, as well as Carmarthen Quins RFC and Carmarthenshire County Council. We are also hoping to bring in Coleg Sir Gâr and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David into this scheme, whereby the school gives a piece of land in the hope of establishing a 3G pitch there. That pitch would be used by the school and primary schools in the day, and there would be changing rooms and classrooms, because there is a lack of resources at the school. We would be able to play our academy and second-team games there, sparing Richmond Park. The quality of the park would improve because fewer games would be played there and we could move on from there. That is an exciting plan. We are hoping to press ahead with that in the near future. We are hoping to get other funding sources from different places—not just from the football association, but also through looking for different funding sources. I hope that something will come from that in the future.

[158] **Mark Isherwood:** You made reference to your activities to develop as community hubs. Other than 3G pitches, are there other things that Bangor City is considering? We heard from a previous witness how, rather than accessing direct Welsh Government sports funding, this could link in to other initiatives—community regeneration initiatives, poverty-fighting initiatives and regeneration areas. Have you considered how you might capitalise on that?

[159] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** We have people in the club who are involved in that. As Gareth mentioned, it is about building partnerships with these people. One of the things that we have is the university in Bangor, and we also have Coleg Menai, and we are working closely with

them. To use Rhyl as an example—which I do not like doing—I do not know whether Rhyl still does it, but it had people going in to use the computers at the ground. That is something that we would be looking to extend to as well—was it Communities First, or something like that?

[160] **Ann Jones:** No, it is Strikers, which is part of Rhyl Football Club in the Community, and it takes young people who are likely to fall out of good ways of living.

[161] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** Using Rhyl as an example, that is one of the things that we would like to pursue. It is a question of how to go about reaching out for the funding. There is a guy in Rhyl called Tony Hepton who is leading the way on that. We will be contacting Rhyl to see the way forward on that and to see whether we can push that on. It is also about clubs talking to each other and learning from each other. That is the way that we are going to move forward—by talking to different people. We are in our infancy at Nantporth stadium, and our new facilities there. We were used to Nantporth just being a football field. We had no facilities there. It is a learning curve for us as a club, and for us as club officials. It is about talking to people and asking how we go about doing certain things and so forth. That is the way that we will be looking to move forward—by talking to people, learning and trying to reach out for funding from different areas, as was suggested.

[162] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Yng Nghaerfyrddin, yn hytrach na galw ein clwb yn glwb cymdeithasol pêl-droed, rydym yn ei ddefnyddio fel canolfan gymunedol. Mae fy mam-yng-nghyfraith yn y clwb celf ar hyn o bryd; mae'n mynychu'r clwb bob dydd Mercher. Mae'r cyfleuster yn cael ei ddefnyddio gan y gymuned. Y bore yma, cynhelir tri chwrs yno, sef y clwb celf, dosbarth Slimming World mewn ystafell arall, a chwrs cyfrifiaduron ar y llawr gwaelod. Rydym yn ystyried y defnydd hwn o'r adeilad yn ffynhonnell ychwanegol o arian. Mae nifer o'r darparwyr hyn wedi dod atom oherwydd mai cyrsiau achrededig yn unig a gynhelir mewn canolfannau dysgu cymunedol. Felly, mae'r darparwyr yn chwilio am ystafelloedd priodol i gynnal eu cyrsiau. Rydym wedi bod yn ddigon ffodus i fod yn y lle iawn ar yr amser iawn, a chyda lleoedd parcio ac ati, i fanteisio ar hynny. Rydym am ddatblygu'r ochr gymdeithasol honno, gan ddenu pobl i mewn. Rydym wedi cynnal nosweithiau elusennol. Nid yw rhai o'r bobl sy'n dod i'r nosweithiau hynny yn gwybod fod ein canolfan yn bodoli, na bod gan Gaerfyrddin gae pêl-droed. Yn awr, fodd bynnag, maent yn defnyddio'r ganolfan yn rheolaidd i gynnal cyfarfodydd ac ati. Felly, mae ffynhonnell wahanol o arian ar gael yn y cyd-destun hwnnw.

Mr Gareth Jones: In Carmarthen, rather than call our club a football social club, we use it as a community centre. My mother-in-law is at the arts club now; she goes to the club every Wednesday. The facility is used by the community. This morning, there are three courses being held there—the arts club, the Slimming World class in another room, and a computing course on the ground floor. We consider this use of the building as an additional source of money. Many of these providers have come to us because only accredited courses are run at community learning centres. Therefore, the providers are looking for appropriate rooms in which to hold their courses. We have been fortunate enough to be in the right place at the right time, with parking spaces and so forth, to capitalise on that. We wish to develop the social side, and draw people in. We have put on charity evenings. Some of the people who come to those evenings do not know that our centre exists, or that Carmarthen has a football ground. Now, however, they use the centre regularly to have meetings and so forth. So, there is a different source of money available in that context.

[163] Mae angen gwella'r cyfleusterau hyn; mae angen gosod lifft yn yr adeilad, er enghraifft. Pan fydd popeth wedi'i wneud,

We need to improve these facilities; for example, we need to put a lift in the building. When everything is done, the centre will be

bydd y ganolfan yn lle deniadol i gynnal cynadleddau ac ati. Felly, mae gennym ffordd ymlaen yn y cyd-destun hwnnw, ac rydym am ei ddatblygu yn y dyfodol.

an attractive place to hold meetings and so forth. Therefore, we have a pathway ahead of us in that regard, and we want to develop this in the future.

[164] **Mark Isherwood:** In Wrexham, facilities are shared between football and rugby league teams. Is there potential for some clubs to share facilities, at least for community purposes?

[165] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Dyna yw ein bwriad gyda'r ysgol, a dyna yw'r ffordd ymlaen yn gymunedol. Ni fydd y prif faes yn atyniadol i'r bobl rygbi, yn fy marn i. Mae gan Gaerfyrddin barc cyhoeddus lle chwaraeir rygbi o safon. Mae gennym y cyfleusterau hynny'n barod, ond nid oes gennym gaeau cymunedol yng Nghaerfyrddin lle gall bobl chwarae ar ddydd Sadwrn. Ychydig iawn o gaeau sydd ar gael. Felly, yr ateb yw cael cae aml-dywydd y gallwch ei ddefnyddio'n rheolaidd. Mae un cae o'r fath ar gael yn y ganolfan hamdden, ond mae'n amhosibl cael mynediad i'r cae hwnnw yn ystod yr wythnos gan ei fod mor brysur. Pe bai gennym gae arall o'r fath yng Nghaerfyrddin, gallai hynny wella safon iechyd pobl leol ac ati. Er enghraifft, gallem gynnal nosweithiau o gemau pêl-droed pump bob ochr i bobl sydd dros 50 oed, dim ond er mwyn annog y bobl hynny i ddefnyddio'r cyfleuster hwnnw. Gallai hynny wella safonau iechyd yn gyffredinol.

Mr Gareth Jones: That is our intention with the school, and that is the way forward at a community level. The main ground will not be attractive to the rugby people, in my opinion. Carmarthen has a public park where quality rugby is played. We have those facilities already, but we do not have community pitches in Carmarthen where people can play on a Saturday. There are very few pitches available. Therefore, the solution is to have an all-weather pitch that can be used routinely. There is one such pitch at the leisure centre, but it is impossible to get access to that pitch during the week because it is so busy. If we had another one of its kind in Carmarthen, it could improve local people's health and so forth. For example, we could have evenings of five-a-side football games for the over-50s, just to encourage those people to use that facility. That could improve health standards generally.

[166] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** That is one of the areas on which we would like to follow up. If we get funding for the 3G pitches, we would like to become involved in disabled football and other disabled sports, and in women's football, which is a growing sport. That is where the 3G pitch comes in: we can use it whatever the weather. At the moment, we receive a UEFA grant that goes towards running our academy. More than half that grant is paid out in renting 3G pitches across Gwynedd, where our academy players can train. So this goes back to the initial question about the academies. With the development of 3G pitches, you can not only keep your academy in house, but encourage full involvement in disabled and women's football and so on.

[167] **Ann Jones:** We have run out of time, but I am going to invite Ken to ask one further question in relation to domestic licensing. We will send you the other questions that we have after the meeting, and perhaps we could have a written response to them.

[168] **Kenneth Skates:** Could I ask the witnesses about their general views on the requirement to hold a domestic licence? Has this been beneficial to the league and to the clubs?

[169] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Yn bendant, credaf fod hwn yn gam mawr ymlaen i'r gynghrair. Fel y dywedasom, bu diffyg uchelgais ymhlith rhai clybiau yn y

Mr Gareth Jones: I certainly feel that this is a big step forward for the league. As we said, there has been a lack of ambition among some clubs in the past. The process of

gorffennol. Mae'r broses o gael trwydded ddomestig wedi sicrhau bod yn rhaid i glwb fod yn uchelgeisiol, neu ni fydd y clwb hwnnw'n cadw ei le yn y gynghrair. Mae'r drwydded yn gosod safon, ac rwyf felly'n gefnogol ohono. Efallai fod y safonau hynny'n rhy uchel mewn ambell faes. Hoffwn ystyried y mater hwnnw eto.

obtaining a domestic licence has ensured that a club has to be ambitious, or that club will not retain its place in the league. The licence sets a standard, and I am therefore supportive of it. Those standards are perhaps too high in some areas. I would like to look at that issue again.

11.15 a.m.

[170] Serch hynny, dychwelaf at fy nghwyn wreiddiol: ni chawsom gyfle i drafod cynnwys y drwydded, yn enwedig y drwydded ddomestig. Gallaf ddeall hynny o ran UEFA, ond dylai clybiau gael mwy o ystyriaeth wrth drafod y drwydded ddomestig. Roedd yn gadarnhaol iawn, oni bai am hynny.

Nevertheless, I return to my original complaint: we did not have an opportunity to discuss the content of the licence, the domestic licence in particular. I can understand that in relation to UEFA, but clubs should have more say in discussing the domestic licence. It was very positive, except for that.

[171] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** I endorse what Gareth has said. Something needed to be done to improve the facilities and infrastructure of clubs. Neath has put a press statement out and questions have to be asked about the licensing procedure. There is a procedure in place and every club should follow that to the letter. Otherwise, it is an abuse of the licence and there is no point to it. I am not going to name individual clubs, but I am sure that the Chair is aware of what I am going on about, because we had a conversation about it on Saturday. To be fair, everybody should adhere to the licence. I endorse what Gareth said; clubs should have had full involvement in the content of the licensing requirements. However, to support the FAW on this, its licensing officers have been very supportive of us as clubs to achieve licences. However, it should be fair to everybody, not only to clubs in the Welsh Premier League, but to all the clubs that have applied for licensing. You can read into that whatever you want.

[172] **Ann Jones:** I will ask you a question that I have asked a previous witness. I know that it is difficult for Carmarthen Town, because it has been reprieved as a result of the issues with Neath and there are some other issues that will come out with regard to another club. Should licensing be based on the footballing performance first and foremost, and then all the other off-the-field stuff? Or, should the off-the-field stuff be more important than the footballing performance?

[173] **Mr Gareth Jones:** Rydym yn edrych am gydbwysedd. Pe byddai clybiau wedi cael mewnbwn i'r trwyddedu, efallai y byddai wedi bod yn decach. Fodd bynnag, wrth edrych ar glybiau fel Rangers yn yr Alban, ni allwch adael iddynt wneud fel y maent yn dymuno heb unrhyw gosb. Efallai mai'r ateb i glybiau yma, os ydynt yn methu o ran y drwydded, yw eu bod yn colli hyn a hyn o bwyntiau ac yna edrych eto ar y trwyddedu wedi tynnu'r pwyntiau. Byddai'n anodd gwneud hynny gyda'r fformat chwech a chwech—nid ydym wedi sôn am rannu'r gynghrair. Nid oes amser gwneud hynny. Fodd bynnag, mae angen cydbwysedd rhwng edrych ar y perfformiad ar y cae a'r hyn sydd

Mr Gareth Jones: We are looking for balance. If clubs had had an input into the licensing, perhaps it would have been fairer. However, looking at clubs like Rangers in Scotland, you cannot let them do as they wish without any penalty. Perhaps the answer for clubs here, if they fail with regard to the licence, is that they lose a certain amount of points and then look again at the licensing when the points have been taken away. It would be difficult to do that with the six and six format—we have not talked about splitting the league. There is no time to do that. However, we need a balance between performance on the field and what is needed to run the club properly and legally.

ei angen i redeg y clwb yn gywir ac yn gyfreithiol.

[174] **Mr Gwynfor Jones:** I will sit away from Gareth on this one. I think that they go hand in hand. If you have one club that has finished in the bottom two of the Welsh Premier League and another that has finished runner up in the Welsh alliance, say, and has achieved the licence requirements, then, unfortunately, at the moment, the rules of the FAW state that only one club can be promoted. That needs looking at, in my opinion. If you finish in the relegation places in the Welsh Premier League, you should be relegated, especially if there is a club ready to take your place. This season, for example, Carmarthen Town and Newtown would have been relegated and, even though there were no clubs coming up from south Wales, Rhyl should have had the opportunity to come up to the Welsh Premier League.

[175] **Ann Jones:** Thank you very much for that, we will end there on that positive note from the secretary of Bangor City. We have to end, because time has beaten us. I thank you both for coming to give evidence. You will get a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy. Gwynfor, you may be strung up when you get back to Bangor for mentioning Rhyl so many times, but thank you for that. Good luck in Europe, because you fly the Welsh flag there and that is a privilege that you have had so many times. We will fight you for it the next time that we play, but good luck to you. I hope that the draw is good for you. We in Rhyl hope to see you in the Welsh Premier League when we come up. Thank you both and a safe journey home to you.

11.19 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i Uwch Gynghrair Cymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into the Welsh Premier League—Evidence Session

[176] **Ann Jones:** We will take evidence from Mr John Loosemore, who is the chair of the FAW Club Licensing First Instance Body. You sat in on earlier proceedings, so I think that you know how the headset works. It is a pleasure to have you with us. Thank you very much for coming to spend some time with us today. Do you want to make any brief comments to start the session with, or are you happy to go straight to questions?

[177] **Mr Loosemore:** Chair, I think that I can address two issues for you. The first is the licensing procedures, which you have already been talking about. As you say, I chair the FAW Club Licensing First Instance Body. I am very happy to answer any general questions about that. It is a bit difficult for me if you ask me about individual clubs—

[178] **Ann Jones:** We will not do that.

[179] **Mr Loosemore:** Obviously, I am an independent chair and we have to try to strike a balance. Madam Chair, I know that you are connected with Rhyl and I was very pleased to see that it got through the domestic licensing procedure. I can answer general questions on licensing. My particular interest is in boys' and girls' football—youth football. I am trying to think what your committee could do to really make things happen in Wales. I am conscious that money does not grow on trees any longer, but for a limited financial outlay the Welsh Government could do tremendous things for boys' and girls' and youth football, working with schools, the community and through the clubs of the Welsh Premier League. My experience goes beyond Wales. I have a grandson who is in Southampton academy. In fact, as soon as I leave here, I have to drive to Oxford to take him to Southampton. So, I can talk about that as well if you wish.

[180] **Ann Jones:** We will try to keep to time in that case, as we would not want your grandson to miss out on his opportunities. We will not refer to individual clubs. There was a

bit of banter going on there about Bangor City and Rhyl, but it was an opportunity for them to get their views across. We will not ask you about individual clubs. However, we want to go through the structures if that is okay. Peter, do you want to take the question on standards?

[181] **Peter Black:** Yes. Welcome. What are your overall views on the current standard of football in the Welsh Premier League? Has it improved in the 20 years since the league was formed?

[182] **Mr Loosemore:** That is probably outside my brief as chair of the licensing committee. We look at such things as the standard of coaching, which is very important to that question. The standard of coaching has improved considerably over the past eight years that we have been doing licensing. Each of the clubs that now plays in the UEFA has a person with a Pro licence. A lot of clubs have people with an A licence. However, there is still plenty to do there when you consider what happens in England. Southampton puts coaches in various towns and cities within a 100 mile radius of Southampton and they take kids from the age of five onwards and feed them into its academy. Therefore, as far as the overall standards are concerned, all I can go on is what I read in the papers. I can see that Welsh clubs are now occasionally winning in Europe, which did not happen in the first eight years. However, it is a slow process. It will take 10 to 20 years to raise the standards to the level that we might want them to reach.

[183] **Ann Jones:** We will move on to the issue of the competitions format, with questions from Rhodri Glyn and Bethan.

[184] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Do you consider that the format of a 12-club league has worked?

[185] **Mr Loosemore:** I think it was essential to reduce the number of clubs, because that is the only way to improve quality. It is interesting that there is now tremendous competition to get into the Welsh Premier League. The clubs that are trying to get in by way of promotion are much better prepared than they were even a few years ago. So, I can see the argument—if you are a club on the periphery, you are going to say, ‘Hey, why can’t we get in here?’ However, my view is that 12 is the appropriate figure for a country the size of Wales.

[186] **Bethan Jenkins:** I do not know whether this is within your remit, but there has been discussion with regard to the summer format and whether we could emulate what Ireland does, or potentially create a Celtic competition for the period before the European games are played. Do you have an opinion on that?

[187] **Mr Loosemore:** I suppose that I am a bit conservative in that football has always been a winter game. I can see the arguments for summer football, but, on balance, I would prefer for football to still be played in the winter months, perhaps with a gap—we get those occasional horrendous Januaries or Februaries. That would be my preference. I think that you get better television exposure by playing in the winter months. However, I quite like the idea of a Celtic competition; it would be quite interesting.

[188] **Bethan Jenkins:** I quite like it, too. Would you, in your role, make any official recommendations to the FAW in relation to those opinions or is that just your personal opinion? The view of the clubs that we have heard evidence from seems to deviate somewhat from the evidence that we have received from the FAW on trialling any summer format.

[189] **Mr Loosemore:** It is probably outside of our remit in licensing, but, having said that, the FAW asks us for our opinions after every licensing meeting, and, quite often, members of my appeals panel put forward points for discussion, and we generally note that they are considered.

[190] **Ann Jones:** We now move on to the development of players and coaches, including at grass-roots level.

[191] **Mike Hedges:** I believe that the question on coaches has previously been answered, so I will go on to the academy system, which Mr Loosemore expressed an interest in. Has the academy system been successful among the Welsh Premier League clubs and what more needs to be done to further improve it?

[192] **Mr Loosemore:** We have done a lot but we have a long way to go on the academy side. I would like to see every premier club and clubs in the feeder league having academies that work in the local community, for example with schools. However, in the end, it is down to facilities. For limited expenditure, we could have half a dozen artificial pitches spread around Wales. That would make a huge improvement to academies and to school and community participation.

[193] **Gwyn R. Price:** We have taken evidence that S4C gives good coverage and that the *Daily Post* gives good coverage in north Wales, but that the BBC and ITV, along with the *Western Mail*, do not give very good coverage at all. Do you have a view on how the FAW could improve media coverage in Wales and attendance at matches?

[194] **Mr Loosemore:** Again, this is outside my brief. I know that the attendances are pretty poor. If you get an attendance of above 1,000, then that is an exception. I agree that the S4C coverage is good, and probably better than one could hope for for a small footballing nation. However, it is all down to money. At the end of the day, S4C can pay for what it does by selling advertising and so on, and the BBC does not have that option. I do not have a particular view on that. No doubt the FAW lobbies to get better coverage.

[195] **Ann Jones:** Mark has a question on the clubs' resources, infrastructure and community contribution.

[196] **Mark Isherwood:** How do you respond to concerns expressed by a number of witnesses about the need for investment in infrastructure and pitches in particular?

11.30 a.m.

[197] **Mr Loosemore:** We have about six criteria that we have to look at, and the stadiums and training facilities and so on are a very important part of that. There is no doubt that Welsh clubs have a lack of funding for that kind of development, and, frankly, any help that the Welsh Government could give in that area would be tremendous, because clubs are either dependent upon a sugar daddy investor—and there are several of those—or they are dependent on sponsorship, or running lotteries in the local club house and selling beer and so on. They have limited revenue streams, and the turnover from gate receipts is not high. A major problem that we have as a licensing body is, first, the playing facilities, and, secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the financial structure of the clubs. In the past, many clubs have failed on the financial criteria. However, again, there have been tremendous improvements in that regard, and Rhyl is a case in point. It failed financially three or four years ago, but now has got through the club licensing. So there have been tremendous improvements, and the people in the licensing department of the FAW work their socks off to try to help clubs improve. However, many of them are operating on a shoestring. That is the difficulty.

[198] **Mark Isherwood:** Although money is tight, a number of the Government, commercial and charity grant-giving bodies are focusing on community regeneration. Is that an avenue that clubs could be pursuing more—not sport-specific, but sport as part of that

broader agenda? Linked to that, how effective do you think FAW initiatives such as Grow Your Club and the community hub projects have been?

[199] **Mr Loosemore:** I am familiar with those projects, and they have not been going a long time, but there is tremendous scope for clubs not only to work with elite young players through academies, but with school kids, and kids who are otherwise hanging around on the streets. The scope for female football is tremendous, and there has been tremendous growth in women's football. A national women's league is starting. A lot of things are happening, but at the end of the day it comes down to finance. I am sure that you have heard that story many times.

[200] **Mark Isherwood:** One or two witnesses might have mentioned it. [*Laughter.*]

[201] **Ann Jones:** We are going to move on to licensing, which is probably the area that you can give us most help on.

[202] **Kenneth Skates:** Can you tell us more about your work in awarding domestic and UEFA licences to clubs in Wales, and the impact that it has had on those clubs and the league in general?

[203] **Mr Loosemore:** We have been running for eight or nine years. We were set up originally just to license clubs that might have a chance of competing in UEFA competition, through winning the league, or winning the cup or whatever. We have done that for eight or nine years and there has been tremendous improvement. The first few years were really hard work, because it was an educative process—we were having to tell clubs about simple things such as audited accounts, and what it means if an accountant puts a reservation on the account. That has been a process that has gone on over eight or nine years, and the standard of information that is now put forward to us as a committee has improved tremendously. We have rarely failed a club for UEFA competition. I cannot recall that we have. The domestic licence for the Welsh Premier League has only been in for two or three years, and we are still on that learning curve, but it was good this year to see that clubs that were looking for promotion had put in quite a lot of homework and made very good presentations, and they were approved.

[204] **Kenneth Skates:** What would be your response to Neath Football Club?

[205] **Mr Loosemore:** Obviously, you know that Neath was turned down primarily on financial grounds. I would not want to get into a discussion about any particular club. It is not alone in having been turned down on financial grounds; that has happened to other clubs, and other clubs have bitten the bullet and have got their act together for next time. It is very sad to lose a club of the standard of Neath. It shared its ground, its quality was good and it finished high in the league. So, obviously, it is very sad to lose a club on that basis, but we have to try to be even handed.

[206] **Ann Jones:** You heard me ask the final question of the last session to both Gwynfor and Gareth about whether it should be the footballing performance that relegates or promotes a team rather than the off-the-pitch conditions. We have referred to Rhyl, and it is no secret that our demise came when financial arrangements went into some sort of chaos, if you like. So, in your view, when you write the licence, are there any footballing performance elements that you would look at, because you could end up with a few teams like Neath—there but for the grace of God go those teams at the top of the Welsh Premier League at the moment. If they were all to lose their licences, what would that do to the standard of football in the Welsh Premier League?

[207] **Mr Loosemore:** I am, through and through, a football man, and so I have a lot of

sympathy with a club that says, for example, ‘We have come third, so why should we lose our place to someone who has won a feeder league?’ However, at the end of the day, the aim is to improve standards overall. I do not agree that you would have a batch of clubs that would suddenly lose their licences, because the education process has gone on for eight or nine years now, and it would be a rare exception to have one that would not qualify for the Union of European Football Associations, although you might have one or two that would not qualify for the domestic licence. However, I am optimistic about the future.

[208] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Thank you very much. We will now move on—sorry, I have lost my place because I was thinking of something else.

[209] Janet and Joyce have questions on the FAW’s strategic plan, Government funding, the clubs playing in England and issues around equality.

[210] **Joyce Watson:** Do you have any views on the strategic plan published in January 2012 and the way in which it relates to the WPL?

[211] **Ann Jones:** The FAW’s strategic plan, that is.

[212] **Mr Loosemore:** Obviously, it has been important for the FAW, particularly with a new person at the head of the organisation, to take an overview of things, and the strategic plan is drafted in very broad terms. However, my sense is that things in the FAW are moving forward. I am an outsider, but I sense that things are moving forward. I hope that it would move forward in conjunction with the Assembly. I do not know whether there has been too much dialogue in the past. I have not been party to any of that, but, looking as an outsider, one wonders whether there has been. However, I hope that this is the beginning of a continuing dialogue and I hope that it does not just stop at chat and that it results in real growth for Welsh football.

[213] **Joyce Watson:** This brings me on nicely to the fact that the FAW has suggested that the Welsh Government could do more to help the WPL by investing more money in football and infrastructure. Do you agree with that comment?

[214] **Mr Loosemore:** I do not want to get drawn into a debate about rugby and football, because Wales has had that debate many times. [*Laughter.*] My view is that they are both equally as important to the health of the nation, to the health of kids and to the community stuff that you are all concerned about, such as keeping kids off the streets and so on. Any funding that you are able to make available in these tough times would be tremendously welcome. I think that you could show real long-term results for communities in Wales by making an investment—not necessarily involving huge sums of money.

[215] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** How would you respond to comments from certain witnesses that most problems facing the WPL can be traced back directly to the fact that six Welsh clubs are allowed to play within the English league pyramid?

[216] **Mr Loosemore:** This is a political problem, going back a very long time. It keeps throwing up odd ramifications. One odd ramification is that, if a Welsh Premier League club brings a very good youngster through its academy and that youngster goes to an English club, they get a good pay-off, but if they go to Swansea or Cardiff, they do not get a pay-off. There are always different ramifications being thrown up. You are looking at over 100 years of history; that is the basic problem. The home nations were the original founders of football and still have certain privileges, which many people would like to take away. It is difficult for you, as the Assembly, but I think that it would be a bad thing if we were to lose that privileged status. We therefore need to work within that structure, rather than do individual things. We could argue about that for a long time, I am sure.

[217] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** What are your views on the work that the FAW and WPL are undertaking with respect to tackling racism and homophobia in football and in reaching out to more diverse footballing communities, such as women and BME and LGB communities?

[218] **Mr Loosemore:** Every club must have a racism policy. I also see this issue, as the chair of disciplinary matters. It is very occasionally that we have had a racist issue arise, and not, to my knowledge, in the past few years, because there is much greater awareness. I have refereed through the system and, interestingly, I have seen that lots of people from ethnic minority communities play in Welsh clubs. That is a tremendous thing that we can point to. As far as women's football is concerned, there are fantastic developments. I have refereed one or two women's matches, and they are as keenly fought as any men's match.

[219] **Kenneth Skates:** Following up from that, it is mandatory to have an anti-racism policy, but what about a policy on tackling homophobia? Also, have you taken any disciplinary action against players who have behaved in a racist way, or spoken in a racist or homophobic manner?

[220] **Mr Loosemore:** I have never known a case of homophobia. There may have been a case, if you searched through the records. We are a mixed community in Wales; we have a gay rugby referee, who is accepted in the community. I think that there is a much more enlightened attitude.

[221] **Kenneth Skates:** So, there is no homophobia in Welsh football.

[222] **Mr Loosemore:** I have not noticed it. As I say, I have refereed for 35 years, and I have never heard a homophobic comment made to another player, although they have questioned my parentage quite often. [*Laughter.*] I have never heard a racist comment either.

11.45 a.m.

[223] **Kenneth Skates:** So why have a policy on racism but not homophobia if you have never heard a racist comment or a homophobic comment?

[224] **Mr Loosemore:** These things happen gradually. I am with you. If it is felt that that is needed, then let us have a policy on general discrimination. I think that you will find that the racism policy also deals with general discrimination. I do not have chapter and verse, I am afraid.

[225] **Ann Jones:** I do not think that you have ever refereed a match at which I have been present as a supporter, so I do not think that I have ever questioned—

[226] **Kenneth Skates:** Are you implicating yourself there?

[227] **Ann Jones:** No, no; I am just saying that I have never done anything like that.

[228] Do Members have any other questions? I see that they do not. Thank you, Mr Loosemore, for coming to give us your evidence. You will get a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy. Thank you for your time. Have a safe journey to Oxford and onwards.

[229] **Mr Loosemore:** I very much enjoyed being with you and I look forward to hearing the result of your deliberations.

[230] **Ann Jones:** Thank you.

11.46 a.m.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod**
**Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from
the Meeting**

[231] **Ann Jones:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(vi).

[232] I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11.46 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 11.46 a.m.*