

Active Gwent Sport Partnership – Hosted Model Approach November 2024

There is a national directive from Sport Wales to move towards a regional model of sports governance and delivery, with the aim of better supporting the national Vision for Sport in Wales – transforming Wales into an Active Nation (<https://visionforsport.wales/>). The move also supports the Sport Wales Strategy which envisages “a Wales where everyone is Active” (<https://www.sport.wales/sport-wales/strategy/>).

Sport Wales also recognises that collaborative partnership is essential to each regional model and one size does not fit all, with local nuance of need and demand evident, and established organisations and partnerships in place that share a collective ambition to work together and to make a significant change and impact in their area through sport.

The format and operation of the individual partnerships is therefore to be agreed between collaborating local authorities and their relevant partners. Economies of scale and the ability to better leverage funding are also key considerations in identifying the optimum shape of each regional partnership.

Through the ongoing development of five Sport partnerships operating across Wales, Sport Wales have identified a number of requirements, which need to be demonstrated as the model develops, and becomes operational. These factors are non-negotiable, and include:

- Partnership boards will adhere to the principles that underpin the governance arrangements expected of Sport Partnerships as set forth in the Governance and Leadership Framework for Wales (more information on the GLFW can be found [here](#)).
- Each Sport Partnership will also meet the [capability requirements](#) as per Sport Wales guidelines. Sport Wales will require an Independent Chair and a skills-based board in line with good governance practice. For the purposes of clarity, referred to as the ‘Active Gwent Board’ within this paper (Definition to be confirmed at a later date) This differs from a ‘representative board / representative committee.’ For the purposes of clarity, referred to as the ‘Active Gwent Steering Group’ within this paper (Definition to be confirmed at a later date)
- Inclusivity and representativeness, across a wide range of stakeholders, is essential.
- Prior to final approval of the model, Sport Wales will require the development of an emerging vision and strategic objectives framework for the group in order to understand how these align with the Vision for sport in Wales, the Sport Wales Strategy and the requirements and ways of working of the Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- Sport Wales will need to see evidence of a strategy for how the model will target, and bring in additional funding outside of Sport Wales investment, in particular how the partnership will attract funding that is not available to Local Authorities (such as by directing funds to charitable foundations, etc

To date, the most advanced regional sport partnership is Actif North Wales ([Home - Actif North Wales \(gogleddcymruactif.cymru\)](#)), which was implemented via the mechanism of an Inter-Authority Governing Agreement between the six constituent local authorities in North Wales. The partnerships in West Wales and Central South (covering the capital, RCT, Merthyr Tydfil, Bridgend and the Vale), are also advanced, but utilise different models to the North Wales pilot. In these regions, a new company arrangement is being developed as this route has been identified as the optimal model.

Whilst this flexibility to develop the most appropriate model for each individual region reflect the differing demographics and delivery models in situ across Wales, there are also commonalities between the emerging partnerships. Essentially, each model allows for local authorities to retain the ability to operate independently but also collaborate on shared regional objectives, and share resources, best practice and learning. The more established partnerships allow local authorities to opt whether to take a strategic interest in the partnership, or occupy a purely delivery-focused role.

Once implemented, all Sport Wales funding in Gwent will be controlled via the Active Gwent Board, and therefore whilst the models being developed across Wales allow this tiered membership, each of the five Gwent authorities has confirmed their support for the partnership and intention to collaborate at a strategic level in setting a vision and objectives to support a more active Gwent. It is also recognised by the five Gwent Authorities that ongoing collaboration between the independent operational partner organisations across Gwent, as currently embodied in the existing Active Gwent forum, must be maintained in the Active Gwent Steering Group as the region transitions to a fully regional model.

Discussion over the optimum format of the Gwent Sport Partnership has taken place with the Active Gwent group, including both Local Authorities and Leisure Trusts. The Active Gwent group have confirmed that their preferred approach is to develop a hosted model to progress the development of a Sport Partnership in the Gwent region.

The designation of the host authority is therefore a critical next step for the partnership. The host authority will be required to staff the partnership, provide secretariat functions and accounting services in relation to financial resources held for distribution, along with other key tasks set out below.

As the only City authority in Gwent with the fastest growing population in Wales, and largest concentration of sporting facilities (including national and regional facilities), Newport City Council has been proposed as the best fit to act as the host authority for the emerging regional partnership.

Active Gwent

1. Role of the Host Authority

It is proposed that Newport act as the host authority for a minimum term of five years, in order to give the developing partnership stability and the ability to plan strategically beyond the current local government electoral cycle. Newport City Council will host the Active Gwent Partnership for the full initial five year period, including implementation and transition phase (years 1-3).

Whilst the host authority will take a lead role in liaising with Sport Wales in the development of the partnership and take responsibility for convening the stakeholders and ensuring the partnership model matures to the timescales set by Sport Wales, once established, the role of the host authority within the partnership is proposed to be equal and equivalent to the other authorities within the partnership. The host authority will not have any additional rights or responsibilities over and above the other four authorities, save those relating to the employment of staff, proper accounting practices around funding, and provision of equipment and workspace to support the operation of the partnership.

It is suggested that the regional partnership will utilise the existing Active Gwent nomenclature as this body is established, and bring this informal partnership into a formal collaborative setting via the mechanism of the Sport Partnership.

The primary task for Newport will be to implement a cross-authority working group, in order to agree the detail behind the Active Gwent Partnership, including the services to be provided (including standards of service) on behalf of the Active Gwent Board and the costs of these services, which Sport Wales expect to be a fixed cost per annum.

Based on the Sport Wales requirements and the implementation of the North Wales partnership, the role of the host authority (i.e. Newport City Council) will include mobilising as the lead in order to deliver the following tasks:

- Act as the lead authority for the development of the partnership and implementation of operation support structures
- Act as the host and accountable body for the Active Gwent partnership, including responsibility for the appointment and employment of the lead officer;
- As host authority, be allocated an agreed proportion of the Sport Wales Funding to contribute towards the hosting and lead officer roles and functions (including contributions towards insurance, HR, equipment, legal/finance support and all other reasonably required costs).
- To operate as the principal contact for engagement with Sport Wales in relation to development of the partnership, set the framework for receipt and dispersal of Sport Wales Funding and ensure adherence to the Sport Wales governance requirements on behalf of the emerging partnership.
- The host will administer the finances on behalf of the Active Gwent Board, manage the Partnership Account and be responsible for the allocation of funding from the Account as determined by the Active Gwent Board. The host will have an obligation to report to the Active Gwent Board (and by extension, Sport Wales) if monies are to be spent on activities not in line with the budget or objectives partnership and strategy. There is no primacy implied within this role, and Newport will not receive additional priority for funding save where:
 1. The additional funding is a contribution required to support the day-to-day operation and activities of the partnership (see above)
 2. Where through the operation of the board, strategic priorities are identified in Newport and investment of Sport Wales funding made in accordance with the governance and decision-making framework adopted by the partnership
- Engage any staff required by the Active Gwent Board, administer payroll and all matters relating to employment. The Active Gwent Board will determine the roles required, JDs and remuneration levels of any posts and the host will abide by these unless:
 1. The funding does not allow these levels.
 2. Posts are not aligned with Newport's Pay and Grading structure.

The Active Gwent Board (or delegated executive) will follow the host's procedures (for example disciplinary) but will action the procedures themselves.

- Ensure that Partnership Board and Steering/Working Group meetings are undertaken in accordance with the provisions for the board set out in the heads of terms and subsequent arrangements

- Support the Active Gwent Board in the development of a suite of implementation documents, including heads of terms collaboration agreement, a draft strategic objectives framework and regional funding and investment plan.

2. Finance

The host organisation will not be involved in setting the strategy or budget of Active Gwent, other than via its equal role alongside the other Gwent authorities on the AG Board, Newport will have a responsibility to inform the Board if financial obligations cannot be met or the budget is not sustainable. There is an onus on Newport to demonstrate clear separation between its role as a strategic partner and the operation of the Sport Partnership.

The immediate tasks around the constitution of a working group and management of the relationship with Sport Wales can be supported within the existing Regeneration and Economic Development service for an initial period of 3-6 months, however as the partnership matures, Active Gwent will need to consider carefully what staff roles are required to deliver the above proposed structures and tasks. Any potential displacement of roles across the Gwent region must also be clearly understood. Sport Wales funding of up to £220k per annum is available to the host authority, to support the function of the partnership.

Once established, the host organisation structure will act as receiver for the full quantum of regional funding for the Gwent area. For the transition period (years 1-3), it is proposed that aggregated regional funding will be maintained to avoid disruption of partnership delivery and disbenefit to service users across Gwent. From year 3, it is expected that the Active Gwent Partnership will have matured fully as a structure and will receive funding based on the regional allocation mechanisms being derived by Sport Wales.

Throughout the initial five-year period, the partnership hosted by Newport City Council will therefore be passing Sport Wales funding to approved groups for agreed purposes, acting as the legal entity and will be responsible for keeping records, paying bills and distribution of funds in accordance with the instructions of the Active Gwent Board. Clearly separated accounting processes will be required.

The host organisation may finally also be required to provide hybrid working/office space for Active Gwent staff with appropriate costs agreed by the Board, and will form part of the host agreement. Newport City Council has existing office space available at Newport Civic Centre.

Governance Structure

The five authorities will aim to develop the optimum governance board model via the initial working group; however as a starting point Newport has proposed Active Gwent will be modelled on the maturing North Wales partnership, also based on a single host authority lead.

Actif North Wales utilises a two-tier governance system, with clear separation of strategic (i.e. LA) and operational boards and tasks. The proposed structure is set out in Appendix 1.

For strategic oversight, Active Gwent will select a strategic and supervisory board comprised of the five local authority partners, 5 independent members and an independent chair. The aim of the Active Gwent Board will be to ensure the successful realisation of the partnership vision and objectives, and communicate progress to Sport Wales.

The five Active Gwent LA members will appoint their officer representative on the Active Gwent Board ensuring that their representative is appointed on the basis the range of skills required and the need to comprise a balanced and inclusive Board membership (see Sport Wales requirements above). This representative shall be "fixed" to ensure consistency though temporary replacements may be required in certain circumstances. The Active Gwent Board will take responsibility for the following:

- setting the strategy, the budget and framework for partners undertaking the day-to-day operation of activities to support Active Gwent objectives
- reporting the progress of Active Gwent to Sport Wales (or other funders).
- Accounting for the expenditure of funds received from Sport Wales and elsewhere, as set out in the funding and investment plan
- Develop and adopt a Collaboration Agreement which establishes the membership of the board, the operation of the board and the ability to delegate the activities to executive staff (employed by the host). The Collaboration Agreement will be signed by the 5 LA's. The expectation is that the LA's who are engaged in the Active Gwent Board and sign the initial Collaboration Agreement, maintain a place on the Active Gwent board for the full duration of the initial five-year period.
- Manage the activities of the executive staff on a day-to-day basis, although payroll and administration will be run through the host.
- Select the 5 independent members and 1 independent Chair. The Chair and the independent members are to be recruited through an open recruitment process.
- operate in line with the expectations of the Sport Wales Capability Framework and Governance and Leadership framework.
- invite representatives from Sport Wales to meetings, as required to observe and support.
- Establishment of a key stakeholder Steering Group (see below) which will comprise of partners that input into creation and direction of the regional strategy, and take a lead role in the delivery of the strategic plan for Active Gwent. The Steering Group will also provide a forum for discussion on matters of common interest and issues facing sport in the region, as well as ensuring best value and maximisation of benefits are accrued from any investment made by Active Gwent.
- Understand and build strategies that align with other regional public service bodies such as the Gwent Public Services Board, and the Gwent Regional Partnership Board.

ACTIVE GWENT STEERING GROUP

Rather than having one board with decision-making powers held centrally by the **six** five Local Authorities, Newport proposes to introduce a separate regional Active Gwent Steering Group, which would have authority to implement the vision for Active Gwent and could engage wider representation of the regional partnership as well as independent skills-based board members.

A two-tier approach will place clear delineation between strategic and operational activities, and ensure sufficient scrutiny and accountability across both arms of the partnership, whilst retaining the input, insight and established relationships in place under the existing Active Gwent structure

The Steering Group will draw on wider participation than the Active Gwent Board, and be primarily focused on the operational, day-to-day activities that support the vision and objectives of Active Gwent. The Steering Group may also provide feedback, expertise and other information in order to support the development and evaluation of strategic objectives.

The Steering Group will comprise 5 representatives from the existing Active Gwent local authority members (this may be an officer with operational responsibilities for delivery within the structure) and/or nominated independent delivery partners for those authorities with a designated body undertaking delivery of sport development on behalf of the local authority. The remainder of the board will be independent and should include representation from the following backgrounds:

- health
- education
- housing
- preventative services
- equalities
- service user

All external Steering Group members will be recruited by the Active Gwent Board based on skillset and diversity. Any local authority representatives on the Partnership Board shall be different to those local authority representatives on the Governance Board.

The Steering Group will also select an independent Chair (or enact a similar democratic provision for selecting its Chair that meets with the partnership expectations of Sport Wales). The Steering Group shall initially meet monthly and be accountable to the Active Gwent Board for ensuring the strategic vision and objectives of Active Gwent are progressed successfully.

The regional host body, and its dedicated employees, will take responsibility for the performance and success of Active Gwent and will act as a liaison between the Steering Group and Governance Board.

As discussed, there are three principal agreements required by the emerging partnership:

- **Collaboration Agreement** – setting out how the AG Board will be developed and operate and be signed by at least the 5 LA's but potentially the whole of the Active Gwent group. It is noted that Actif North Wales utilise an inter-authority governing agreement as the basis of their partnership
- **Active Gwent Strategy** – this document should articulate the vision, strategy and business case for the Active Gwent Partnership, and its key aims and objectives for the initial five year period
- **Funding and Investment Plan** – effectively an agreement between Sport Wales and the host to establish key responsibilities in the funding requirements, etc. this document will also establish the mechanisms for funding distribution against the objectives set forth in the Active Gwent Strategy.

Next Steps & Way Forward

In order to progress, Sport Wales and each of the five member authorities party to Active Gwent, must agree the following:

- Confirmation to Sport Wales that Newport is the agreed host authority for the Active Gwent Sport Partnership for the initial 5-year term, and subject to the stipulated role
- Newport will lead on the formulation of a working group that includes the five local authorities, to develop the detail behind the proposed Gwent model and the host body requirements, including engagement with relevant partners. This working group will

effectively be the shadow 'Active Gwent' board with representatives from the five local authorities entering into the collaboration agreement.

- Agree and establish the legal basis and mechanism for the incorporation of the regional sport partnership, including the agreement of formal heads of terms. It is noted that the North Wales Partnership was established pursuant to section 2 Local Government Act 2000 and section 111 Local Government Act 1972 under which the member authorities entered into an Inter-Authority Governing Agreement to set out clearly their roles and responsibilities in relation to the governance and structure the new partnership vehicle. Confirmation of the working group membership (the shadow Active Gwent board)
- Confirmation of a shadow Steering Group membership, which will work alongside the working group/shadow board to develop the vision and strategy for the region
- Development of the three principal agreements in partnership with Sport Wales, which establish the local and regional governance framework, and allow for democratic oversight and accountability for the implementation and development of the regional partnership.

Once the approach and agreements have been agreed, then the actions will switch to recruitment of the Board and Chair and any regional roles required as identified through the development of the strategy. The expectation is that the Active Gwent group will have all required governance and agreements in place by mid/end of March to formally accept and distribute Sport Wales funding from April 2025.