



THE WAY FORWARD

THE FUTURE OF ELITE RUGBY IN WALES

YMLAEN

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01



INTRODUCTION TO THE DECISION

WHY A CHANGE OF APPROACH WAS REQUIRED

As rugby changes, Wales can set the standard for what comes next



WHY MAKE CHANGES NOW?

- Global financial pressures on rugby – falling revenues, rising costs, and reliance on investors.
- Traditional funding models are breaking down, forcing structural rethink across rugby unions.
- Welsh rugby performances declined – national and club levels need to be more competitive.
- Talent diluted across too many teams; professional alignment between WRU and clubs to be improved.
- Moment of opportunity – WRU's improving finances creates scope for bold transformation.

THE WAY FORWARD FOR WELSH RUGBY:

The Strategic Opportunity

- A chance to reset Welsh rugby for sustainable success - performance and financial stability.
- A centrally funded model where the WRU oversees all rugby operations to ensure full alignment and improved standards across the professional game.
- Aligning structure, governance, and funding around fewer, stronger teams.
- Connecting elite rugby with community and national identity through improved pathways
- Acting now to build a model that thrives in the next decade.

WHAT HAS INFORMED THIS NEW DIRECTION



This new direction has been informed by **the largest sporting consultation to ever take place in Wales.**

31+

Face-to-face meetings with our key stakeholders from players and clubs, to politicians and competition owners

7,000+

Responses to our public engagement survey

26,000+

Visitors to our consultation micro-site, where we shared the document, video interviews, In-focus documents and blog content

What we heard from the consultation...

You recognised that the current system isn't delivering for the elite men's and women's game, talent is spread too thinly across four regional teams, player pathways and academies are fragmented, some top players have moved abroad, coaching and development cohesion can be improved, and the women's game still needs a domestic league and greater support.

We also heard loud and clear that **we need a long-term fix, not a short-term patch.**



KEY THEMES TO EMERGE FROM THE CONSULTATION



OVERWHELMING AGREEMENT THAT CHANGE IS NEEDED

The majority of consultees are in favour of making changes if this helps our Welsh national teams return to winning ways.



STRONG SUPPORT FOR INVESTMENT IN PATHWAYS, COACHING AND THE WOMEN'S GAME

There was strong feeling that the WRU must invest in pathways with SRC and the women's game featuring highly. Consultees felt that the development pathway is the lifeblood of Welsh rugby, and any plan must bolster it.



DESIRE FOR A MORE COMPETITIVE AND SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM

There was clear frustration with on-field performance at both national and club level, with consultees saying that the level of success is not at the levels they expect to see.



STRONG VIEWS ON NUMBER OF PROFESSIONAL TEAMS

The majority of consultees were opposed to a two-club model. The most common alternative to four, was a three-club model.

02



THE WAY FORWARD

A NEW SYSTEM FOR WELSH RUGBY



A CLEAR PATH FORWARD

The board is unanimous in its recommendation of a new whole system approach

First, the most discussed element – men's professional clubs

Move to three, equally funded, professional men's teams

Maintain four teams in URC during transition

Focus on quality, alignment, player depth, and sustainability

HOW WILL THE NEW SYSTEM WORK

A focused and clear plan for a united system built to deliver lasting success for Welsh rugby



ALIGNED RUGBY LEADERSHIP & OPERATIONS

Headline elements of the new system

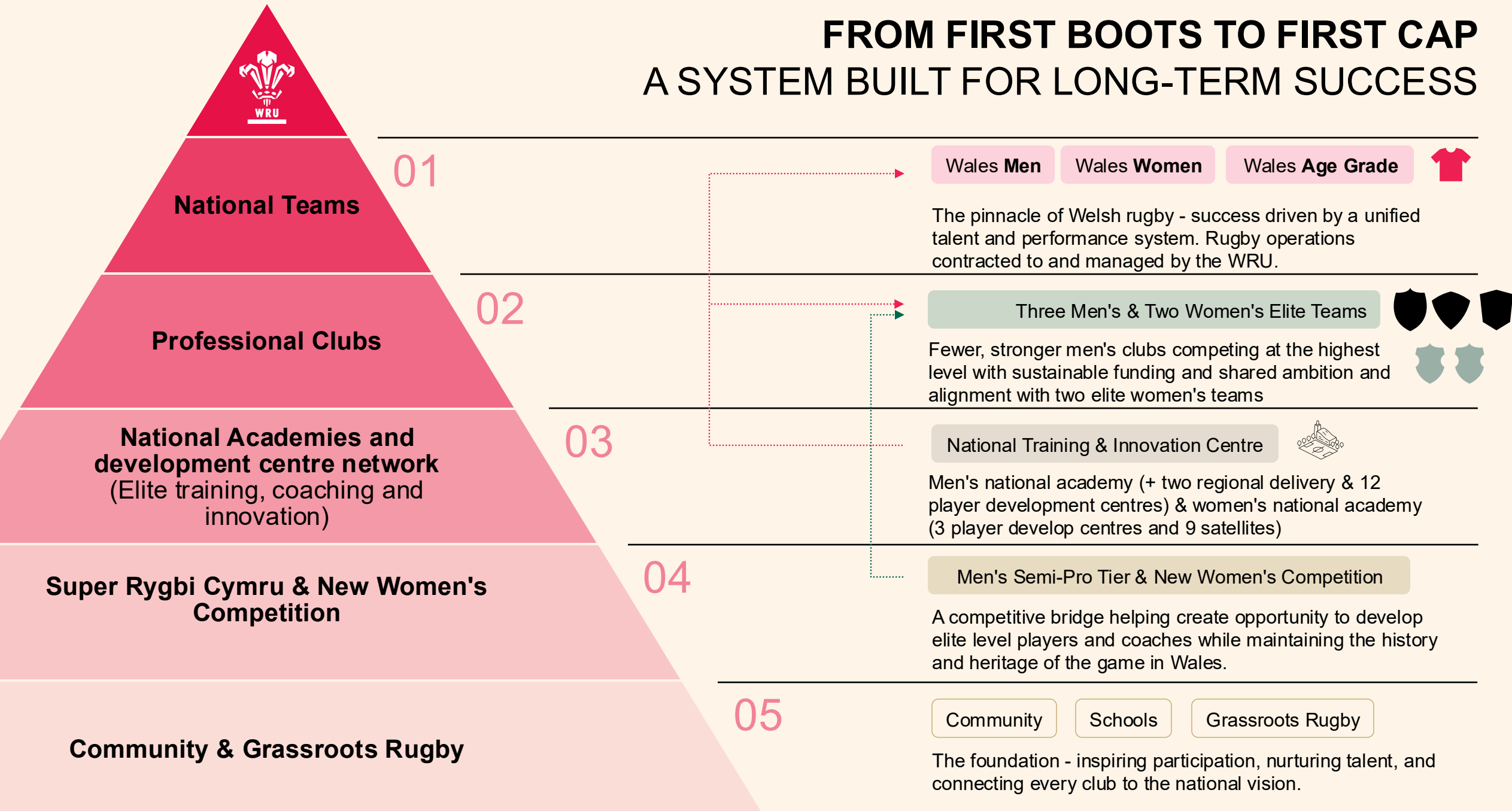
- **Three, Stronger Men's Teams** - Focus investment and talent into three professional clubs to raise performance and sustainability.
- **Sustainable Funding Model** - Rebalance resources to ensure funding matches ambition and impact
- **A National Academy Network** - Create a national training and innovation network to unite elite players, coaches and pathways.
- **Generational investment into Pathways** - Build a seamless route from community to professional rugby, accelerating the women's game and strengthening feeder leagues.

WHAT ADVANTAGES THE NEW SYSTEM GIVES US

- **Stronger, more competitive teams** – concentrating talent and resources raises on-field standards and international performance.
- **Financial stability and sustainability** – smarter funding and fewer teams reduces long-term financial risk for the rugby eco-system.
- **Unified player development** – a joined-up system ensures the best players and coaches have a clear pathway.
- **Accelerated growth across the whole system from the women's to the community game** – investment flows through the whole system, not just at the elite level.
- **Central capability to deliver excellence** – aligned governance, shared facilities, and clear accountability will drive progress.

FROM FIRST BOOTS TO FIRST CAP

A SYSTEM BUILT FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS



A NATIONAL ACADEMY & TRAINING CENTRE NETWORK



As part of our commitment to the whole system, from pathways to the national team, we will introduce new national academies for men and women with player development centres for both. Rugby operations contracted and managed by the WRU.

NEW NATIONAL ACADEMIES - MEN & WOMEN

Would provide world-class training, coaching, and performance support, and talent and data insights - accessible to Wales' top emerging men's and women's players across all professional pathways.

TWO REGIONAL DELIVERY CENTRES FOR MEN

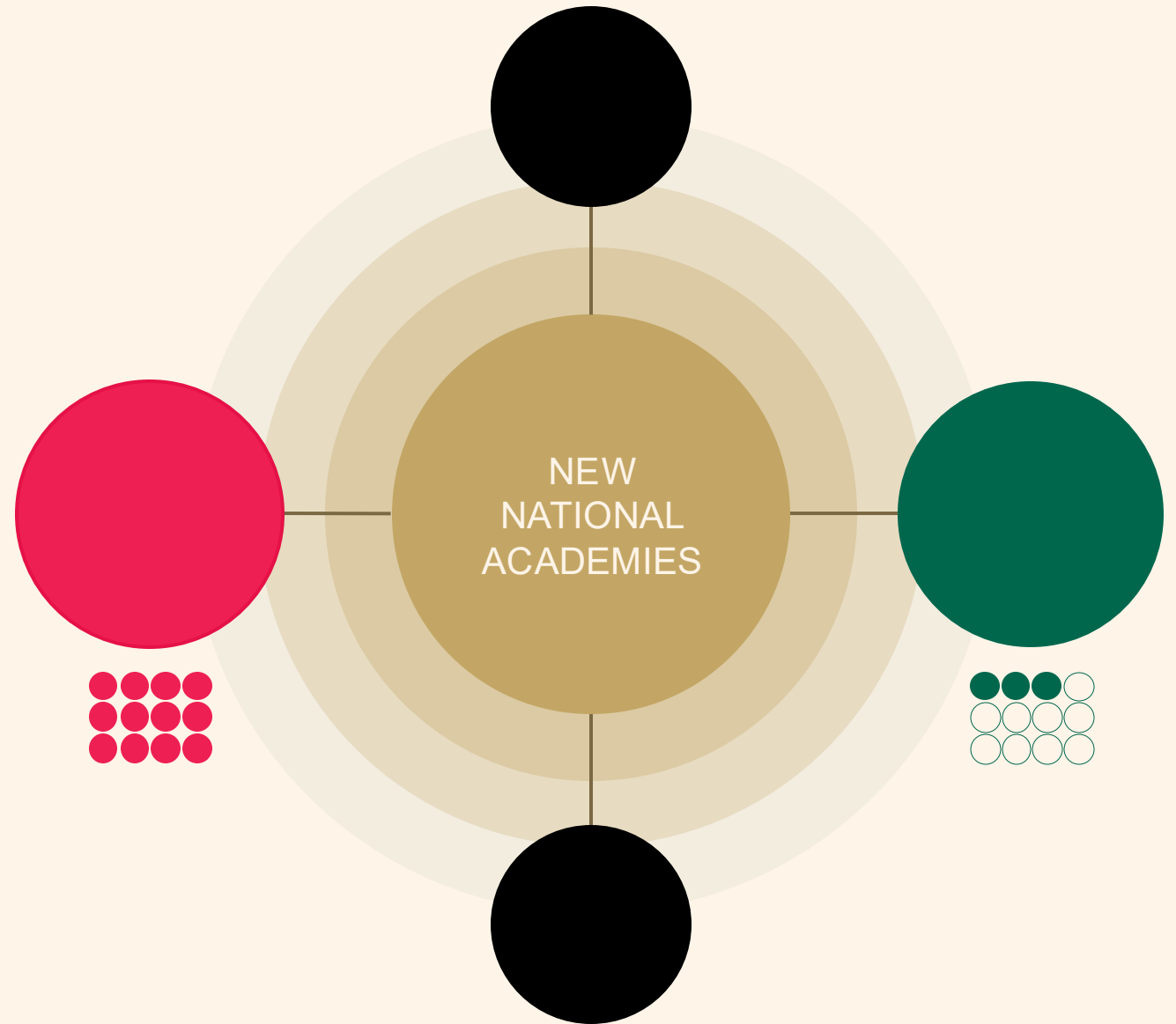
Based at two of our professional clubs, these regional locations will enable year-round access to top-level training facilities as part of the National Academy

12 MEN'S/BOYS PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

Based all across Wales, these regional hubs will be open to emerging talent as well as schools, clubs, and academies - giving them access to high-quality coaching, sports science, and facilities closer to home, while ensuring consistent national standards and smoother progression into the elite pathway.

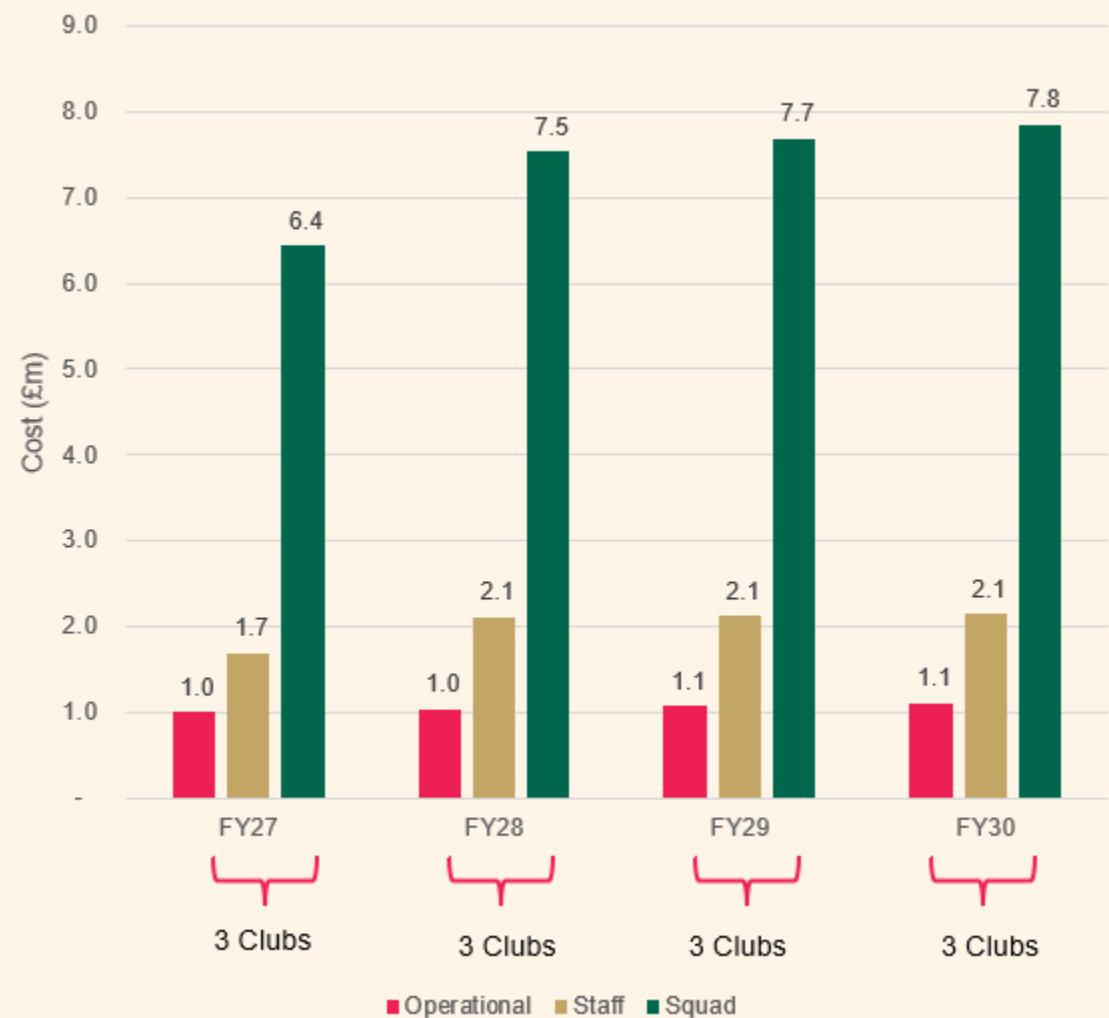
3 WOMEN'S/GIRLS PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CENTRES WITH 9 SATELLITE CENTRES

To be based in the East, West and North Wales. Currently running two programmes but will be expanded to create 3 satellites sites under each PDC, supporting 14 - 16, and 16 - 18 (for players who can't access the main PDC).



A GROWING INVESTMENT IN MEN'S PROFESSIONAL TEAMS

A year-on-year increase in our men's professional teams so we can compete at the highest level



Year-on-Year Growth

Increased WRU investment in professional men's teams each year from FY27 to FY30.

Building Competitiveness

Gradual, strategic funding uplift to strengthen teams and raise performance standards.

Backing Our Elite Clubs

Supporting three professional teams to compete for top honours in domestic and European competition.

Investing in Quality and Depth

Focused resources to develop stronger squads, world-class coaching, and improved player development.

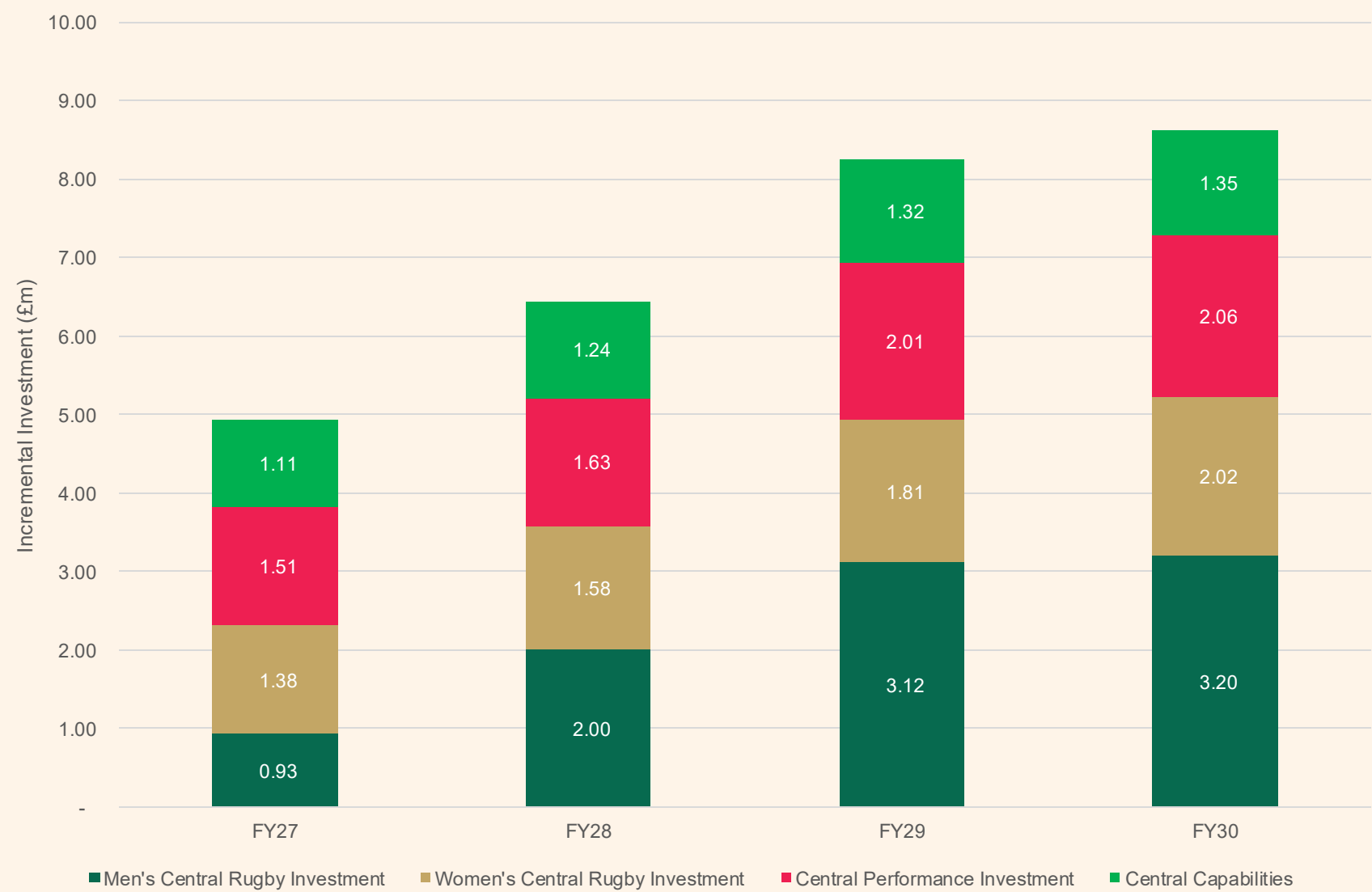
Keeping Welsh Talent in Wales

Creating an environment that retains top players - and attracts Welsh talent back home.

A Sustainable Future

A long-term, performance-driven funding model designed to lift standards across the professional game.

INCREASING OUR RUGBY INVESTMENT OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS



We aim to increase our investment in the game year-on-year

- This chart shows the components of the required investment to improve standards of elite Men's and Women's rugby in Wales.
- It demonstrates WRU commitment to investment in Men's and Women's elite rugby in Wales and reduces reliance on rugby investment from private owners.
- Reducing the number of professional teams and reinvesting WRU funds into rugby will allow us to fund the game in line with our ambitions and grow rugby across the whole system.

A WHOLE SYSTEM APPROACH TO INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Unifying resources, people and purpose to deliver excellence on and off the field



Men's Player Development

A new National Academy with two regional delivery locations, 12 player development centres and improved age-grade programmes

Incremental investment of £440,000 next year to **£2.7m by FY30**

A National Talent and Identification Insights Unit for men and women

Central capability to power a better system through talent insight and management, people and team development and data infrastructure

Investment of £1.2m next year, **rising to £1.5m in 2030**

Women's Player Development

A new Women's National Academy, domestic league, and improved funding for the Celtic Challenge.

Incremental investment of £1.4m next year, **rising to £2.0m in 2030**

A focus on Coach education and development

Comprehensive coaching development infrastructure supporting coaches from community to international rugby

Incremental investment of £300,000 next year, rising to **£600,000 by 2030**

SRC and heritage club support

Increased support for SRC Championship and Heritage Clubs including investment in North Wales.

Incremental investment of £500,000 per annum to strengthen our community and heritage clubs

03



THE NEXT STEPS

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN

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Driving the next phase of Welsh rugby through collaboration



MAKING OUR RECOMMENDATION

We are talking with all four professional clubs and the United Rugby Championship (URC) to inform them of our recommendation for a three-team model and to ask them to **work with us on reaching consensus to make this happen** responsibly.

SHIFT FROM LISTENING MODE TO PLANNING MODE

We will now start talking and planning with all our key stakeholders - Scarlets, Ospreys, Dragons RFC, Cardiff Rugby, their benefactors, the WRPA and player leaders, the PRB, and the URC, to partner in designing the best path to the recommended three club model.

REACH A FULLY AGREED SOLUTION

Our desire is to **reach a solution by consensus, agreed on by all parties**. If a solution cannot be agreed, we will run a fully competitive and transparent tender process for the licensing of three future Welsh professional teams.

MAKING THE TRANSITION

We have an aspiration of having our three-team model in place as soon as possible and we will work to achieve this **in unison with our partners**.

IT'S TIME TO COME TOGETHER FOR WELSH RUGBY



We all want Wales to win again. Let's build a system together that makes success inevitable

Every player, coach, club and supporter has a **part to play.**

Together, we can create **a system that unites the game,** inspires the nation, and delivers lasting success.

The future of Welsh rugby starts with all of us - now is the **time to work together**





TOMORROW, WE
START TO BUILD
THE FUTURE OF
WELSH RUGBY





DIOLCH