



TOPBINS

NEWS FROM ACROSS WALES

Pictures by **Lewis Mitchell** / FAW

WELCOME TO TOP BINS MAGAZINE

A magazine dedicated to the JD Cymru Premier, North & South leagues and others bringing you news, views and stats.

Here we are again, edition 8! Apologies for the later edition. I moved house recently so spent a lot of time sorting and cleaning but we're back.

A huge thanks to all who took the time to answer questions and provide content for the magazine. The football season is a busy time so I appreciate everyone's time and availability. This month we speak to a new manager on the scene, take a look at the murals of the Cymru Premier, speak to Haverfordwest about investment and of course a lot lot more. I'll try and bring out an early November edition to make up for being late.

We're still keen to talk sponsorship of the mag in various formats including all our social media content so if you are keen, come say hello.

Also, if you work for a club and want to highlight or promote something from the club please let me know. The magazine is here to promote the Welsh leagues as best we can so if you have something let us know.

Please enjoy the edition and see you on the socials.

Diolch,
Dan

FROM CAPTAIN TO GAFFER

Connah's Quay Nomads have entered a new chapter this season with a familiar face at the helm. After years of competing at the sharp end of Welsh football, the club turned to one of its most respected figures to take charge and guide the next stage of their journey.

When John Disney announced his retirement from playing live on TV, he hinted that his connection with the Nomads was far from over. Soon after, he was unveiled as the club's new manager. At the time of writing the Nomads have played twelve league games under his leadership with six wins, three draws and three defeats. It has been a great start as Disney adjusts to life in the dugout, but Welsh football fans already speak highly of the way he comes across as a natural leader.

We spoke to him about the transition from captain to manager, the strengths of his squad and the identity he wants his side to show.



How have you found the transition from player to manager since taking the reins at Connah's Quay?

I have really enjoyed it so far. The days seem to fly by, but that transition is massively helped by the staff I have around me. The players are all fantastic people and willing to support each other as well as learn, and mainly by the support of everyone at the club from the ownership down, knowing that this is my first role and therefore this will be a journey. It does open your eyes to a lot of things that you would never need to know as a player, and it's great to see what the long-term plans of the club are. The focus is to get this group to be as successful as possible. That said, I would love to be a player playing with this group we have assembled, as there is some real talent within our squad.

Was management always something you had your eye on, or did the opportunity come sooner than expected?

As a player heading towards my 30s, I did start thinking about what my next steps in football might be. Family aside, as that will always come first, football has and always will be my main passion in life. I always took an interest in how sessions and games I was involved in and watched were playing out, and I would always try to reflect that within my game on the pitch from my own experiences. I remember mentioning to Andy Morrison back in 2021 that I was looking to start my coaching badges with the Welsh FA, and it was something he highly recommended. From there on, I have had the full support of the club, especially the owner Gary Dewhurst, and they have given me time and helped me on my way by leading the Under-18s at the club for two seasons. I have learned loads.

I am comfortable enough to admit that I made plenty of mistakes from a coaching and tactical perspective doing that role away from any spotlight, and I clearly impressed enough to be given an opportunity to manage the club. In my day-to-day work I have managed large teams and organisations, so that part isn't new to me. While I was playing, my main focus was always performing to the best of my ability to ensure I was selected for the next game, helping my teammates and doing my utmost to ensure we competed in every match. I had turned down a number of opportunities in coaching within the previous 12 months, inside and outside the club, as I was focused solely on playing every domestic minute of last season. But in May, when I was pleasantly surprised to be asked again, it felt like the right time to take that next step.

What kind of style and identity are you looking to instil in your team?

As I have always tried to ensure, the answer to this question is simple: a successful identity is imperative for short and, more importantly, long-term gain. As has been proven so far in our games, I like my teams to manage matches to ensure opponents don't create many opportunities, and I like my sides to dominate the ball, but there has to be a purpose with that. As staff, we'd be doing our forward and attacking players a disservice if we weren't getting them as many touches on the ball in the right areas as possible within games to help us be successful.

What have been the biggest adjustments for you in moving from the dressing room to the dugout?

I would like to think I led as a player and captain in a similar way. I am not naïve, and I understand that each decision made is heightened more when you aren't a teammate and are now a staff member delivering difficult news. But the players are aware it's all done with honesty, so we try to keep the dialogue as open as possible.

How have the players responded to your ideas and approach so far?

As mentioned, the players at the club are a fantastic group. We have plenty of different characters, but they are hardworking, committed, and all willing to sacrifice for each other and learn new ways and ideas, which is key. They have been fantastic and are clear on what our targets and aims are for the season. The work rate and hours they all put in on the training ground is a credit to them and a trait that will only make us better.

What do you see as the main strengths of this squad?

We are a new squad, so being adaptable to every opponent is and will be our main strength. Again, that comes down to the profile of players we have at the club, many of whom can play in multiple positions and still know their roles in those positions.

What are your ambitions for this season, and what would you consider a success?

With the nature of the league and its format, getting into the top six is ours, and I'm sure most other sides', first ambition. From there, we will look to push as high up the league as we possibly can. Winning silverware would be a success and would be fantastic too, with our history in the Welsh Cup in recent times being impressive, so that's something we will also be looking to continue if possible.

How do you balance experience in the squad with giving opportunities to younger or local players breaking through?

Finding the balance is really important to any side in any league. There have been a number of new signings coming into the club who have predominantly played in the English league system, and we're very excited about them. Getting used to the Welsh Premier takes a bit of time, but we are seeing those signs starting to show now. The experienced lads are also extremely key in this league, passing on experiences of each challenge and knowing what each fixture may bring. Senior players such as Chris Marriott being able to pass on their experiences to our new and younger lads is imperative.

What influence have your past managers had on the way you now lead?

I have been fortunate to play under and be managed by many great coaches in England, for Ireland as a youth international, and then, more relevantly, within the Welsh Premier League. Andy Morrison, Craig Harrison and Neil Gibson are all well-known names and arguably some of the best coaches and managers the league has seen at our club and others over the last 10 years.

I was lucky to have success with them, but I do always feel you learn and are influenced by people when things aren't going well. As is well known, Andy Morrison and I have a good relationship, he took me under his wing and stuck by me when I was 18 and recovering from two broken legs. Andy is someone I have so much respect for due to many things, but most importantly his unwavering honesty at all times.

I do, however, feel that you have to be yourself and do things your own way. When your head hits the pillow at the end of the day, after a positive or negative day, you should know that the work you've done is your own and what you truly believe in.



The Cymru Premier expands next season which means more teams, more games and more travelling. How do you view the strength of the league at the moment and the challenge it will pose going forward?

I think it's an extremely exciting change, one I am all for. Every time you play a team from the Cymru North or Cymru South, there's a real buzz and a community atmosphere within those clubs. The strength of those two divisions is getting better and better each season, and this year in particular I expect that level to be extremely competitive as the stakes are so high.

As a player in this league for a long time, it can become extremely monotonous playing against the same sides four times. With so many Pro Licence coaches who have full detail on all players, the expansion should generate more local fans to come and watch games and pose different challenges and away days for clubs that have been in the Cymru Premier for a while. The league has, for five years or more now, regularly seen players move on to the Football League, so more eyes are increasingly coming to this league, and long may that continue with the new format.

Cymru Premier matches are shown live on TV during the season. Would you like to see more games covered, and what impact do you think that could have for clubs and players?

The TV coverage is fundamental for the players we've seen move on to Football League clubs, so that is always an attraction for any new players coming to the league. We are fortunate to have this, and it always generates excitement around any game being covered.

I've seen a lot of people requesting more games be shown across all the Cymru leagues, not just the Premier, and again I'm an advocate of that. There are some really good characters, staff and players throughout the leagues, so opening up the coverage for those clubs would not only benefit them financially but also serve as a huge shop window for players and clubs alike.

The club has introduced a new hybrid First Team model this season. How do you see that shaping the future of the Nomads?

The hybrid model is definitely in its infancy, but the club is aware it may take a number of seasons to develop into a full-time programme. Our staff aren't hybrid, so managing it is a real collective effort. It does come with a lot of positives, meaning we can bring in players who may be leaving full-time football and give them an opportunity to bridge that gap rather than dropping straight into part-time football and getting jobs.

We are fortunate to deliver this with the owners' backing, and it will only grow as the league does. With the league expanding and travel increasing, a number of senior players with more demanding jobs may struggle to continue due to personal circumstances. So we must plan ahead while focusing on the here and now. One thing we do reiterate at the club is that we are one club, Connah's Quay Nomads, and all players, whether part-time or full-time, are part of the same group and selected for the same reason. It's imperative we ensure we don't divide the group, and the players are fully aware of that.



CARFAN DYNION 2025-2026 MEN'S SQUAD

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Aberystwyth Town have unveiled their very own sticker book, a first-of-its-kind project for the club.

The collection includes current first team players, eight legendary figures from the club's past, and the shirts worn this season. The idea is not just about fun and collecting, but also about celebrating the club's history and educating supporters on the people and moments that have defined the Black and Greens.

The project has already captured the imagination of fans and offers a fresh way to connect with the club throughout the campaign. We spoke to Damian Burgess who at the time was Commercial & Marketing Manager at Aberystwyth Town about the project.

What inspired the club to create a sticker book?

I've always believed that football is about more than just what happens on the pitch, 30 plus years ago I remember collecting stickers and the connection it gave me to the superstars on the TV. The sticker book came from the idea of creating something fun and interactive that brings supporters closer to the players. I wanted fans, especially young ones, to have something tangible that helps them feel part of the club. It's also about celebrating the history of Aberystwyth Town by including eight legends of the club alongside the current squad. It's a project that bridges generations of supporters and players, hopefully something the club can release every season.

What makes this collection different?

Most sticker books are either about global tournaments or massive clubs. This one is purely about Aberystwyth Town, our men's and women's first teams (womens sticker book in the making asap) and our club legends. It's unique in that sense because it's personal to the supporters here in the town. Every sticker you collect is a player you see on the pitch every week, maybe see them day to day around town or a legend you've heard stories about. It's not just a product but it's a connection between the fans, the squad, and the history of the club.



How has the reaction been so far?

The reaction has been fantastic. Fans love it, especially families with kids who can collect, trade, and swap the stickers. We've already seen players getting involved, signing stickers and engaging with supporters in new ways. It's brought a buzz around the ground and online, and it's already proving to be a commercial success too, which is really important for the club. The PR we had from the launch was amazing and we hope that continues, with a large group of new players into the team it has been great to see the connection it has given the fans and the players.

How do you see this project helping the club going forward?

Commercially, it's a revenue stream that will bring in profit for the club, but it's also so much more than that. It's helping us build stronger bonds between the players and supporters, giving younger fans something to treasure, and reconnecting older fans with the legends they grew up watching. It's another way of showing that Aberystwyth Town is a community club and as much as that connection has wained over the years, since I have been at the club it has been my goal to re energise that connection.

Aberystwyth are known for forward-thinking marketing, where does this project fit into that wider approach?

Over the last 12 months, I have worked hard to improve the club's website, digital footprint, memberships and marketing, always with the goal of connecting more closely with fans and building a sustainable future for the club with the town and supporters. The sticker book is one piece of that bigger puzzle. It's innovative, it's fan-focused, and it proves that we can take creative ideas and turn them into something that has both commercial value and community impact. It has been an absolute pleasure to see fans interacting so much with the club over the last 12 months, the feedback with all the new initiatives has been positive.





BUILDING THE FUTURE ON Y CANOLBARTH

Pictures by **Craig Thomas / FAW**

Caersws FC are one of the best known names in Mid Wales football and now they are setting out a clear plan for where they want to go next.

Playing in the JD Cymru North, the Bluebirds want to be seen as more than just a football team. They want to be a club that really matters to the people around it. Their vision sums it up perfectly:

“An aspirational football club which benefits the lives of the people in its community.”

Everything connects back to that idea. The club talks about serving its community through inclusion and wellbeing and being open and transparent in the way it does things. Those values of community, transparency and aspiration are the standards Caersws want to be judged on.

When it comes to football the big focus is Y Canolbarth which means The Central Region. Caersws want to build success using players from Central Wales. It is about giving local talent the platform to shine and making sure the team on the pitch really represents the area it comes from.

But it is not only about what happens on matchdays. Caersws also stress their role in the community aiming to make a positive difference to people’s lives and provide facilities that the whole area can benefit from.

To make it all happen the club have set out some simple steps. They want to work with community groups the FAW and local government, keep their governance transparent, improve communications and marketing and make smart use of sponsorship and grant funding.

Put together it is a clear plan that ties everything back to Central Wales. Caersws want to be the club that gives local players opportunities, builds proper facilities and stays true to its community. With Y Canolbarth leading the way the Bluebirds are aiming to be a team that represents more than just football.

THE CAERSWS FC PLAN

Vision
An aspirational football club which benefits the lives of the people in its community

Values
Community • Transparency • Aspiration

Football Ambition
Sustainable on field success using football talent from Central Wales

Community Impact
A football club which enhances the lives of the people in its community

Facilities
Facilities which are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the local community

How They Will Deliver It

- Strong partnerships with community groups, FAW and local government
- Transparent systems and processes
- Engagement through communications and marketing
- Investment from sponsorship and grant funding

To learn more about the club's vision and what Y Canolbarth means in practice, we caught up with Caersws FC chairman Neil Lewis, who was happy to share his thoughts on the journey so far and the plans taking shape behind the scenes. We asked Neil a few questions about the club's philosophy, its focus on Central Wales talent, and how Caersws aim to turn their vision into reality.

Caersws have spoken about Y Canolbarth. Can you explain what it means to you personally and why it is so important for the club?

Y Canolbarth is our philosophy of only using football talent from the Central Wales region. I grew up playing football in Central Wales for Caersws FC, and during the "Glory Years" of the 90's the 00's the club's success was built on local talent. Our vision is to fly the flag for Central Wales football, and we believe Y Canolbarth creates a unique social purpose and cohesion between the players, club, and the region, through a sense of shared belonging, pride and connection.

The club's vision talks about being "an aspirational football club which benefits the lives of the people in its community." What does that look like in practice?

We aspire to be the best version of ourselves on and off the pitch. On the pitch, we want to build teams that can achieve sustainable on-field success, which makes our supporters proud, and inspires the next generation of Central Wales football talent. Off the pitch we want to support the people in our community through initiatives such as Bluebirds in the Community which provides much needed support to local schools, clubs and charities.



The values of community, transparency and aspiration are at the core of your plan. How do you make sure those values guide decisions day to day?

Our values are at the heart of every decision we make at the club. We have created a club vision, mission, and strategy, together with our values and a club development plan. These are daily guiding principles and used to hold ourselves accountable as a club. Club officials meet regularly to review if we are on track and make changes and improvements where necessary.

How realistic is it to build long-term success using only talent from Central Wales?

100% realistic. There is plenty of footballing talent in Central Wales, but for a variety of reasons, they are currently not playing for a Central Wales club or are not getting the opportunity to show their talent at their current club. We want to provide a platform and environment which will attract and develop players to showcase the talent we have in Central Wales.

Can you give examples of local players who have come through the system and made an impact?

Born and bred Caersws local, Rhys Hesden, joined us 2 years ago as he was not getting the opportunity to show his talent at his previous club. He has since become a mainstay of our team and was last season's Players Player of the Year and Top Scorer. In January, Iwan Smout joined us from a Tier 1 development team and went on to be our First Team's Young Player of the Year. Both these young players decided to play Cymru North for their local club and have gone on to show the abilities they have after being given the opportunity to thrive. We also have a number of players who play for our development team who have come through our junior grass roots section, and we are really excited to see how these players develop. We have players who have previously played at Tier 3 and Tier 4 levels but have developed with us and currently play in the first team. The number of children attending our junior section is rapidly increasing year on year. On a match day the number of children attending games has increased dramatically, watching local players run out of the tunnel, for a club they also play for, brings a sense of belonging and improves the feeling of community within our local area.

What role does the Development Team play in preparing players for the Cymru North?

We made the decision last season to remove our Reserve team from the FAW Central Wales reserve league and enter a Development Team into Central Wales Tier 4 football. As Central Wales does not currently have a Youth league this was an important move to ensure that our 16-19-year-old players had a team to progress to within the club. They now play regular senior men's football, in a competitive league, with 30 plus games a season. This has a number of advantages for us as a club. It provides us with a pool of young players, which we can support and develop within our own environment, whilst giving some of the first team players important match minutes when recovering from injury.

How do you balance giving opportunities to local talent with the need to stay competitive in a tough league?

There is no balance, we are Central Wales only. We have a brilliant managers and coaches, who fully support our philosophy, understand its limitations, and appreciate the advantages it offers the club and community.

The plan highlights the importance of facilities. What improvements are you hoping to deliver in the next few years?

We have made big strides in facilities over the last couple of seasons. In our first season in Cymru North we were only able to play 1 game at home between November to February due to the pitch being waterlogged. Foconstruction Ltd, a business based in Caersws, paid for Terrain Aeration to perform noninvasive drainage work on our pitch. The investment was a huge success and the next season we only had games called off due to a frozen pitch. Since then, we have secured a £25,000 grant from Cymru Football Foundation for ground maintenance equipment which will mean we have a better playing surface all year round and allows us to explore the opportunity to expand the club with new teams, such as senior women's team. Floodlights is the next big facilities project for us. On promotion to the Cymru North our floodlights were deemed unsafe for use, and we had to disconnect them. We secured some funding from the Windfall fund last season which allowed us to put up new LED lights, but unfortunately, they don't meet Tier 2 criteria. We are now able to play development team games and local cup competitions under the lights, but we will be looking into funding to upgrade these to Tier 2 standard as soon as possible.

How do you see the club's role in the wider Caersws community beyond football?

We see Caersws Football Club as being at the heart of the village of Caersws and it's our duty to support the people in our community through the football club. We work closely with partners such as The Recreation Association and The Caersws Wellbeing and Support Group in raising money and donating items and time to local organizations and charities, and supporting people with wellbeing challenges through training, education and walking groups.

What does success look like for Caersws FC in five to ten years?

A thriving football club on and off the pitch. On pitch, competitive teams at all levels of the game, growth in our junior grassroots section and expansion of our female football provision. Off field, continue to support local people needs through our initiatives and partners, improved connection with local businesses and develop facilities which meet the needs of the club and community.



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Do you see Y Canolbarth as a model other clubs in Wales could follow?

Every club needs to make their decision on the basis of their location and current situation. We adopted this model after being inspired by the "La Cantera" model used by Athletic Club Bilbao of the Basque Country. They are one of the most successful clubs in Spain by using this model to create a strong cohesion and bond with the Basque community. We believe this type of model can have a similar impact on the Central Wales football community.

What are the biggest challenges you face in delivering this vision, and how do you plan to overcome them?

I would imagine most clubs would give a similar answer to this question – Finances! Caersws is a village of about 1000 people and we have one of the lowest average attendances in the Cymru North (160). Although, compared to % of population (16%), we are probably one of the best supported clubs in the league! The size of the village and attendances make it difficult to raise the types of funds that the bigger town/city-based clubs can generate. We have a proud history of punching above our weight in Welsh football, and we will continue to do so through the support of local business, by securing grants and funding and attracting new fans and followers to our Y Canolbarth story.

How can supporters and the local community get more involved in the journey?

If anyone wants to get more involved with the football club please speak to one of our club volunteers at any of our games, fundraising events or initiatives. Alternatively, you can contact the club through our social media platforms on Facebook, Instagram and X.



300
WINS FOR
HASELDIN

Holywell Town manager Johnny Haseldin has officially reached a major career milestone, recording 300 competitive victories since taking charge of the club in 2012.

Confirming the milestone

The achievement was first believed to have come during Holywell's 4-1 home win over Penrhynoch. However, after a detailed review of records by Dave Jones of [nwsport.co.uk](https://www.nwsport.co.uk), it was discovered that several NEWFA Challenge Cup results had not been readily available at the time of counting. Once those results were added, it was confirmed that the 3-1 away victory at Caersws on September 6 marked the true 300th win.

Record and achievements

Thanks to Dave's in depth research and record keeping, Haseldin's full managerial record now stands at 463 matches played, 302 wins, 58 draws and 103 defeats, giving him a win ratio of 65.23 percent. During his thirteen seasons in charge, Holywell have enjoyed consistent success across both league and cup competitions, including

- League titles in the Welsh Alliance Division One in 2014 to 2015, the Welsh National League Premier Division in 2019 to 2020, and the JD Cymru North in 2023 to 2024
- Cup honours in the FAW Trophy, Mawddach Cup, Cookson Cup and NEWFA Challenge Cup
- A 25 match consecutive league winning run during the 2022 to 2023 season
- Welsh Cup semi finalists in 2013 to 2014

From first win to 300th

Haseldin's first win as Holywell manager came on August 14 2012, a 3-1 victory away at Llandudno Junction. Fittingly, his 300th came by the same scoreline, a 3-1 success at Caersws thirteen years later.

Holywell's current form

As things stand, Holywell sit joint top of the Cymru North with Airbus UK Broughton and remain unbeaten after a strong start to the campaign. It is a crucial season for the club, with the top three teams from both the Cymru North and Cymru South set to move into the expanded Cymru Premier next year.

Haseldin's side have positioned themselves perfectly in the early stages, blending experience and consistency with the momentum that has defined his tenure.

Lasting legacy

Under Haseldin's leadership, Holywell Town have scored 1,246 goals in all competitions and established themselves as one of the most successful and consistent sides in North Wales.

He is now firmly cemented as one of the club's most successful and longest serving managers, and thanks to the detailed statistical work of Dave Jones at [nwsport.co.uk](https://www.nwsport.co.uk), every part of that journey is now fully recorded and recognised.



PAINTING THE GAME INTO WELSH COMMUNITIES

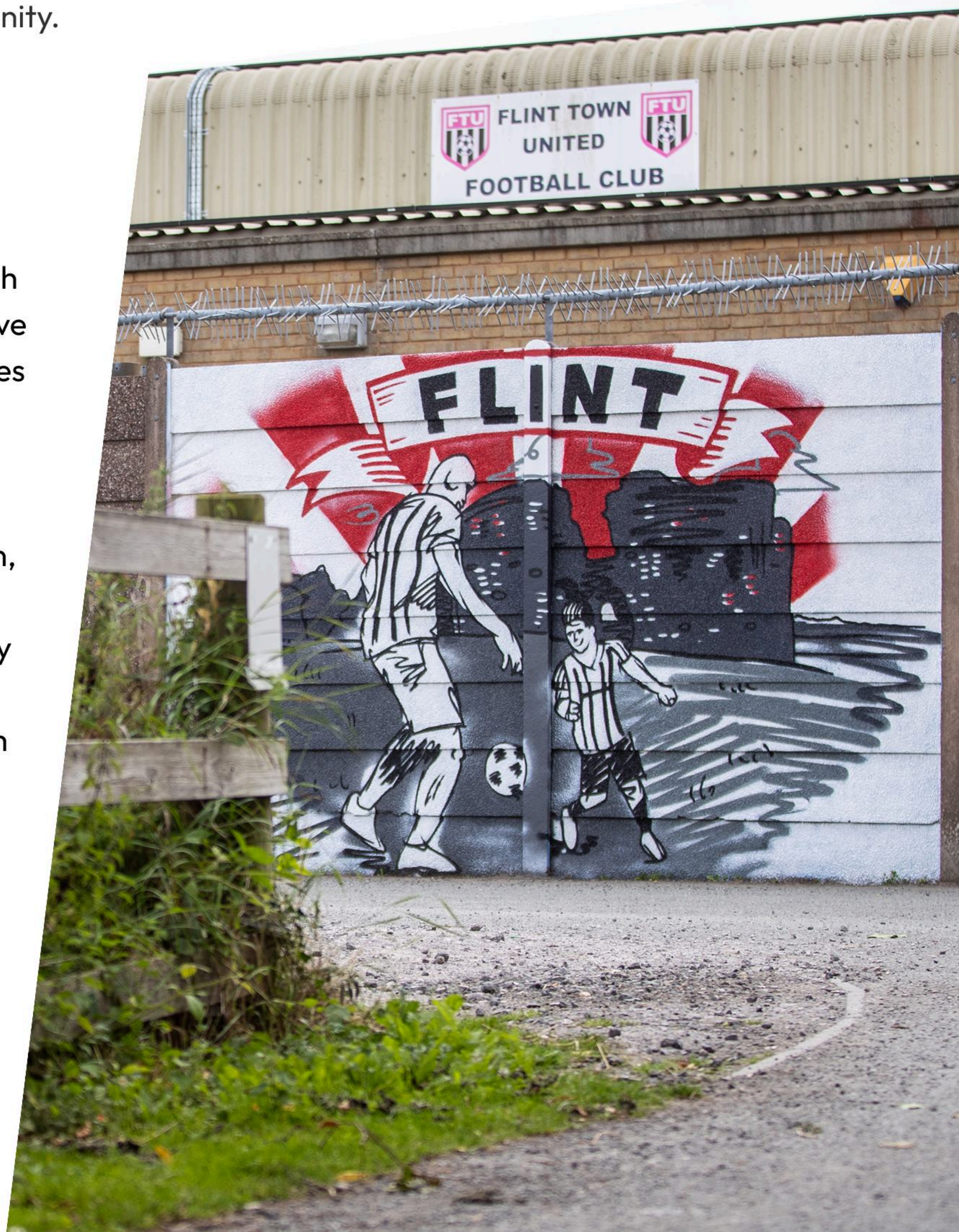
Football in Wales is finding a new way to express itself, not just on the pitch but on the walls of towns and stadiums. Canfas Cymru Premier is a project that has brought together artists, designers and clubs to create murals that capture the identity of every team in the top flight.

The idea was simple but ambitious. Give all twelve JD Cymru Premier clubs a permanent work of art that reflects their story. The result is a series of murals that now stand across the country, telling tales of heritage, heroes and the pride that lives within each community.

Football and Art Together

What links a goal in the last minute and a mural painted in bold colour? Both can move people, both can bring communities together, and both can leave memories that last for years. The project underlines how football and art share the same power to inspire and connect.

Each mural sits in a stadium or community location, designed not only for match-going supporters but also for local people who see them every day. They are markers of history and ambition, reminding clubs and fans alike of where they have come from and where they are going.



How the Murals Were Made

The FAW partnered with The Deep Creative and SixFive Design to guide the process. Illustrator Mike Miles-Boardman, founder of Visually Speaking, worked on the initial concepts. His designs were shaped by consultation sessions with the clubs to ensure they reflected authentic stories. Once complete, Pembrokeshire artist Lloyd The Graffiti turned those drawings into large-scale murals, transforming plain walls into vibrant celebrations of football culture.

Identity and Community

For the FAW, the project has been a way of strengthening the connection between clubs and supporters. Olly Allen, FAW Domestic Football Media & Marketing Manager, explained:

“It has been brilliant to see this project come to life over the last few months and the murals that have been produced brilliantly encapsulate the unique identities of our Cymru Premier clubs. As part of the Cymru Premier strategy, we are aiming to build the profile and awareness of clubs and this project provides permanent pieces of art that activate that goal. Community also sits at the heart of the development of the league and these murals help clubs engage with supporters old and new.”



A Broader Story Across Wales

The artworks are not only about individual clubs. They are also about how football in Wales forms a wider picture of culture and identity. Edd Norval, Director of The Deep Creative, reflected on that idea:

“This project spotlights the tapestry of distinct identities across Wales, working with clubs to understand these distinctions, whilst weaving them together to tell a broader story. As a whole, it is not really about those differences, but how those differences bring us together as football fans. Working with the clubs and the FAW on this has allowed art to tell stories, whether on stadia or in prominent community locations. We hope these artworks bring fans together, not only to celebrate the club you love, but each mural as an attraction in its own right when travelling on awaydays. We also hope that the designs give fans and members of each club and community a sense of pride, reinforcing their love of the beautiful game.”

More Than a Game

The JD Cymru Premier has always represented more than results and league tables. It reflects the passion of supporters, the importance of identity and the role football plays in daily life. With Canfas Cymru Premier, those values now have a permanent place in the public landscape. Across North and South Wales, murals are celebrating football for what it truly is: a part of community, culture and pride that never fades.





2 Devon Ave, Barry CF63 1BJ



Stebonheath Park, Llanelli, SA15 1EY



16 Stryd Y Porth Mawr, Caernarfon LL55 1AG



Sydney Rees Way, Haverfordwest, SA61 2EX



Y Graig Chapel, Briton Ferry



The Marine, 236 Abergele Rd, Colwyn Bay, LL29 9YH



THE NON-LEAGUE NETWORK

The Non-League Network is where the non-league game comes together – a first-of-its-kind platform connecting players, clubs, and fans with scouting tools, transfers, community chat, exclusive content, and a marketplace built for the beautiful game's grassroots.

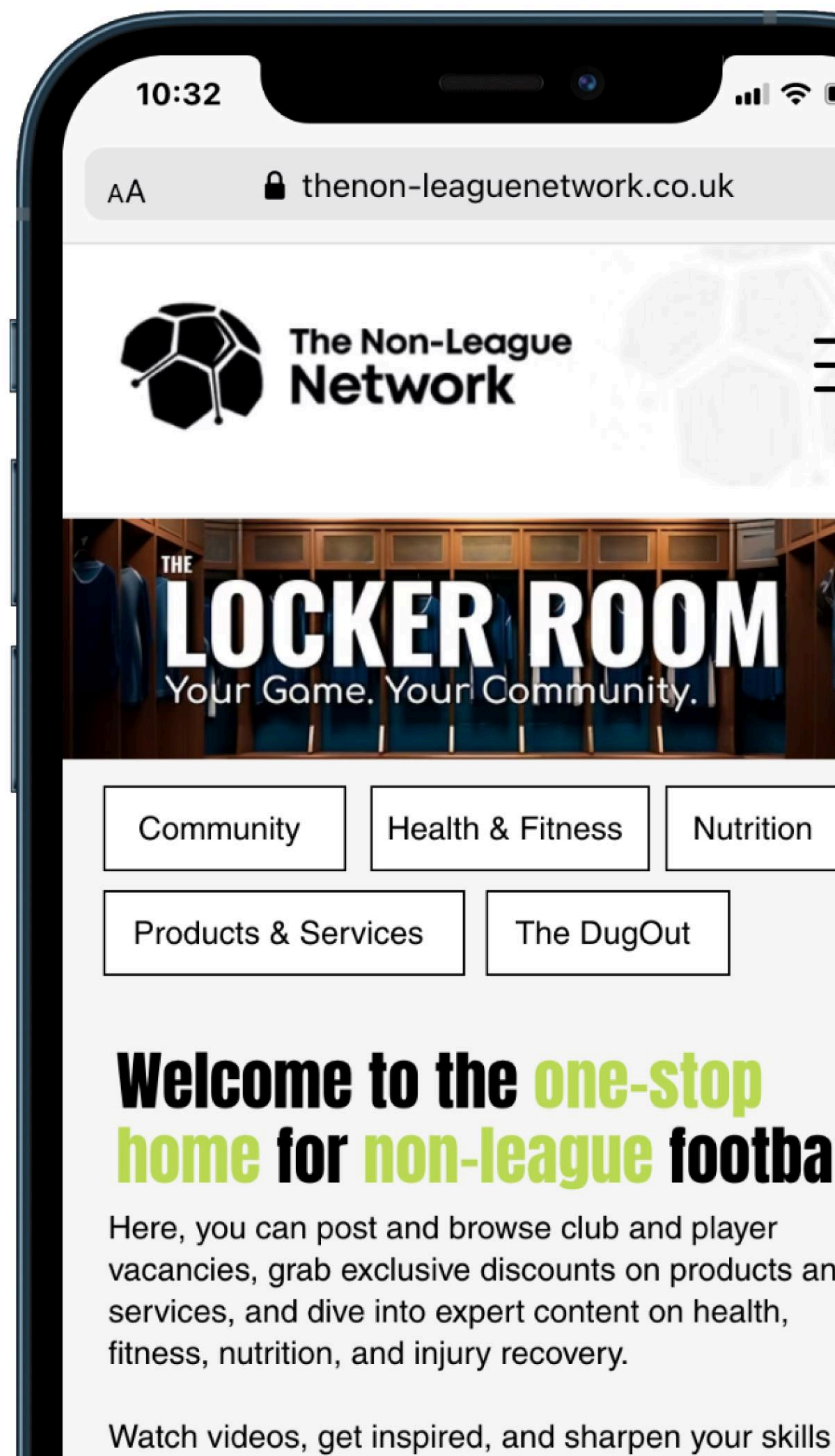
“We are entering an aggressive growth phase, rapidly expanding our user base. Developed entirely in-house and with full ownership of our IP, the platform is initially free to access and created specifically for the non deal as a dedicated channel, something that hasn't been achieved before.”

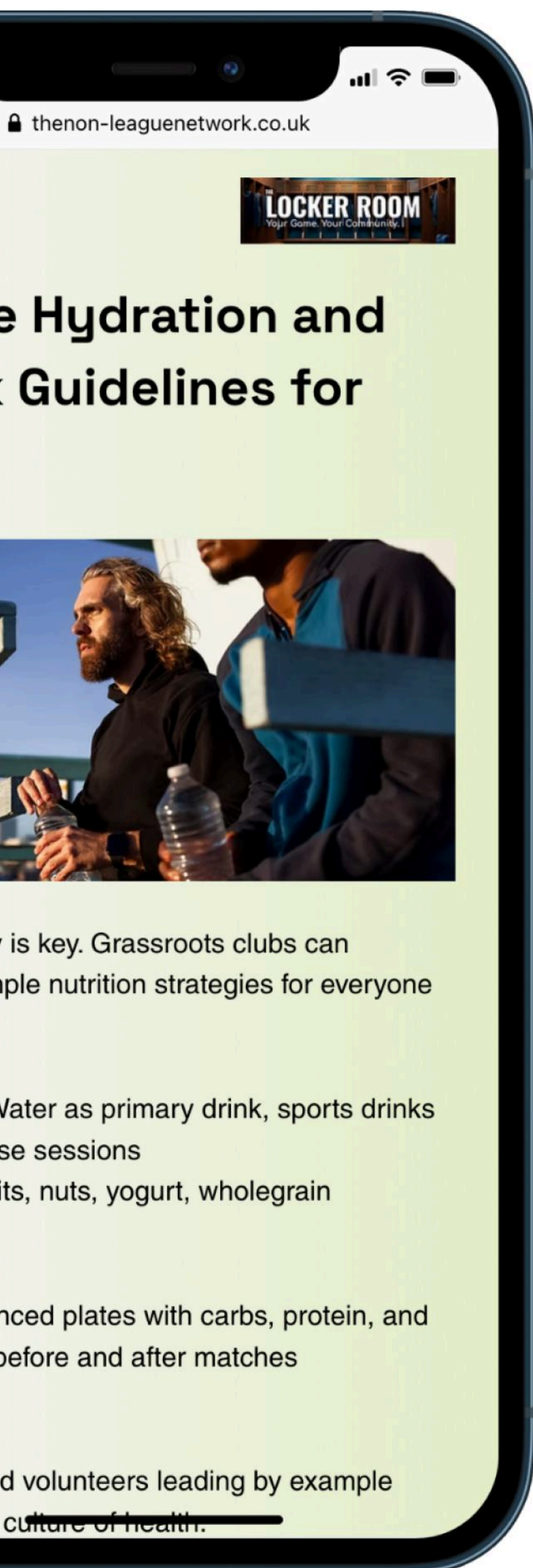
Jason Pyne, CEO

About The Locker Room

NOW launched on The Non-League Network

Step inside The Locker Room – your all-in-one space for the game beyond matchday. Designed exclusively for the non-league community, The Locker Room brings together health, performance, connection, and fun in one easy-to-use hub.





WHAT'S INSIDE:

Club & Player Social Community

Your very own social network for non-league football. Connect, post, chat, and advertise for the talent or club you need.

Sample pages:

The Locker Room Dedicated Social Media Platform – A members-only social media platform area within the Network, offering health & fitness advice, nutrition tips, products, services, and football-related content, all designed to support players and clubs.

Health & Fitness

Expert tips, training plans, and advice to keep you match-ready all season

Nutrition

Game-focused guidance on fuelling your body for performance, recovery, and long-term health.

Products & Services

Exclusive deals on football gear, coaching, club support, and more – all hand-picked for our community.

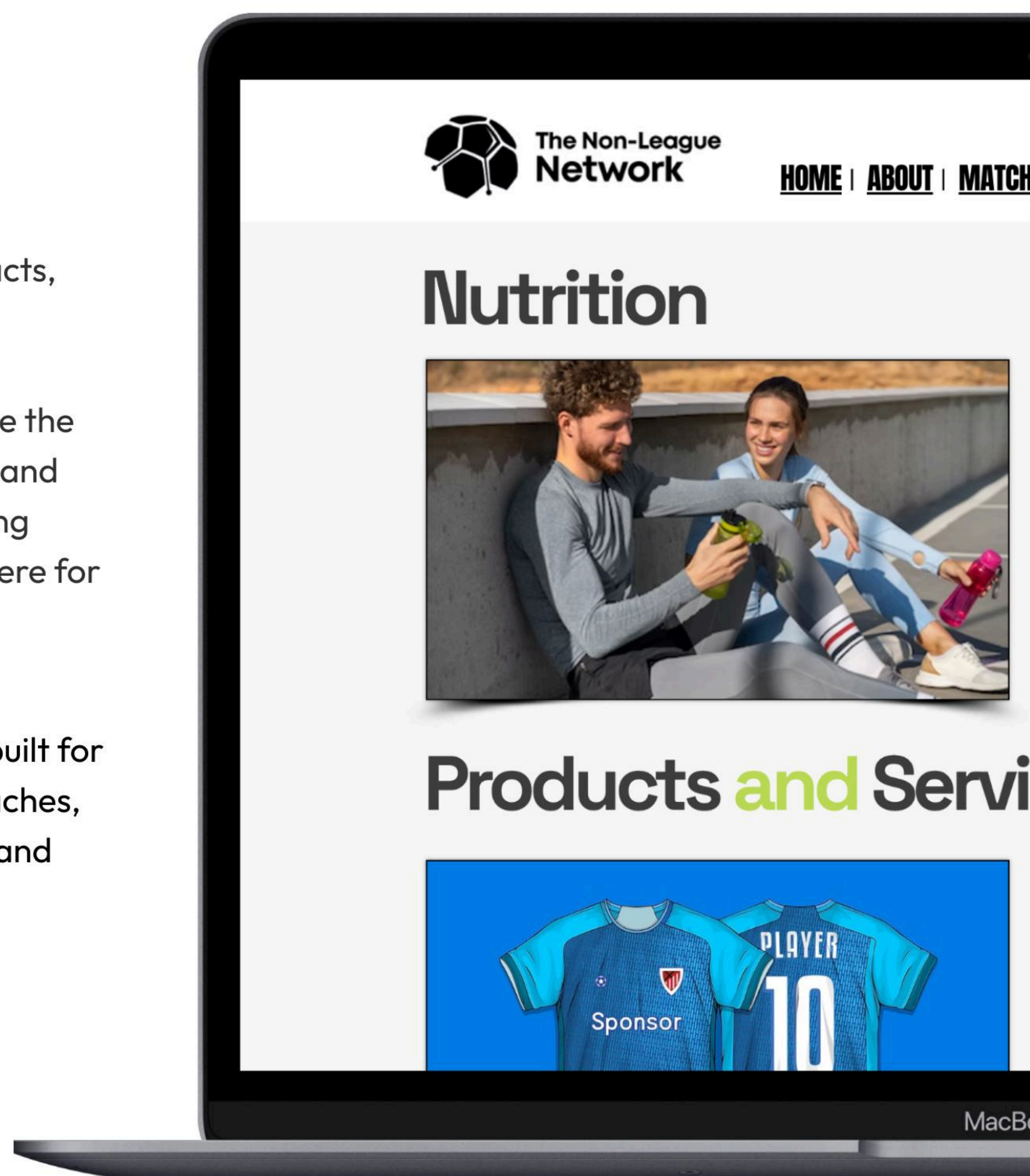
Other Stuff

The lighter side of football: trivia, funnies, quirky facts, and stories that make the game what it is.

The Locker Room is more than a feature – it's where the non-league family comes together to learn, share, and enjoy the game in new ways. Whether you're chasing peak performance, building your network, or just here for the banter, you'll find your space here.

The Non-League Network – An online community built for non-league football, connecting clubs, players, coaches, and fans. It's a place to share news, opportunities, and resources.

Sign up is FREE and can be found at www.thenon-leaguenetwork.co.uk





BUILDING BRIDGES: HOW SLOS ARE CHANGING WELSH FOOTBALL

Pictures by **Craig Thomas/FAW**

The relationship between clubs and supporters is often talked about, but rarely given structure. That is starting to change.

Over the past year, the FAW has quietly added a new layer to the JD Cymru Premier's off-pitch setup with the introduction of Supporter Liaison Officers (SLOs). It is a role designed to put fans right at the heart of how clubs operate, and it is now officially in place across the top division.

The FAW recently completed Wales' first full SLO training programme in partnership with UEFA Academy and Football Supporters Europe. The four-day course, held across two sessions in Cardiff, brought together club representatives, fan voices and football administrators. It was a rare chance for people from very different parts of the game to sit in the same room and share how things really work.

What does an SLO actually do

An SLO is the human bridge between the boardroom and the stands. They are not there to police or enforce anything. Their job is to listen, connect and communicate. When done properly, they help clubs understand what fans experience on matchdays and make sure supporters know their voices reach the people making decisions.

Across Europe, SLOs have become an essential part of football culture. In countries like Germany they help shape supporter life and strengthen the bond between club and community. Now Welsh football is developing its own version of the role, built around the same spirit of communication and trust.

The growing SLO network

There are now 14 SLOs in place across Cymru Premier clubs, along with representatives from a few sides who joined the programme early. Each one acts as a key contact between supporters, club staff and local partners.

Each SLO brings a different focus. Some are improving accessibility and family engagement. Others are helping with feedback, matchday coordination and inclusion. What unites them is a shared belief that football in Wales can be better connected and more transparent.

Why it matters

For years, the link between clubs and fans has relied on social media replies and word of mouth. The SLO structure changes that. It gives every club a clear point of contact and every supporter a trusted route to be heard.

The role will only work if it is driven by people who care deeply about the game. That is what makes it such a powerful step forward. If it takes off, it could quietly transform how clubs communicate with their supporters, one conversation at a time.

Looking beyond Tier 1

It would be great to see this approach spread across the divisions. Many Cymru North and Cymru South clubs already pride themselves on their close connection to fans, and an SLO could help strengthen that bond even further. A single volunteer or committee member taking on the role can make a big difference, especially as clubs grow and supporter bases expand.

If the aim of Welsh football is to build genuine community clubs, the SLO model gives everyone a simple blueprint for how to start.



HAVERFORDWEST COUNTY SEEK NEW INVESTMENT

Pictures by **Ashley Crowden/FAW**

Haverfordwest County have confirmed they are open to new investors or even a full sale of the club as they look to take the next step in their development. The Bluebirds, who play at Ogi Bridge Meadow in Pembrokeshire, want to turn professional, strengthen their youth structure, and one day lift the Cymru Premier title.

Although sitting at the wrong end of the table this season, the club's long-term ambitions remain bold. Current chairman Rob Edwards, who first got involved after spotting a "for sale" post during the Covid lockdown, has overseen a huge shift in fortunes since arriving. Crowds that once hovered around the 100 mark have surged, with over 1,700 attending last year's European play-off final.

"We started with a strong base and built from there, particularly in the academy and community," Edwards explained. "The progress has been clear, but now we want to bring in the right people to help accelerate that journey."

European Experience and Youth Success

Haverfordwest secured third place in the Cymru Premier last term, booking another shot at Europe. They also made headlines in 2023 when they claimed their first victory in continental competition.

Their academy has mirrored that progress, winning successive U19 league titles, lifting the FAW Youth Cup, and even earning a place in the UEFA Youth League. A number of those young players have already made the step into the senior side.

Part of a Wider Trend

The call for new backers comes during a period of increased outside interest in British football, with high-profile examples including Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney's ownership of Wrexham and NFL icon Tom Brady taking a stake in Birmingham City.

For the Bluebirds, the hope is that fresh support can help them turn from a club with potential into one regularly competing at the top of the Welsh game.



We caught up with **Ryan Evans, Multimedia Lead and board member at Haverfordwest County**, to chat about the club's current direction and future ambitions. He spoke openly about the work being done behind the scenes, the investment opportunities being explored, and how the board plans to keep building on the club's recent momentum both on and off the pitch.

What kind of investment or partnership is the club hoping to attract, and how would that support the vision for the first team?

We're looking for partnerships that share our belief in sustainable growth - investment that doesn't just chase short-term success but strengthens the whole ecosystem around the club. That means working with people and organisations who see the value in what we're building: a club rooted in its community, with the ambition to consistently compete at the top end of the Cymru Premier and in Europe. I believe that any backing we bring in should enhance our ability to support the first team with even better facilities, professional structures and the resources to continue developing talent the right way.

Is the long term goal to become a fully professional club, or do you see a gradual, hybrid model as the best route forward?

The ultimate ambition for every Cymru Premier club is surely to become a fully professional club - but it's something that must be achieved in the right way and at the right time. For us, that means continuing to make steady progress, potentially through a hybrid model where professionalism develops naturally from the structures we're building. Going full-time only makes sense if it's sustainable, both financially and operationally. At this stage, several of our players have established careers outside football, and it wouldn't be realistic or fair to expect them to make that leap overnight. Our priority, therefore, is to create a framework that can support that transition in the future - rather than forcing it before the club is ready.

How do you see Haverfordwest's ambitions influencing the wider Cymru Premier? Could your progress help raise standards across the league?

We'd like to think so. Every club that raises its standards - on and off the pitch - contributes to lifting the entire Cymru Leagues. If we can implement initiatives that others view as an example of what can be achieved through ambition, good governance, community connection and modern practices, then that's a real positive. The progress we've made in recent years across areas such as multimedia, fan engagement, and professionalism has been encouraging - and if that inspires others to raise their own standards, everyone benefits. Ultimately, that makes Welsh football stronger and more respected as a whole.

The New Saints are currently the benchmark both on and off the pitch. How realistic is it for other clubs to close that gap, and what would it take over time to consistently challenge them?

TNS have had incredible success on the pitch for the last 20 years - and full credit to them for that. But I'd like to think football can be cyclical - and with the right structures, investment and vision, the gap can close - as Connah's Quay proved a few years ago. I'm not naive enough to think it could happen overnight but the more clubs who operate with clear long-term plans, invest in infrastructure and build strong professional cultures, the more competitive the league will become. The challenge is to grow sustainably and build something lasting.



If new backing comes in, what areas would you most like to strengthen — facilities, staffing, or the playing squad?

All three are vital, and it's not easy to separate them in terms of priority. That said, I'd probably lean towards further improving our facilities first. Strong foundations off the pitch create the right environment for players - male and female, across all age groups, to thrive. Enhanced facilities benefit everyone, from the first team to the academy and the wider community. Naturally, strengthening our staff and playing squad remains a key focus too, but it's all about balance: building a club that's robust and well-equipped in every department.

With outside interest in Welsh football growing, what makes Haverfordwest County a strong opportunity for potential investors?

Haverfordwest County is a club with authenticity, potential and real purpose. We're proud of our roots and proudly champion the #PlayingForPembrokeshire mantra - but we're not defined or limited by it. There's a genuine opportunity here for investors who want to be part of something growing in the right way: a club deeply connected to its community, competing in Europe and leading the way in how we tell our story. Across every department — from commercial to the academy — we're exploring local, national, and international collaborations that strengthen the club's foundations and broaden our reach. From a multimedia and brand perspective, our team has built strong digital foundations through our social media channels, podcast, live commentaries and club documentary series - with *You Can Have It All: Series 4* on the horizon - giving the club reach and recognition far beyond Pembrokeshire. We're showing what modern Welsh football can be: professional, creative and ambitious.

If more clubs move towards full time football, do you see that as a positive step for the league's overall growth and competitiveness?

Yes – 100% – provided it's done sustainably. The more professional the environment, the higher the standards on the pitch and the better the product for supporters and broadcasters. But it's important that clubs don't overstretch to get there. The goal should be steady progress, where clubs learn from each other, share best practice and raise standards together. A competitive, professional Cymru Premier is good for everyone involved.

Is matching The New Saints the ultimate target, or is the focus on creating a sustainable model that builds long term success on your own terms?

Our focus is on building success in our own way. TNS's achievements on the pitch in recent years have set the benchmark for all clubs in Wales but our journey will always be our own – rooted in our community, our values and our identity. The aim isn't to replicate someone else's model, but to create a version of success that reflects Haverfordwest County; sustainable growth, competitive football and a continued legacy on and off the pitch. If we stay true to that vision, I have no doubt that success will come.





BAGLAN DRAGONS A WELSH CLUB ON THE RISE

Pictures by **Geraint Nicholas/FAW**

Say hello to Baglan, home of one of the most ambitious clubs in Welsh football. The Dragons are now proud members of the second tier, the JD Cymru South, but their journey has been anything but straightforward.

The story began in the 1999 to 2000 season when the club entered Division Two of the South Wales Amateur League under the name Red Dragon and Baglan. After a few years of steady progress they secured promotion to Division One as champions in 2002 to 2003.

A year later the club changed its name to Baglan Red Dragons and quickly made an impression in the higher division, missing out on the runners up spot on goal difference in only their second campaign. In 2009 they became Baglan Dragons FC, the name that has stuck ever since.

The merger of the South Wales Amateur and South Wales Senior leagues in 2015 to 2016 placed Baglan in the new South Wales Alliance League Division One. They finished runners up to Canton Liberal at the first attempt and secured promotion.

What followed was a steady climb towards the top of the pyramid. The 2021 to 2022 season saw Baglan crowned champions of the South Wales Alliance League, a landmark moment for the club. The following year was even more dramatic. After a slow start in the Ardal South West they put together a remarkable run and reached the play off final against Risca United. Two goals from Jordan Evans sealed promotion to the Cymru South, a level that once seemed a distant dream.

The debut season in the second tier brought new challenges. Against clubs with much larger budgets, Baglan more than held their own, finishing in a respectable tenth place and claiming memorable wins over Afan Lido, Goytre United, Trefelin and Pontardawe Town. Their Welsh Cup adventure also caught the eye, pushing Cymru Premier side Haverfordwest County to penalties before bowing out.



It is not just the first team that is thriving. The reserves stormed to the FAW Reserves South West title, while youth and under 16 teams gained valuable experience in their first seasons as Dragons.

In 2024 to 2025 the club took another huge step forward off the pitch. A merger with Baglan Boys and Girls Club brought more than 500 players under the same umbrella, creating one of the strongest community football bases in South Wales.

Honours

- Ardal South West League Runners up 2022 to 2023
- Ardal Southern Play off Winners 2022 to 2023
- South Wales Alliance League Premier Division Champions 2021 to 2022
- South Wales Alliance League Division One Runners up 2015 to 2016
- South Wales Amateur League Division Two Champions 2002 to 2003
- FAW Trophy Runners up 2021 to 2022

From Red Dragon and Baglan to Cymru South, the rise has been built on persistence, ambition and a clear sense of identity. With a strong community backing and a structure that now spans every age group, the Dragons look set to keep breathing fire in Welsh football for years to come.







KEY PEOPLE



Manager **CARL CLEMENT**

Carl Clement, 43, is the manager of Baglan Dragons. A former player with the club, he took charge in 2019 and has been at the heart of the Dragons' progress ever since.

Captain **LEWIS HOLMES**

Baglan Dragons captain Lewis Holmes has racked up over 100 senior appearances in Welsh football. A commanding centre back, he leads by example on the pitch and remains a massive presence for the Dragons.



Top Goalscorer **TOM DAVIES**

Thomas Davies is Baglan Dragons' top scorer, a lively wide player who has hit double figures in goals for two seasons running.

KEY INFO

Founded 1950

Ground Evans Bevan Playing Fields

Capacity 1000

2024/25 Position 8th

2024/25 Top Scorer Tom Davies





Clubs have been crying out for affordable video coverage, and now, thanks to a new partnership between TotalGrassroots and Staydia Sports, there is finally a solution that does not involve hefty subscription fees or expensive equipment.

Staydia Sports, Ireland's leading provider of AI powered broadcasting, has teamed up with TotalGrassroots to launch a UK wide offer that gives clubs a professional grade AI camera and full installation for free.

Yes, free. No setup costs, no ongoing charges for the club.

We are helping to spread the word because this is one of the most exciting bits of tech to hit the grassroots and non league scene in years.

How it works

Staydia provides the camera, installation, and platform at no cost to your club. They make their revenue by charging supporters, scouts, and coaches £6.99 a month for unlimited access to live and on demand games from across the UK.

Players and club officials can subscribe for just £3.99.

Your club gets:

- ✓ Professional quality match footage and streaming
- ✓ 100% of the advertising revenue you sell on your broadcasts
- ✓ The option to stream directly into your clubhouse and boost bar sales
- ✓ A second free camera when you reach enough subscribers

Why this matters

Proper video coverage has been out of reach for too many community clubs. This model flips that completely. It is accessible, sustainable, and designed to help clubs make money rather than spend it.

If you want to get your club set up with a free AI camera through the TotalGrassroots and Staydia partnership, hit the link below and register your interest:

Sign up here to get your club started at

topbins.co.uk/staydia

No strings. No costs. Just a genuine chance to bring professional broadcasting to your club and make the game we love even more visible.





400 UP FOR CRAIG HARRISON

Pictures by **Craig Thomas** / FAW

Craig Harrison has reached a landmark achievement, taking charge of his 400th game as manager of The New Saints.

Appointed in December 2011, the former Premier League defender stepped into the dugout for the first time on January 2nd 2012, a 3-0 victory over local rivals Newtown. What followed would reshape Welsh domestic football.

A first era of dominance

Between 2012 and 2017, Harrison delivered six consecutive league titles, four Welsh Cups and three Nathaniel MG Cups. His 2014/15 and 2015/16 squads completed back-to-back domestic trebles, and but for a Bala Town upset in the 2017 Welsh Cup final, a third was within reach.

Then came the record that grabbed worldwide attention. In the 2016/17 campaign, TNS strung together 27 straight wins in all competitions, breaking Ajax's long standing world record for consecutive victories in top flight football, a benchmark that had stood since 1972.

The return to Park Hall

After spells with Hartlepool, Bangor City and Connah's Quay Nomads, Harrison returned in August 2022. The Saints have not looked back. Three more league titles, two Welsh Cups and two Nathaniel MG Cups have since followed, while in Europe, history was made again last season as TNS became the first Welsh club to reach the UEFA Conference League league phase, lining up against Fiorentina and Panathinaikos.

400 and counting

In an era where managers rarely get time, Harrison's 400 games at the helm stand as a rare landmark.

And he's far from done. Reflecting on the milestone, he told the official TNS website:

"It's a moment I'm incredibly proud of – something that takes me all the way back to December 2011. I remember joining the club when my wife was pregnant with our daughter, who's now 13. This club has been a huge part of my life and my family's journey ever since. It's been an absolute privilege, and hopefully, there's another 400 to come!"

From trebles to European nights under the lights, Craig Harrison's story with The New Saints is one of trophies, records and longevity. The big question now is just how many more chapters are left to be written.



CRAIG HARRISON'S FIRST GAME

5 - 0

02.01.2011

Park Hall | Attendance: 417

TNS XI

Paul Harrison (GK)

Phil Baker

Steve Evans

Chris Marriott

Tomos Roberts

Simon Spender

Scott Ruscoe

Christian Seargeant

Alex Darlington

Craig Jones

Greg Draper

Goals

Greg Draper x3

Alex Darlington x2

NEWTOWN XI

Nick Thomas (GK)

Shane Sutton

Matthew Cook

Zach Evans

Robbie Millington

Gareth Partridge

Nicky Rushton

Connor Courtney

Luke Boundford

Steve Blenkinsop

Dave Howarth

DICKINSON ERA BEGINS AT FLINT MOUNTAIN

It's been a few weeks since Flint Mountain appointed Liam Dickinson as their new First Team Manager, stepping into the dugout after the departure of Andy Ruscoe.

The 32-year-old is a UEFA B Licence coach and was brought in with the aim of bringing a calm approach, fresh ideas and a youthful ambition to Tier 2 management. General Manager Jamie Welsh explained at the time that Dickinson had been on the club's radar since the summer, and that the opportunity came sooner than expected.

"It was always our plan to add Liam to the coaching staff and we had been in contact since the summer, but the events over the weekend gave us the perfect chance to now bring him in as manager," Welsh said.

"After speaking to Liam, as well as coaches and players who have previously worked with him, I believe his ideas, perspective and coaching ability will be a great asset to the club as we look to build momentum."

Dickinson's first match in charge was a tough introduction, with Mountain falling to a 5-1 defeat against Denbigh Town in the league. Since then, the focus has been on regrouping and building towards a stronger run as the season moves into its decisive stages.

It's still early days for Dickinson, but the foundations are being laid for what Mountain hope will be a progressive new chapter.



THE WELSH FOOTBALL MEDIA GUIDE

There are loads of good resources for Welsh football now so we've made a list of the podcasts, radio stations and everything else so you can keep in touch with the Welsh game.

Radio / Podcasts

Radio Cymru Sport

Cymru Sport is an internet based radio service, designed to fill the gap for live sport commentary in the regions of Wales.

cymrusport.cymru



SW20 Football Hour

Covering South Welsh football in the JD Cymru South and Ardal South East leagues

mixcloud.com/SW20Radio

Magazines / Print

Welsh Football Magazine

Welsh Football Magazine is a print publication devoted to all aspects of football (soccer) in Wales, run on an unpaid basis by football fans, for football fans.

welsh-football.net



THE WELSH FOOTBALL MEDIA GUIDE

Blogs

The 94th Minute

Clint is a groundhopper from Flintshire in North East Wales. He decided to create this blog to give a record of his experiences visiting grounds

the94thminute.wordpress.com



Video

Newport City FC

Cymru Sport is an internet based radio service, designed to fill the gap for live sport commentary in the regions of Wales.

youtube.com/@newportcityfc1438

