

Good morning

I am delighted to introduce you to Leighton Davies, who has been appointed as the new Chief Financial Officer of the Welsh Rugby Union.

Leighton will join us next month and the hugely positive contribution we expect him to make to the future of the game in Wales will be most welcome.

The media statement below will be issued this morning from 11 am and gives you further information about Leighton's background and experience.

The statement below also confirms a new Board appointment for Alison Thorne, who becomes our Senior Independent Director and gives the very best wishes of everyone at the WRU to Dan Mills, who has decided to leave his current role as interim Finance Director after completing a handover period – and does so with our best wishes and blessings.

Yours,

Abi Tierney
WRU Group CEO

Leighton Davies has been appointed Chief Financial Officer at the Welsh Rugby Union Group. The high profile role is the first senior management appointment of new Group Chief Executive Abi Tierney's tenure.

New CEO Tierney took over from interim CEO Nigel Walker in January 2024, with Walker moving to another Executive Board post, Executive Director of Rugby, on her arrival.

Davies is currently Global Controller at Puro-lite, an Ecolab Company, having previously spent seven years with them as Finance Director, International Operations.

He is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants and graduate of Cardiff University who hails originally from Crynant in the Dulais Valley.

After training as a Chartered Accountant with Ernst Young he has embarked on a varied international career spanning sectors across Chemicals, Aviation, Transportation, Media and entertainment and most recently Life Science and Bioprocessing.

Before Puro-lite, he worked at the BBC as a Finance Director for three years. Prior to that he held senior finance roles at GE Aviation and Network Rail.

"This is an exciting time to be joining Welsh rugby and I'm really looking forward to the challenge, to helping get to grips with the issues affecting our clubs, the professional game and our communities and to playing my part in finding the solutions that will help the game grow to its full potential," said Davies.

"I am a finance leader with proven commercial business acumen, I will bring an ability to see and help drive the big commercial picture as well as ensuring the finance function at the Welsh Rugby Union is efficient, effective and reliable for all other parts of the business."

"Rugby means more to us in Wales than it does in any other nation around the globe and this is a role I will relish."

Davies will start as Chief Financial Officer next month with interim Finance Director Dan Mills remaining in post during a handover period, after which time he intends to take a well-earned break before moving to seek new opportunities.

"It has been vitally important for us to find the right person to fill this CFO position and, in Leighton, we have found someone who is not only passionate about the game in Wales"

but who brings a wealth of relevant operational experience, commercial acumen and gravitas to the role,” said CEO Tierney.

“Leighton joins us at a time when we are designing a new strategy for the game in Wales and his insight and expertise will be invaluable to that process, just as it will be to the business and operational management of Welsh rugby in the months and years ahead.”

Tierney added: ***“I can’t let this moment pass without offering my heartfelt thanks to Dan Mills for all that he has done over the last year.***

“He will leave Welsh rugby with the blessing and best wishes of all those who have worked with him during his time here and, equally, I know he would be welcomed back with open arms should he ever decide the time is right to return.”

In a further advancement for the governance of Welsh rugby, WRU Board member Alison Thorne has been appointed to a new position of Senior independent Director (SID).

The Board completed an interview process earlier this month and officially appointed Thorne at the Group’s recent monthly meeting.

Richard Collier-Keywood, who made history when he was named as the WRU’s first independent Chair in June last year, joined the new WRU Board at the same time as Thorne who was brought in as one of four new iNEDs in the summer of 2023.

“I am delighted Alison has accepted the position of senior independent director on the WRU Board,” said Collier-Keywood.

“This is a new role for the WRU but it is a vital part of good governance to have a senior independent director in place to act as a focal point for other directors as necessary to ensure that I, as chair, am accountable for my performance and behaviours. This is something that is widely regarded as best practice for a good strong Board.”

Alison is a former chair of leading equality charity Chwarae Teg. She is the Lead in Wales for Women on Boards and Chairs Barcud Housing and National Dance Company Wales.

“We have a dynamic and diverse Board in place to govern Welsh rugby, one that has already progressed significantly in a short period of time,” said Thorne.

“I see my role as one that supports the chair but also helps to hold the chair accountable and can work as a conduit between the chair and other Board members and stakeholders.

“We feel we have the right recipe in place in terms of the levels of expertise, different lived experience and diverse opinion available to us to make better and more meaningful decisions and we are all hopeful and optimistic about what we will be able to achieve as a result.”

The full composition of the WRU Board is:

Amanda Bennett, Richard Collier-Keywood (Chair), Claire Donovan, Chris Jones, John Manders (CGB chair), Jennifer Mathias, Jamie Roberts, Alison Thorne (SID), Abi Tierney (CEO), Malcolm Wall (Chair of PRB); Colin Wilks, Andrew Williams