

A new cycle for Welsh

The Wales National Velodrome – just the second of its kind in the UK – opened its doors in November, ushering in praise from sport chiefs and world-class athletes, as well as the local community

BY JANE WILLIAMS

In 1995, the Sports Council for Wales decided which sports would most benefit from a national centre. It was decided that Wales had real potential for winning world-class cycling medals and that a velodrome would be a massive boost.

Proving the Sports Council's theory right is one Nicole Cooke, who this year became the youngest ever winner of the World Cup series. Joining her on the world stage is Julian Winn, who became British Road Race Champion in 2002, Huw Pritchard, who won a track silver at the Manchester Commonwealth Games, and a string of up and coming talents.

As Cooke notched up her ranking in the World Cup Series this season, the construction of the Wales National Velodrome seemed equally speedy. Given the official go-ahead to start construction in July 2002, CH Pearce Construction of Bristol completed the project within the 10-month contract period, and on budget.

Built to the tune of £7.5m through the Sports Council's lottery budget, Newport City Council will be responsible for the running costs. Value for money it may be, but the Wales National Velodrome continues to enjoy the trappings of a world-class training base.

The 250-metre banked timber track was designed by Australian track design specialist, Ron Webb, who was also responsible for tracks at Manchester, Sydney and Athens. Boasting a sports science laboratory, weight training suites, a cardiovascular fitness centre and wet relaxation areas, it has capacity for 2,000 spectators with 500 seated.

While the facility will be home to elite riders, it will also be used by local cycling clubs and up and coming talented youngsters that have been identified by the Welsh Cycling Union.

The track centre is jam-packed with facilities. The 40 x 80 metre arena houses facilities for basketball, badminton, netball, gymnastics and five-a-side football. There are also changing units that can be accessed by teams using the pitches outside. As well as providing for the community, the basketball and badminton courts are international-level standard and can be used by elite performers. The courts have been placed directly in front of the seating in order that matches can attract spectators.

According to architect Graham Milsom, not many velodromes make use of this space inside the track. Prior to completing their designs, Milsom carried out a study of continental velodromes in order to establish the design and quality parameters necessary: 'There is very little information on velodromes, so we saw the benefit of a study tour,' says Milsom. 'The different partners – the Sports Council, the Welsh Cycling Union, the local authority – visited velodromes in Cologne, Antwerp, Ghent and Buttgen. We had a tight budget but we made sure we had good, hard-wearing finishes and good quality equipment.' Milsom's vision, coupled with Newport City Council's eagerness to provide more facilities for the community, has resulted in a highly valuable sports centre for the people of Newport.

Haydn Ames, sports and leisure manager for Newport City Council and ISRM Member, says: 'The opening of the velodrome marks another important development to the portfolio of leisure facilities now provided by Newport. The city's sport strategy is aimed at encouraging healthy lifestyles, offering equal access and supporting community development – the Wales National Velodrome demonstrates this ethos.'

Another finishing touch, which adds to the ethos that this is also for the champions of tomorrow, is a road which circles the velodrome. Free of traffic, this can be used as an external race-track, which is particularly useful for wheelchair racing and youngsters who are not old enough to ride on the roads. In a separate development, Newport's speedway cycle track is in the process of being located nearer to the velodrome to make this a truly world-class training base.

Dr Huw Jones, chief executive of the Sports Council for Wales, concludes: 'What we've got is an incredibly hard-working facility that manages to cater for elite riders as well as recreational sportsmen and women. This means that the project is much more sustainable financially. The fact that youngsters are rubbing shoulders with, and gaining inspiration from, champions like Nicole Cooke augurs so well for the future.' ●

About the author

Jane Williams is press officer for the Sports Council for Wales.



Sport



Crystal Clear Water So Inviting...
Your Guests Will Be Jumping For Joy



Accu-Tab
Tablet Chlorination
System




The Accu-Tab® System by PPG is the Total Solution

for your chlorination needs. We are a leader in safer, simpler, more accurate tablet chlorination.

■ **Safer...** a solid alternative to liquid chlorine or chlorine gas. No cylinders or drums to handle. No spill, leak or bunding concerns.

■ **Simpler...** easy to handle 8cm (3") tablets, a patented chlorinator with no moving parts or small openings to clog. Conversion from existing systems is easy.

■ **More Accurate...** as easy to adjust as gas. More consistent than liquid chlorine. Predictable delivery.

The
Crystal
Clear
Total
Solution



*The clear result is
in your water.*



Available
exclusively
from:

Certikin

Ph: 01993 778855
Fax: 01993 778620
info@certikin.co.uk