

Vale Council rallies behind rising badminton star

A rising star of Welsh badminton is aiming to reach the pinnacle of her sport with a helpful volley from the Vale of Glamorgan Council.



Thirteen-year-old Ellen Mahenthalingam, from Dinas Powys, is one of 20 elite athletes from the county whose sporting ambitions are being supported during 2010 by the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Sports Academy Scheme.

Overseen by the council's leisure and tourism department, the scheme gives members free use of the council's leisure facilities to help with their training needs.

Ellen, who started playing badminton aged seven, currently trains four times a week, with two of those sessions on the courts at Cowbridge Leisure Centre with her coach Chris Rees.

The Vale Council's Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism Cllr Anthony Ernest said: "We are delighted to support talented individuals to reach their potential on a national and international stage within recognised sports. The Sports Academy Scheme has been running for a number of years in the Vale and supported athletes such as Nicole Cooke earlier in their careers. I wish Ellen every success for the future and hope that she continues to enjoy her sport and achieves her dreams."

Ellen's proudest achievement in badminton so far is winning the under 11 and under 13 Welsh junior titles in singles, doubles and mixed doubles, and she will be travelling to Belgium in April to play in her first European tournament.

A pupil at St Cyres Comprehensive School, Ellen also plays tennis and hockey and runs for the school's athletics team. Her sister Joanna, 15, also took up badminton at a young age and has teamed up with Ellen to play doubles competitively in Wales and England, winning several tournaments. Her parents Ann and Esh also play a lot of badminton and golf, so hitting things definitely runs in the family!

Delighted with the support her daughter is receiving from the council, Ann Mahenthalingam said: "The Vale Council's Sports Academy Scheme has been invaluable in allowing Ellen access to courts and training facilities in the Vale of Glamorgan. With coaching and travel to tournaments, the cost of developing Ellen's badminton skills are high and it is great to have this extra support from the council."

