

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH RUGBY CLUB RUGBY BOARD
HELD AT 5PM ON MONDAY 23 JANUARY 2023
AT BT MURRAYFIELD AND BY MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Present:

Keith Wallace	(KW)	Vice-President
Alistair Forsyth	(AF)	Borders Regional Representative
Murdo Gillanders	(MG)	Edinburgh Regional Representative
Jim O'Neill	(JON)	Glasgow South Regional Representative (online)
Kevin Quinn	(KQ)	Premiership Representative
Bob Richmond	(BR)	North Regional Representative (online)
Neil Sutherland	(NS)	National 2 Representative
Hazel Swankie	(HS)	Midlands Representative
David Jamieson	(DJ)	Glasgow North Regional Representative
Gib McMillan	(GM)	Schools Representative
Ian Carse	(IC)	National 3 Representative (online)
Mhairi Hay	(MH)	Referees Representative
Mike Bruce	(MB)	Women & Girls Representative (online)
Gavin Scott	(GS)	Director of Rugby Development

Apologies:

Gerry Tosh	(GT)	National 1 Representative
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In Attendance:

Colin Rigby	(CR)	President
[NAME REDACTED]	(XX)	Senior Solicitor
[NAME REDACTED]	(XX)	Head of Business Operations
[NAME REDACTED]	(XX)	Head of Regional Development

1. Introduction ACTION

The Vice-President noted that a quorum was present and opened the Meeting.

An update was given on the National 1 Representative. The Vice-President passed on the best wishes of the CRB in his continued recovery.

The Vice-President noted that it was the first reporting meeting of the CRB and there was a lot of work to fit into the first year. He highlighted that the obligations of the CRB members were to work as a collective, with a duty to act in the best interests of Scottish rugby as a whole.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the CRB Meeting of 16 November 2022 were **APPROVED**.

3. Actions

3.1 *Update to be included in Club Comms re Clubs taking additional insurance policy – Complete.*

3.2 *Review of CRB Quarterly Report Template – ongoing*

- 3.3 *Review of the Terms of Reference for Fora* – complete.
- 3.4 *Agree timing of CRB Meetings and Working Groups* – complete.
- 3.5 *Share VP initiative with Clubs* – complete.

4. Business Reporting

4.1 Rugby Development Business Report

The Director of Rugby Development noted that report which had been provided to the CRB were a new way of reporting under the new governance structure. He highlighted that there would be business and activity reporting and each CRB Representative would be asked to feed in to the “activity” element. He acknowledged that as that was the first round of reporting the documentation may evolve as the business of the CRB progressed.

In reference to the Business Report, he noted that there was some evidence that across the women and men's game, and particularly the men's game, 72% of clubs have reported that players played 10 games or less. Almost half of players played five games or less. He highlighted that only 25% of players were playing in more than five games.

He emphasised that the total player registration number had always been a contentious point but the Rugby Development Department saw this as only one snapshot of the playing population which did not give the full picture.

The Vice-President encouraged CRB members to review the information contained within the Business Report and provide feedback to the Director of Rugby Development on its content.

4.2 Tackle Height Paper

The Vice-President noted that under the new governance structure, it was within the remit of the CRB to consider matters that affected the Cubs game. As such the Rugby Development Department would be presented to the CRB on the proposed lowering of the tackle height in the community game.

It was acknowledged that the RFU had recently launched an amendment to tackle height which had caused much consternation publicly. The Vice-President highlighted his desire for the CRB to be given the opportunity to debate this ahead of any next steps being advanced.

Scottish Rugby's Rugby Development Department provided the CRB with a detailed presentation on the benefits of law trials lowering the tackle height in the community game. The following key points were noted:

- It was noted that the data showed that under the current tackle height laws, players were 4.3 times more likely to suffer a head injury. 74% of all concussions came from the tackle area and that a trial conducted in France in 2019 had demonstrated a 63% reduction in head-on-head contacts when the limit was lowered to waist height tackles. On the basis of this evidence,

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the Rugby Development Department had considered their own position on tackle height.

- The Head of Training and Education noted that before a final policy position could be adopted, there were a number of decisions that Scottish Rugby had to carefully consider. These areas were:
 - (i) the height of the tackle. Each country had gone with different tackle heights. The RFU had decided upon the naval, New Zealand had opted for a limit of the sternum and France had decided that the ribs were the limit.
 - (ii) The next decision was around the second tackler and second tackler was permitted.
 - (iii) In relation to the ball carrier, movements may need to be restricted in order to align with the lower tackle height. Each country had also dealt with this differently.
 - (iv) Lastly, would pick and go be permitted going forward.

It was noted that World Rugby were likely to launch a global tackle height law trial around March or April 2023 but this did not allow the home unions enough time to implement it ahead of the season so the tier one nations had worked together to move ahead of that timing with World Rugby's blessing.

In terms of timeline, it was noted that Scottish Rugby still had a number of steps to carry out. First and foremost it was acknowledged that there needed to be engagement with the relevant stakeholders before final policy positions could be adopted. Developments would need to be made with Scottish Rugby's resources. Training courses and workshops would need to be carried out. It was noted that the training element would need to be extensive to ensure that coaches/players/referees understood the position and how to coach/play/referee accordingly.

The idea of having a tackle champion in every club school and referee society was discussed and it was highlighted that this was a system that had worked well in New Zealand.

The Rugby Development Department noted that it was moving fast issue with new research being released often. It was highlighted that Scottish Rugby was committed to fully consulting its stakeholders and not rushing into anything until it had been properly considered.

During questions the following points were noted:

- It was acknowledged that the first couple of months after implementation would be difficult, with much training needed to for everyone in the community game. It was likely that the penalty count would rise substantially while everyone got used to it. However, the extended trial in France had demonstrated that after the first couple of months it did begin to embed into the game.

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- It was noted that there were likely to be knock on consequences of the tackle height changing and would mean that everyone had to learn it progressed.
- In terms of timescale of any such change, it was noted that the consultation would take place throughout February and a decision would be required in March. It was likely the CRB would need to meet again in late March to discuss the outcome of the consultation.
- The CRB discussed at length the rationale of introducing such a law trial and the pros and cons of it. Ultimately the need to reduce injuries and keep the game progressing was flagged as fundamental.
- The need for stakeholder education and buy in was seen as fundamental to the success of the trial. The CRB and the Rugby Development Department noted their commitment to working to ensure that clubs, schools and for a were part of the change process which was hoped would lead to advocates of the law change.

The CRB agreed in principle that the Rugby Development Department should continue to look at the trial of the tackle height law and they would work in collaboration on the consultation process before meeting again in late March 2023.

It was agreed that an interim communications would be included in club comms within the next couple of weeks to set out what had been agreed by the CRB at this Meeting.

4.3 *Home Nations Visit Update*

The Vice-President advised the CRB that he and the Director of Rugby Development had recently taken part in a Home Nations session with their counterparts.

He noted that it had been hugely valuable exercise and that everyone at the meeting had transparent and open in sharing issues and best practice.

His main take away was that the Unions were all dealing with the same issues, but each of a different stage and scale.

He observed that the Unions that were seeing the most success were those that were not just focusing too much on their first XV and saw the development of their game more widely. All the Unions had at the session had acknowledged that in order to get the best from the community game, you had to look across all areas of a club.

4.4 *Rugby Development Conference*

The Head of Training and Development referred to the paper which had been circulated to the CRB in advance of the Meeting which was taken as read.

He noted that as more information on the Conference was decided over the coming weeks, the CRB would be kept up to date.

4.5 *Women's Regional and Premiership leagues criteria*

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The Director of Rugby Development referred to the papers which had been included within the Meeting pack. The papers were taken as read and he invited questions from the CRB.

The following points were noted:

- A number of CRB members noted that the language used within both criteria documents seemed overly onerous. The Director of Rugby Development noted that the documents have been drafted with the contribution of the women's teams and the language was designed to be encouraging rather than regulatory.
- The Head of Regional Development noted that the documents had been put together on the basis that were goals and targets to work towards. He highlighted that the Regional Teams were working with each club to find out what support they needed in order to meet the criteria.

It was intended to be supportive but also challenge the clubs to grow and develop. The Regional Teams wanted to understand how far away each club was from the criteria and how the big how big the gap was.

- The Women's Representative noted that he had met with representatives of the Rugby Development Department in the previous week to discuss the documents. He agreed that some of the "mandatory" language could be softened so that it was clear that these were areas to strive for. He welcomed the CRB comments and would feed these back into the Rugby Development team.

During discussion it was noted that the women's game had to be incentivised and targets had to be set so that the game would grow, develop and be held to higher standards going forward.

4.6 *Rugby Development Budget 2023/34 outline*

The Rugby Development Department provided the CRB with a comprehensive update on the 2023/24 department budget.

It was noted that the time for agreeing the budget was fast approaching and would require the input of the CRB in making budgetary decisions.

The Rugby Development Department provided an update to the CRB on each element of club funding and the changes between the years.

During questions, the following points were noted:

- There were a number of questions and comments on the Welfare and Improvement fund. The CRB received information about the content and allocation of this funding. It was noted that one justification for the tiering of this provision was that as the game became more competitive, the higher the risk of injury was.

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- The timing of the budget cycle was discussed and it was noted that the subcommittee of the CRB's operation steering committee of the CRB had been formed to provide feedback on that process.

From a high-level perspective, the Rugby Development Director noted that £8.5 million was currently 15% of the average Scottish rugby turnover of the previous four years of revenue. It was noted that next year it was predicted to be around 8.7 million. As part of the new governance structures, the set budget percentage provided some more stability to the Rugby Development Department budgetary process and ironed out the drop in revenue due to the World Cup. It was highlighted that a World Cup year was always a difficult year for the business as it was a double hit of more costs combined with less revenue.

5. Activity Reporting

5.1 CRB Member Quarterly Reports

The CRB quarterly reports were taken as read. The key points highlighted were as follows:

- In relation to defibrillators within clubs, it was noted that Dr Karen Brady had recently been recruited by Scottish Rugby as Welfare Manager and she would be taking this project forward due to her experience in the area. The project would still be done in conjunction with the relevant charity but Br Brady was considering the most efficient way of helping the clubs in the approach.
- The Premiership Representative noted that a meeting had taken place last week with High Performance regarding the Super6. He noted that the presentation which was provided still needed more work. He raised concern the the risk of premiership players being pulled to play Super6 still existed. He noted that this had a knock-on effect to the clubs in other leagues. He highlighted that a small working group had been re-established to consider the issue.
- The Schools Representative noted that the schools final had recently taken place and was a well-run and organised event with 7,500 tickets sold. He did note there had been an increase in the number of offences particularly in the quarters and semis matches and the sanctioning of that needed to be considered.
- It was noted that at the time of the age grade finals had been brought forward to align with other parts of the game. The Borders Representative noted that this was putting pressure on players as age grade games were being played at weekends.
- A number of CRB representatives noted that playing numbers remained a critical issue facing the clubs. The Edinburgh representative noted that they were starting to be friction between the women and men's game in relation to the priority and support the games were receiving. He noted that it was something with CRB should remain aware of.
- The President noted that an issue at Liberton RFC and their women's team had come to light through the course of the day. Scottish Rugby would be

considering this further. He noted that it was an issue that the CRB would take extremely seriously. The President asked that if any CRB members become aware of similar issues they should be brought to the attention of the President and/or Vice-President immediately.

- The Referees Representative noted that the referee recruitment process had not converted as many people as they had wished but there was a better conversion from the formal course only. The conversion rate was required to be able to raise standards. The society was targeting referee coaching so the clubs could get better referees.
- The Glasgow South Representative raised that the aspiring teams in the bowl games tended to only be involved for 10 minutes in 10 aside matches. He noted that meant there was a big step up to the full game. The Head of Regional Rugby explained that this was cumulative game time and should be more than that to allow players to acclimatise to a full game.

5.2 *Working Group Quarterly Reports*

5.2.1 *Districts*

It was noted that the group was working with the Rugby Development Department on a number of issues.

5.2.2 *Referees*

The Referees Representative noted that the group had carried out a productive review of progress to date and what was needed going forward.

5.2.3 *Regional and Reserve Leagues*

The work in this area was ongoing and it had been acknowledged that there was not a one-size-fits-all for all clubs across Scotland.

5.2.4 *Scrums School*

It was noted that the launch of the scrum schools had recently happened and had received good feedback. The CRB considered whether it would be useful to have club ambassadors to join.

5.2.5 *Transition*

The work on this area was ongoing and the next step was to confirm the operational timeline.

5.2.6 *Youth and Schools*

In this working group there had been a conflict of meeting dates. The National 2 Representative noted that the H&G group should not be meeting without the Schools Representative. He suggested the group should put forward a representative to join the Youth and Schools working group. He highlighted the importance of an AsOne ethos in the game and the need for collaborative working.

6. Vice-President Update

6.1 *Update from Vice-President on visit to Edinburgh Rugby and Glasgow Warriors*

The Vice-President noted that he had had a successful meeting with both of the Managing Directors of Edinburgh Rugby and Glasgow Warriors. Both MDs had noted that they would like to host the CRB at their respective clubs for a meeting.

Both MDs had full recognised the value of their players giving back to the domestic game.

The engagement between the club and professional games should be a focus of the CRB. It was agreed once some of the existing working group projects were complete, the CRB may consider establishing a professional team working group.

7. CRB Constitutional Documents

7.1 *Fora Terms of Reference*

The following points were raised in relation to the Fora Terms of Reference:

- The Midlands representative noted that previous regional fora terms of reference had not highlighted first XV, and asked had this now been included as there will only be 'one' terms of reference to cover all leagues and Regions fora. It was agreed that the election rules needed to be reviewed.
- The Premiership Representative raised that the use of "mandating" within the terms of reference should perhaps be softened. The Vice-President agreed that he would review that wording.

7.2 *CRB Terms of Reference*

The Vice-President noted that the contents of the CRB Terms of Reference had been based on the Minute of Understanding. After consideration, the CRB **APPROVED** the terms.

7.3 *Championship/Competitions Committee Quarterly Report style*

The Championship/Competitions Committee Quarterly Report style was **APPROVED**.

8. CRB Work Planning

8.1 *Updated Work Plan*

The Vice-President referred to the work plan that had been circulated to CRB Members. He noted that an additional meeting may be required for an update on working groups and the development of the tackle height discussion.

8.2 *Draft Dates*

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It was noted that the meetings were aimed to fit in with meetings of the SRL and Unions boards and had purposely built in time for club contribution to the CRB work process.

9. Diversity and Inclusion Update

No updates were given.

10. Safeguarding Update

No updates were given.

11. AOB

Under AOB, the President raised the following points:

- He wished the Men's National Team all the best on behalf of the CRB for the upcoming 6 Nations.
- He noted that SCOG had been reformed under the chairmanship of B Frazer. This would be communicated after the first Union Reporting Meeting. He noted one of the group's first tasks would be to look at the implementation of the governance review.
- It was noted that the recruitment process for the remaining two Custodian vacancies would shortly commence. A landing page "join our huddle" had been established. Club members should be encouraged to consider the vacancies.

12. Chair Remarks

The Vice-President thanked the CRB members for their contribution.

With no further business the Vice-President closed the Meeting at 8pm.

APPROVED 20 FEBRUARY 2022