

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH RUGBY CLUB RUGBY BOARD
HELD AT 5PM ON WEDNESDAY 18 OCTOBER 2023
AT SCOTTISH GAS 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
Neil Sutherland	(NS)	National 2 Representative (online)
Hazel Swankie	(HS)	Midlands Representative
David Jamieson	(DJ)	Glasgow North Regional Representative
Gerry Tosh	(GT)	National 1 Representative (Online)
Mhairi Hay	(MH)	Referees Representative
Mike Bruce	(MB)	Women & Girls Representative (online)
Gavin Scott	(GS)	Director of Rugby Development

Apologies:

Ian Carse	(IC)	National 3 Representative
Gib McMillan	(GM)	Schools Representative

In Attendance:

Colin Rigby	(CR)	President
Angela McCracken	(AM)	Head of Legal and Governance
[NAME REDACTED]	(XX)	Head of Regional Development
[NAME REDACTED]	(XX)	Solicitor
[NAME REDACTED]	(XX)	Business Operations & Support Manager
[NAME REDACTED]	(XX)	Head of Competitions & Compliance
[NAME REDACTED]	(XX)	Child Wellbeing & Protection Manager
[NAME REDACTED]	(XX)	Head of Game Development
[NAME REDACTED]	(XX)	Head of People & Engagement
[NAME REDACTED]	(XX)	Head of Rugby Development Operations

1. Introduction ACTION

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

The Vice-President noted that the roadshows that had taken place since the last CRB meeting have been successful.

Apologies were noted from the National 3 Representative and the Schools Representative.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the CRB Meeting of 23 August were approved.

3. Actions

- 3.1 *SuperSeries Review Update:* The Vice-President noted that this would be discussed in greater depth during the meeting as one of the items on the agenda.
- 3.2 *Update to Minutes of 28 June 2023 to reflect comments of Edinburgh Regional Representative:* **COMPLETE**
- 3.3 *Update on location of Minutes of the website:* Ongoing – the Head of Legal and Governance advised that the website is now up to date and that requests have been made to have a dedicated Minutes page on the Scottish Rugby website. Head of Legal and Governance confirmed this will be put in place and included in Club Comms once the change has been made.
- 3.4 *Election Rules Progress Update:* Ongoing - Head of Legal and Governance noted that the Union board meeting was taking place this week and that this is on their agenda. Head of Legal and Governance stated that she would keep the CRB Members up to date as to the progress of this.
- 3.5 *Borders proposed District Union Application:* Ongoing – Head of Legal and Governance noted that feedback was given to the Borders League on their application, and Scottish Rugby is now awaiting a response.
- 3.6 *CRB Dates:* **COMPLETE**
- 3.7 *Safeguarding Update:* It was noted that an update would be given in depth under the Agenda Item later in the meeting.
- 3.8 *Update from Head of Regulation on regulatory statistics:* **COMPLETE** - Paper included in Meeting Pack.
- 3.9 *Review of consultation process on NCRs:* Ongoing – it was agreed that this will take place for next season’s NCRs.
- 3.10 *Query relating to pitch dimensions:* It was noted that the Head of Regulation would address this in the next meeting.
- 3.11 *Invite Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development to October CRB Meeting to discuss movement of players from academy to clubs:* It was agreed that due to pressures of business this will be rolled onto the next CRB Meeting.

All other action points were either complete or covered off under agenda points at the Meeting.

4. Safeguarding Update

4.1 Update from Safeguarding Team

An update was given by the Child Wellbeing & Protection Manager and the Head of People & Engagement. This included an overview of the Safeguarding Team structure and the work that the team do. The Child Wellbeing & Protection Manager and the Head of People & Engagement also provided an overview of:

- the training provided by Scottish Rugby;
- cases received last year;
- the Scottish Rugby Safeguarding Conference;
- the safeguarding landscape; and
- the high-profile reviews taking place across other sports.

The following key points were highlighted:

- It was noted that we are audited by Children 1st to ensure that Scottish Rugby is providing the right level of protection.
- Scottish Rugby intend to run the Scottish Rugby Safeguarding Conference every second year.
- Trainers are being brought in at a bespoke level, who can support on rugby-specific scenarios that arise.

Borders Regional Representative noted that the topic at hand is not something that everyone is aware of but is reflective of society due to social media etc. being prevalent in children's lives. Borders Regional Representative asked how CRB can be made aware of cases, appreciating there is confidentiality involved. The Head of People & Engagement noted that CPOs and safeguarding community is the first port of call but that Scottish Rugby do a monthly safeguarding report.

The Child Wellbeing & Protection Manager provided a snapshot comparison of reported cases from August-September 2022 and August-September 2023. It was noted that more cases are reported and this is possibly down to the increase in training and awareness, which empowers individuals and clubs to report.

The Child Wellbeing & Protection Manager advised that a new case management panel to be created – discussions were ongoing as to who will be part of this. It was advised that Scottish Rugby also intend to set up a new safeguarding independent advisory group to review complex cases and steer the overall safeguarding strategy. The Safeguarding Team advised that the Terms of Reference to be shared in the coming months.

The Safeguarding Team advised that the focus points for the 2023/24 season were to:

- update the safeguarding policy;
- form the case management panel;
- implement the case management tool on SCRUMS; and
- provide further updated safeguarding training.

The Head of People & Engagement noted that Scottish Rugby is keen to offer safeguarding training to CRB Members, and that the Child Wellbeing & Protection Manager would be in touch to ascertain availability for training, ideally to take place in person in early 2024.

4.2 *CRB Member Updates (if any)*

The Vice-President noted that the uptake in reporting is positive as it means there are more people coming forward, reducing the worry of underreporting. The Vice-President asked if CRB members could receive get regular reports on figures. The Child Wellbeing & Protection Manager advised these could be provided quarterly and

that the data can be broken down by region. ACTION: quarterly reports to be provided.

National 2 Representative noted that young people feel more empowered to come forward. The Head of People & Engagement agreed and that we should keep encouraging this and guiding them where and who to report to.

5. Strategy Session

5.1 *Rugby Development Strategy*

The papers were taken as read.

The Vice-President noted that the strategy sessions roadshows and community rugby day have been successful and that there has been lots of positive feedback.

Director of Rugby Development advised that the management team met after the strategy sessions to pull together feedback.

Director of Rugby Development talked through the world view playing population slideshow and noted that Scottish Rugby is punching above its weight in that we produce quality rugby players despite not having the quantity available to other nations. The differences between male and female uptakes in different countries was discussed: male numbers were predominantly stagnating or dropping, whereas women's numbers are on the rise in Scotland and a number of other countries. It was noted that a minority of nations are seeing a rise in the male game, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

National 1 Representative asked for a copy of the playing population chart, which would be circulated post-meeting.

The Head of Game Development discussed the 2024 to 2028 strategy:

The Head of Game Development provided a recap of strategy phasing and a timeline overview. He noted that players were underrepresented on consultations and there are plans to engage further with players in November (dates/times TBC).

The Vice-President stated that an additional, single topic, online meeting will take place to check-in on CRB strategy, the date of which is to be confirmed but aiming to take place on w/c 20 Nov. The Vice-President noted that the draft strategy would then be shared with CRB members pre-Christmas for CRB members to comment on, before the strategy is finalised in January 2024.

The Head of Game Development discussed the "Big Rocks" (i.e., priorities) on Playing Opportunities, People and Support, and "Stepping Stones" (i.e. support processes) for the new strategy. The question was asked to the CRB members whether they feel this reflects the roadshows and whether they have any comments. The following comments were made by CRB members:

- Borders Regional Representative noted that the simplification of the volunteer's role could help, as some volunteers being asked to do too much.

- Edinburgh Regional Representative queried student rugby and what we can do to promote this. National 2 Representative held the view that student rugby was a positive holding place between junior rugby and adult rugby and as opportunity to play where players have work commitments at weekends. Referees Representative noted girls have picked up rugby at university when they have never played before and so it is providing new opportunities.
- Midlands Representative queried whether the “Big Rocks” were the focus and whether “Stepping Stones” would be looked at further down the line. The Head of Game Development confirmed this and that there are steps and a success criteria which Scottish Rugby will follow to try and achieve this, but noting that it is still in an exploration phase.
- Premiership Representative and the Head of Game Development noted interdependencies between some of the priorities and the support processed and that Scottish Rugby should resource appropriately to ensure all are covered. National 2 Representative queried whether schools & youth strategy and state school strategy should be separate or as one, referring back to the interlinked point raised earlier.
- Referees Representative stated that the strategy should be moving towards youth rugby and adult rugby as the two main categories.

The Vice-President noted that the main challenge for the strategy is what to prioritise. CRB Members were invited to share what they think priorities are to Scottish Rugby’s Development team after the meeting. The Vice-President suggested that the top three priorities were shared. The Head of Game Development stated he will prepare a survey so that CRB members can vote on top three priorities and explain why, an idea which was supported by the National 1 Representative. Premiership Representative asks for a deliverable of this.

The Head of Game Development noted the final strategy may look different presentation-wise from current the presented idea following further consultation from the CRB members.

6. Business Reporting

6.1 *Regions & Game Development Report*

The papers were taken as read.

Head of Rugby Development Operations advised that new figure-based reports will be produced from now on, linking to strategic areas. The aim of this will be to provide more accurate reports. Head of Rugby Development Operations noted it will be a snapshot in time as monthly reporting comes in, but as the reports move to quarterly it will be easier to understand the trends.

Head of Rugby Development Operations noted that as planned, approximately £1.2 million will be going out for club funding over the coming weeks.

6.2 *Championship Committee Report*

The papers were taken as read.

It was advised that the Head of Regulation will produce this report yearly.

6.3 *Q3 Regulatory Statistics*

The papers were taken as read.

It was advised that the Head of Regulation will produce this quarterly. It was noted that the tackle height change of law has not significantly changed statistics.

6.4 *Player Pathway update paper*

The papers were taken as read.

The Vice-President confirmed he was happy with the process. The President advised that the aim is to have three meetings to create pathways available to players. The President advised that CRB members will be kept updated on this.

North Regional Representative voiced concerns about the pathways programme and that clubs are cherry picking players from other clubs. He believes that better systems need put in place to deal with this and that some form of recompensating clubs who lose players should exist.

National 1 Representative requested the minutes from super series meetings to understand how the process works. The Vice-President advised he would share outcomes of super series/premiership meetings.

National 2 Representative stated concerns with the youth system, would like to share his thoughts with the Rugby Development team following the meeting.

The Vice-President advised that the aim is for a protocol or model to be put in place for players moving from clubs to academies to deal with these concerns. It was noted that whilst we can control academy recruitment, nobody can prevent players freely moving to different clubs out of their own volition. Director of Rugby Development agreed that protocols need put in place for FOSROC academies. The Vice-President noted that funding models could be altered to reward clubs that produce players that go onto play at a higher level. The Vice-President encouraged members to share thoughts on pathway programme.

Borders Regional Representative asked what the remit of pathways is and whether age grade game is considered. The President explained the different categories of players that are included and how pathways would help support players trying to break through past club level rugby. The Vice-President encouraged the Borders Regional Representative to share any concerns with the President after the meeting. Head of Game Development noted that Scottish Rugby can work on club understanding and education of requirements needed for players to get to professional level.

6.5 *Mens and Womens Cup Competitions*

The papers were taken as read and approved.

Head of Competitions & Compliance advised that the 1st December was the cut off for Men's teams opting out of cup competitions. Head of Competitions & Compliance

advised that fixtures would be shared the week after all opt outs were confirmed. Head of Competitions & Compliance advised that the clubs would be made aware of the cut-off date and that cup competition comms will be produced over the next couple weeks.

Head of Competitions & Compliance advised that the Women's knockout competitions were shared with the Women & Girls Representative and the desire to share competitions with clubs themselves.

Glasgow South Regional Representative asked to understand the differences between the different knockout competitions in the women's game, which was explained to all by the Head of Competitions & Compliance.

The Premiership Representative asked questions on penalties on non-fulfilment of knockout competition fixtures. The Vice-President advised that a reminder would be sent to CRB members in relation to funding and penalties for participation and/or non-fulfilment of cup competitions, noting differences between opting out prior to the 1st December cut-off date or dropping out once you've committed.

The Vice-President urged CRB members to ensure that they are comfortable with no penalty for opting out prior to the 1st of December cut-off date, but some form of penalty in place (whether points or financial) if you accept to play in the knockout competitions then drop out.

National 2 Representative raised concerns about costs of travelling, particularly on short notice of fixture setting. Glasgow South Regional Representative echoed this with concerns for costs and budgeting for clubs who haven't budgeted for cup travelling and whether they will they get extra financial support. Head of Competitions & Compliance responded that the funding is given retrospectively once fixtures are announced. The Vice-President and Head of Competitions & Compliance informed CRB members that they will include a reminder of how funding operates for travelling away for cup fixtures in the cup comms. Glasgow North Regional Representative noted that match official expenses also need considered as the quick turnaround can sometimes make this difficult. Director of Rugby Development advised that the Head of Competitions & Compliance will create new travel funding models for the upcoming seasons.

Club Competitions documents were **APPROVED**.

6.6 *NCRs*

It was noted that the process for NCRs would kick off in February 2024 for next season. The Head of Competitions & Compliance expressed her wishes to consult with CRB members on shaping this.

The Vice-President noted that NCR consultations could be in the CRB meeting to take place in January 2024, to give time to go to clubs with rules in February and March 2024 before they are finalised.

7. **Activity Reporting**

7.1 *Response to CRB Questions*

The papers were taken as read.

Borders Regional Representative raised concerns with travel from youth competitions and the funding related to this. Head of Competitions & Compliance stated that this would be considered when creating the 2024-28 strategy.

7.2 *Key Issues from CRB Member Quarterly Reports*

Glasgow South Regional Representative noted he had been dealing with more serious injury referrals this year than previous years and queried whether this is mirrored across the country. He noted that it would be useful for CRB members to receive statistics on serious injury referrals. It was noted that Scottish Rugby would provide this. It was queried whether clubs are reporting more or if more injuries are taking place in rugby. Head of Game Development noted that Scottish Rugby's medical team had monthly meetings to analyse the statistics. He noted that a study is underway with Edinburgh University and that a report will be provided at the end of the season which will show comparative injury rates. No increase across the board trends-wise on reports. Slight increase in youth concussion reports, expect this is due to more awareness rather than increase in concussions.

The rugby development team advised that quarterly reports on injury statistics would be provided by Scottish Rugby to CRB members.

National 2 Representative noted that there may be a connection between lack of playing time during lockdown and an increase in injuries. Head of Game Development noted that some figures are rising but some are falling and so they need to be looked at in the whole.

Borders Regional Representative noted that there was less visibility on tickets for women's internationals and how to sell these to clubs. Director of Rugby Development stated that he would pick this up with Scottish Rugby's ticketing team.

8. **CRB Governance Approvals**

8.1 *Club Name Change – Watsonians 3rd XV*

*Watsonians 3rd XV to move to Watsonians 2A - **APPROVED***

8.2 *Associate Club Membership – “Big Rig”*

The papers were taken as read.

North Regional Representative asked whether they fell under an associate club. Head of Legal and Governance assured the CRB members that the appropriate documentation is in place, and that the reason for becoming an associate member is so they can get permission to play and the associated insurance. It was noted that the Head of Regulation was comfortable with this.

Director of Rugby Development noted that Scottish Rugby have checked that there is no conflict between a member of staff starting own associate club as this club is being proposed by a member of Scottish Rugby's high-performance staff.

The Vice-President suggested that this is readdressed at a future meeting once consulted the high-performance member of staff and the Head of Regulation had been consulted. Director of Rugby Development to speak to high performance employee in question.

9. Diversity and Inclusion Update

Glasgow South Regional Representative noted that the Diversity and Inclusion strategy tends to concentrate on women and that he was concerned that there is no specific policy for BAME members of society. Questions were raised as to how these communities are encouraged and engaged particularly with issues of Ramadan and what players can wear. Glasgow South Regional Representative proposed that the CRB should be involved in process of engagement.

The Vice-President advised that policies were being created and that outputs will begin to be seen by the end of 2023. wait and see what comes out of policies being created (which will be produced at end of calendar year 2023).

The Head of Legal and Governance advised that different initiatives have been put in place by the SRU board and SRL board but appreciating we are yet to see output. The Head of Regional Development gave an example of an initiative already in place, such as the "moving to inclusion" framework, which provides a charter for clubs to work through so they can plan and use a toolkit to promote BAME inclusion.

Director of Rugby Development stated that this will be part of the new D&I strategy in the 2024-28 overall rugby development strategy.

10. President Update

The President provided three updates:

1. That he had been to the Rugby World Cup and that Scotland had beat the expected opponents and were disappointed of the outcomes against South Africa and Ireland. The President gave credit to the players for going through a 19-week training camp and wished them well for coming back to their clubs. He noted that he spoke to other presidents and that there were three key pressing themes: finance of the games, player welfare and playing numbers.
2. In relation to WXV, the President noted it was great to see the women's national team start with a win. He wished them congratulations and good luck for the game on Friday against the USA. He also commended the team for their four game win streak.
3. On Club comms, the President discussed the recent letter that was sent to CRB Members from the President, discussing the AGM in November and that clubs can vote via proxy. It was noted that the CRB no longer have a vote nor make quorate. The President urged the CRB to advise clubs to use proxy vote

if they cannot attend. The Head of Legal and Governance advised she would confirm that the letters had been sent out to the right people. The Glasgow South Regional Representative raised concerns over how proxy votes works, to which the Head of Legal and Governance advised that the information had been sent out in comms already. The Vice-President followed this up by proposing to get the information redistributed just in case this was missed by anyone.

11. AOB

Glasgow North Regional Representative noted the positive outcome of the meeting on community engagement with the Glasgow Warriors' managing director, and that Edinburgh are to put something similar in place. The Vice-President agreed that the presentation from Glasgow Warriors' managing director was positive and that Edinburgh Rugby would be arranging a similar consultation soon.

Head of Game Development noted that Scottish Rugby are aiming to have the end of season awards evening and community conference on back-to-back days in May to save travel costs and time. The target dates were noted as May 24th and May 25th.

The Vice-President confirmed that the strategy meeting in November would take place online and that quarterly meetings to continue hybrid.

12. Chair Remarks

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

With no further business the Vice-President closed the Meeting at 8.30pm.

13. Date of Next Meeting

17th January 2024

APPROVED 17 January 2024