

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH RUGBY CLUB RUGBY BOARD
HELD AT 5PM ON WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH 2024
AT ORIAM 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 (Online)
Hazel Swankie	(HS)	Midlands Representative
David Jamieson	(DJ)	Glasgow North Regional Representative (Online)
Mhairi Hay	(MH)	Referees Representative (Online)
Mike Bruce	(MB)	Women & Girls Representative (Online)
Ian Dalgleish	(ID)	National 1 Representative
Gavin Scott	(GS)	Director of Rugby Development

Apologies:

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

In Attendance:

Colin Rigby	(CR)	President
[REDACTED]	[XX]	Head of Regional Development (Online)
[REDACTED]	[XX]	Head of Competitions & Compliance
[REDACTED]	[XX]	Head of Game Development (Online)
[REDACTED]	[XX]	Head of Rugby Development Operations
[REDACTED]	[XX]	Head of Legal and Governance
[REDACTED]	[XX]	Business Operations and Support Manager
[REDACTED]	[XX]	Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development
[REDACTED]	[XX]	Communications Manager - Rugby Development
[REDACTED]	[XX]	Director of Communications

1. Introduction ACTION**1.1 Quorum and Apologies**

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

Welcome was given to the new National 1 Representative, the Director of Communications and the Communications Manager – Rugby Development.

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

1.2 Chair Opening Remarks

The Vice-President noted his thanks, on behalf of Scottish Rugby, to Gerry Tosh for his service to rugby over the past 60 years following his sad passing.

2. Minutes

2.1 Minutes of 17 January 2024

The Minutes of the CRB Meeting of 17 January 2024 were **APPROVED**.

3. Actions

3.1 Actions from previous meeting

3.1.1 *Invite Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development to October CRB Meeting to discuss movement of players from academy to clubs: **COMPLETE***

3.1.2 *The Safeguarding Team advised that the Terms of Reference for the independent advisory group were to be shared in the coming months: this would be done once complete.*

3.1.3 *Safeguarding training to CRB Members, and that the Child Wellbeing & Protection Manager would be in touch to ascertain availability for training: **COMPLETE***

3.1.4 *National 2 Representative stated concerns with the youth system (pathway), would like to share his thoughts with the Rugby Development team: to be done following the meeting.*

3.1.5 *The Head of Game Development to circulate the recent IRFU report of similar content: **COMPLETE***

3.1.6 *If a date was confirmed with enough notice the Head of Competitions and Compliance noted she would look to align a rest week with that of the AGM to maximise attendance and input of member clubs: to be confirmed.*

3.1.7 *The Vice President questioned whether CRB presence would be beneficial at the Rugby Development Department's working groups. The Director of Rugby Development noted that these meetings would take place around existing staff schedules and he would update the Vice President on this: **COMPLETE***

3.1.8 *The Borders Representative noted his wish to be involved or to have had awareness in a recent Borders Council meeting. Head of Regional Development is to pick this up with the East Region Director:*

CH

3.1.9 *Nominations for any individuals who would like to be involved (in the NCR reviews) should be passed to the Head of Competitions and Compliance who will look at how best to involve them: **COMPLETE***

3.1.10 *The Head of Competitions and Compliance would liaise with the Senior Competitions Administrator to make the suggested changes (to the Men's NCRs): **COMPLETE***

3.1.11 *The Head of Competitions and Compliance would liaise with the Senior Competitions Administrator to make the suggested changes (to the Women's NCRs): **COMPLETE***

3.1.12 *The Vice-President noted he would reach out to the Head of Legal and Governance to acquire an analysis of the Associate Body Membership: **COMPLETE***

4. Pathways Update

4.1 *Update from the Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development*

The Vice-President welcomed the Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development to the Meeting. Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development discussed two areas: the principles of pathway and the review process.

The Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development provided Members with an overview of the Male Pathway and the following key points were noted in the discussion:

- The underlying principles of Pathway were Competitiveness, Curriculum and Coaching.
- He outlined the number of male players involved in the Pathway, in addition to the retention numbers.
- The Pathway fixtures were highlighted.
- The purpose of the Regional Academy's was presented with the guiding principles for selection, including how the Blueprint links into the Pathway.
- The U18 Performance Pathway Review high-level outcomes were noted, including its purpose, key issues and scope.
- The definition of 'Pathway' was discussed, defined broadly as: anyone in a Regional Academy (males) or Regional Training Centres (females) and encompasses the whole youth club and school game.

The Edinburgh Regional Representative questioned what the process was for encouraging players who not selected to go back to club rugby. The Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development noted that the Pathway and Club Rugby players were shared and evidence showed that the majority of players involved in Pathway return to the club game as players/coaches etc. It was noted this could be monitored.

The National 1 Representative discussed the criteria of 'physical potential' and questioned if there was a process to pick-up slightly older players who had physical potential. The Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development noted that this was looked at continuously and there were no set times for assessment throughout the season. The Vice-President noted that clubs may not be aware of what to do if they had a player with physical potential. The Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development noted that they could be directed to the Academy.

The Premiership Representative suggested that collaboration between schools, clubs and coaches should be an area of focus. He also requested an update on the timeline for the focus group and sought clarification on the composition of this. The Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development noted the key people who were involved in the focus group and would send a full list to Members. It was noted that a steering group also existed in between the focus group and how invitees are invited to these for opinions. He noted that middle April is the timeline for this to be complete.

The North Regional Representative questioned the movement of Academy players and noted specific cases which had been highlighted to the Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development. The importance of communication with clubs as to why players were being moved to other clubs was discussed and the amount of investment into players was highlighted.

GS/JF

It was also noted that the Pathway needs to be communicated in a positive light to get clubs onboard. It was agreed by the North Regional Representative and the Head

of Pathways and Elite Coach Development to setup a meeting to discuss Academy coaches and movement of players. It was also noted that players often move across clubs, especially over the age of 18 to allow for competitive environments. The Vice-President, Director of Rugby Development and the Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development to discuss this further out with the Meeting, to allow Meeting to progress.

KW/GS

The Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development's presentation and any additional useful resources to be shared with Members for them to further share with clubs. The Head of Pathways and Elite Coach Development welcomed open discussions and communication with him at any time to discuss Pathway.

JF

5. League Structure

5.1 *League Structure Discussion*

The report was taken as read.

The Vice-President noted that there were three guiding principles that should underline the CRB's discussions and decision on this matter:

- To be as fair to as many clubs as possible;
- To cause the least disruption to 10 team National league structures and regional leagues as possible; and
- Wherever possible, cause no or as few clubs to be seriously inconvenienced.

It was noted that a thorough process had been carried out, including fora meetings to discuss the options and gauge opinion. The Vice-President noted thanks to all involved in the process, especially due to the tight timeframes.

The Director of Rugby Development provided a summary of the discussions which had taken place at the fora and noted how constructive they were. It was noted that the focus groups suggested a further two options to consider. It was noted that the majority of fora ruled out a number of options and the top three options had an overall consensus. The aim of the process was to be as transparent as possible with all options on the table.

During discussions, the options were summarised via RAG rating. The following majority opinions were noted from the RAG rating:

- The majority of Premiership clubs were not in favour of Options 4-7 or Option 2, but favoured Option 3.
- The majority of National 1 clubs did not prefer Option 1. They were more balanced overall but options 6 and 7 were most favoured.
- National 2, 3 and 4 leaned more towards Options 1, 2 and 3 and away from option 6 and 7.

It was discussed that in terms of the underlying principles, Options 2 and 3 were perceived to be the most preferred overall.

However, with no clear favourite and support remaining for a number of options, a process of elimination was then followed, whereby the weakest Options were identified, discussed then eliminated in turn.

It was agreed that as Option 5 was the least preferred across the board, it would be removed from discussion.

Option 1 was discussed to be ruled out as no fora had strong support for it. The Edinburgh Regional Representative however noted that 8 clubs supported this option, so it should not immediately be ruled out.

It was discussed that Options 2 and 3 would have an impact on National 1, 2 and 3 Leagues in terms of number of teams to be relegated.

It was discussed that with Options 2 and 3 for National 2, 3 and 4, the biggest consequence would be for National 2 and 3 as they would be reduced to 9-team Leagues which would result in potential loss of revenue to these clubs.

As an outcome of the fora meetings, one club had suggested to not reduce the number of clubs but instead keep these as 10-team leagues. It was noted that this would however have an implication for the following season with a greater number of relegations. It was noted that it would not be fair to progress this option, without consultation with regional league playing teams, therefore this option was discounted. In a 10-team league, it was noted that the Regional Leagues would continue as 'business as usual' but would have 4 teams relegated into them for season 2025/26.

Option 4 was discussed and was noted that from a National 1 perspective, there would be 5 relegations the following season, which would be too disruptive. It was agreed that Option 4 would be removed from discussion.

Options 6 and 7 were discussed and it was noted that from a National 1 perspective, financially paying players in a 22- team League would not be sensible for Options 6 and 7. The Premiership Representative added that from a Premiership perspective it was not favoured for the integrity of competition. It was noted that with these options there would be potential for the club in the split league to be a slow starter and would be disadvantaged, in addition to numerous mis-matches. It was however noted that some National 1 clubs were in favour of Option 7. As a result of discussions, it was agreed that Options 6 and 7 would be removed from discussion.

The Premiership Representative noted that during fora discussions, having four Super Series clubs in the Premiership and two in National 1 was supported.

The Borders Regional Representative questioned if Option 2 became the agreed option, would clubs be able to challenge the payment of players and whether Player Improvement would be split across 12 teams rather than 10. The Vice-President noted that in the foras and thereafter there had been a bit of groundswell of opinion to stop player payments altogether. It was agreed that time should be spent to determine if we should stop these payments and the impacts if this decision was made. It was agreed that the decision would not be made in the Meeting but would need to be acknowledged and discussed separately in a future meeting. It was noted by the Premiership Representative how far down the line would this removal of payment of players would go e.g. Pathway players. It was highlighted that that Super Series players may be lost if payments were stopped instantly. It was noted that the player payment would be reviewed.

Option 1 was discussed by the Members. It was noted that the two Super Series clubs would be moved further down the Leagues. It was noted that National 2, 3 and 4

Leagues did not express they would be annoyed by being 'leapfrogged' by the two Super Series clubs. Due to the red-Rag rating of 'No club to be seriously inconvenienced', Boroughmuir and Stirling being inconvenienced. It was agreed that Option 1 would be removed from discussion.

The Premiership Representative noted Options 2 and 3 would be considered but the preferred option would be Option 3.

The strength of the Premiership was discussed and the obligation to make it the best it could be and have the best teams within the League, which would be in all's interest. It was also noted that there was not a huge disparity in strength and standard of teams between the bottom 4 of Premiership and the top 4 of National 1.

Members were in agreement of Option 2 most fairly meeting the principles. **OPTION 2 APPROVED.**

It was noted that the Options which were ruled out was a result of them going against the principals.

Members further discussed the option of 9-team leagues over 10-team leagues. The National 2 Representative noted that National 2, 3 and 4 would not favour having a 9-team league. The majority of these foras' clubs preferred 10-team leagues (13 noted this preference out of 22 who responded). It was noted that Regional League clubs would be disrupted in year 2 (season 2025/26) and noted they haven't been consulted. It was discussed that if a 10-team league was put-forward, 5 teams would be relegated from national 4 at end of next season. It was also noted that there was concern regarding a 9-team league and the financial penalty incurred of losing 2 games a season

Given the decision made in favour of Option 2. It was agreed that there was a need to further discuss the ways of mitigating the impacts of a transition season 9-team league with National 2 and 3 further.

The Vice-President summarised that Option 2 was agreed to proceed with and the next step in the process was to consult with National 2 and 3 to discuss their input on a 9-team league. He thanked all for a very robust and thorough debate.

KW/VC

6. Business Reporting

6.1 *Regions & Game Development Report*

The paper was taken as read.

The Head of Regional Development provided Members with a number of highlights over the past two months including:

- Club Development Planning was bringing continued value and starting to bring to life clubs' Plan on a Page and Plan to Achieve.
- There had been over 480,000 attendances through Development Officer-led activity in schools and clubs, with a high level of activity delivered by these DOs and regional teams.
- The second year of the Girls Regional Game Series had been successfully delivered and went. He noted it was overall successful and the quality and standard of girls who took part was higher than last season.

- There were 420 female leaders in clubs (out of a season target of 500). He noted the subsequent increase in diversity and decision making from female in clubs.
- There was nearly 600 fixtures arranged for state schools by the end of Schools Week, which were game play opportunities predominately aimed at S2 and S3 ages (AGLV-bound fixtures).
- He noted the Regional Teams were on target to achieve 230 School Rugby Champions within state schools, whose aim was to promote, support and drive rugby in secondary schools.

The Glasgow South Regional Representative asked for whether there was a strategy paper which included BAME communities in rugby. The Director of Rugby Development noted he would connect with the Head of People & Engagement to provide a paper on BAME. The Head of Rugby Development Operations noted that the data capture in club membership on SCRUMS included ethnicity and this would be included within a core initiative in the new strategy, for EDI.

GS

6.2 *Rugby Development Data & Business Report*

The paper was taken as read.

6.3 *Rugby Development Additional Reports*

The paper was taken as read.

6.4 *SROI*

The paper was taken as read.

The Head of Rugby Development Operations provided Members with an update on the SROI report. He noted that the report received by Members was a draft provisional report and the final was being collated with the next steps to release it in time for the Community Game Conference on 25 May. He noted that how the figures could be used by the Rugby Development Department to display rugby community impact and leverage 3rd party investment in next strategy was still to be determined.

The Head of Rugby Development Operations also stated that a one pager would be produced to give Members an overview of the thirty page report.

ST

6.5 *Community Game Conference*

The Head of Rugby Development noted that registration for the Community Game Conference had opened and the Rugby Development Department would be aiming for around 350 attendees, which was a similar number to last year, with the option of up to 500.

It was discussed that Caroline Blair was confirmed as host for the day and a number of deliverers and workshops would be announced from the end of March.

6.6 *Strategy Update*

The paper was taken as read.

It was highlighted to Members that the high-level measures of success had been added to the draft strategy paper. It was noted that aligning the Rugby Development strategy to the corporate strategy would take place over the coming weeks.

The need to have a specific link with High-Performance Pathways in Rugby Development's strategy was discussed. Members agreed that there should be focus on this and collaboration/alignment with Pathway. Members expressed the desire for pathways and the amateur game to have a prominent position in the wider strategy of the business, and for there to be a clear link between the amateur game with pathways and high performance.

The Premiership Representative noted that from his club perspective there was a focus on improving youth performance and developing those to go to senior team. The partnership with High-Performance to support this would be key and the link was needed and need to be transparent with this.

7. Activity Reporting

7.1 Response to CRB Questions

The paper was taken as read.

No questions from Members.

7.2 Key Issues from CRB Member Quarterly Reports

No questions from Members

8. CRB Governance Approvals

8.1 Full Member Application – Aberfeldy

The Head of Legal and Governance noted Aberfeldy had met the required qualifications of having adequate facilities and being established for three full seasons to become a full member club. The CRB **APPROVED** the application.

8.2 Districts and Borders application

The report was taken as read.

It was noted that the application would provide the Borders District a status within the game without voting rights as an affiliate member. It was suggested for a simple document with how the body would interact with the CRB, President and funding to be created and could be sent to other Districts. It was noted that the District's Constitution would be separate entities but the approach to becoming an affiliate body would be the same.

It was discussed whether the CRB should make a decision on the Borders District application before other District applications are put forward. The Head of Legal and Governance advised that the approval of the Borders District application would be approved but if other Districts applied, an individual decision would need to be made.

The Head of Legal and Governance recommended that a standardised document is produced for other districts to use if they wish to apply for similar status, and that a

paper is produced to explain how districts involved in the interdistrict relate and fit into the amateur rugby ecosystem.

The Borders Regional Representative noted that Peebles RFC were not included in the paper and would be picked up separately.

The CRB **APPROVED** the application subject to the incorporation of the body.

9. Diversity and Inclusion Update

No update provided.

10. Safeguarding Update

It was noted that the majority of CRB Members had completed the Child Wellbeing and Protection in Sport training.

11. President Update

The President provided the CRB with an update on various matters. The following points were noted:

- The SRU and SRL Boards were working together to focus on the 10-year strategy and budget.
- The 2024 AGM would take place in November 2024.
- There was a play to take place at the Traverse Theatre at the end of April on how Scotland Women's team saved the 1994 Women's Rugby World Cup.
- A Scottish Thistles lunch was scheduled in April in conjunction with Wooden Spoon, with key speakers attending. He noted the lunch was aimed to promote the mentoring and transition of women from playing international rugby, into business.
- He congratulated Scotland's Men's National Team for winning the Calcutta cup for four years in row; the first time since 1896. He wished the team good luck for their upcoming game against Ireland.
- He wished the Women's National Team luck in the upcoming Women's Six Nations.
- At the Men's Scotland V England game, he spoke on behalf of clubs thanking Dr James Robson for his service to Scottish Rugby and his drive to improve player welfare in club games, as he stands down as CMO.

The Premiership Representative noted his thanks to the President and the Head of Stakeholder Engagement for arranging the three retrospective cap ceremonies and noted it was great to the club game for this and goodwill.

12. AOB

The National 2 Representative suggested 5PM was difficult to attend CRB Meetings due to work commitments. However it was also noted that rugby development staff would then have their day further extended, and those travelling to attend would be later home. It was suggested that a start time of 6PM be considered for the next meeting. He also suggested that at times it can be difficult to hear the meeting and microphone could be looked into.

AM

The Head of Competitions and Compliance updated Members that a paper would be distributed for a S&Y NCR meeting, in light of significant input in terms of player eligibility from the second draft, which had been sent for consultation. It was requested for a sub-committee to review this over the next few months, in advance of summer breaks, for the age groups to work towards, rather than waiting until June. The following Members volunteered to be part of the sub-committee:

- The Borders Regional Representative
- The Premiership Representative
- The National 2 Representative

VC/KW

The Borders Regional Representative requested an update on the combined meeting with other Scottish Rugby Boards and when these would be scheduled for the combined SRU an SRL. The Vice-President noted he would look into this and provide an update.

KW

The Edinburgh Regional Representative requested an update regarding the working group with CRB, High-Performance and pathways and maintaining the close relationship governance surrounding this. The Director of Rugby Development noted this would be addressed in the next strategy.

GS

The Director of Rugby Development thanked Members for adhering to embargos regarding the League Structure consultations.

The Borders Regional Representative noted at the recent East/Caledonia Midlands Community Recognition Award event, the winners were requested to embargo their award. He noted that by asking this of the winners, it deflated their win and requested for this to be looked into for future events.

13. Chair Remarks

The Vice-President thanked those who attending online and in-person.

With no further business the Vice-President closed the Meeting at 20:10.

13. Date of Next Meeting

12 June 2024

APPROVED