



# **CRB Structure & Progress Review**

## **Part 1: Report**

**June 2025**

**Prepared on behalf of  
the Scottish Rugby  
Union Custodian Board**

**by**

**SRU Standing  
Committee on  
Governance**

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# 1. Executive Summary

## Purpose of the Report

This report, prepared by the Standing Committee on Governance (SCOG), provides a comprehensive review of the Club Rugby Board (CRB) structure and operation as part of a wider club rugby governance framework. It addresses the mandate given to SCOG by the SRU Board to assess whether the CRB has transitioned effectively from its origins and to recommend steps to enhance its effectiveness, structure, and strategic fit within the rugby landscape.

## Scope of the Review

The scope of this review focused specifically on the governance arrangements related to the club rugby game in Scotland. It encompassed the CRB's role, structure, effectiveness, and alignment with the broader SRU governance model. The review has considered the relationship between the CRB and other bodies including, Rugby Development, the club fora, and Member Clubs, and explored how governance arrangements can best support the long-term sustainability and strategic growth of the grassroots game.

## Strategic Context

The CRB was established following the 2022 Crerar Report as the new body responsible for the strategy and development of club rugby in Scotland. It replaced the Scottish Rugby Council and was intended to reflect a more modern, compliant, and responsive governance model. As the primary forum representing the views of Member Clubs, the CRB plays a vital role in ensuring the grassroots game is effectively supported, developed, and strategically aligned with national rugby priorities.

## Summary of Key Findings and Insights

- The CRB's role is broadly accepted, but concerns exist around its effectiveness, size, and skills mix.
- There is an imbalance in representation, with the men's game dominating current CRB membership (10 of 13 seats).
- The transition from a league-based to a regionally focused governance model presents both an opportunity and a challenge.
- The use of sub-committees has been limited but holds great potential to improve focus and delegation.
- The membership process requires more flexibility and broadening of expertise and skill-sets.
- Communication gaps exist between CRB, Rugby Development, SRU and other key stakeholders.

## Options Considered for CRB Structure

SCOG considered five primary options for the future size, shape, and make-up of CRB:

- **Legacy (Status Quo):** Retain the existing 14-member structure, with improvements focused on operational effectiveness through enhanced use of sub-committees and better-defined roles.
- **Legacy+ (Option 1):** Reduce CRB membership to a more balanced and streamlined 9member structure, maintaining a constituency-based model but with broader regional remits.
- **Regional (Option 2a):** Introduce a fully regionally-led governance model with standalone Regional Boards aligned with Rugby Development structures.
- **Regional+ (Option 2b):** Expand the Regional Model to include specific representation for Women & Girls, Schools & Youth, and Match Officials at the CRB level.
- **Executive (Option 3):** Create a lean, strategically-focused CRB of 4 appointed members with defined skills and experience, supported by an extensive subcommittee structure.

These options were evaluated in line with the scope of the review as set out above.

## SCOG Recommendations

- **Retain the current CRB structure in the short to medium term:** Maintain the existing structure (Legacy) to ensure stability, while exploring the viability of a more regionally orientated model with key stakeholders.
- **Establish four core standing sub-committees:** Introduce permanent subcommittees for Finance, Strategy, Rugby, and People to enable more focused discussion, distribute workload, and improve subject-matter understanding.
- **Develop a Board Improvement Plan:** Co-design and implement a plan to improve CRB's operational capability, covering a range of improvements including clearer role descriptions, succession planning, member induction, ongoing development, and performance reviews.
- **Introduce a skills matrix:** Map the current CRB skillset to identify gaps and future needs, and use it to guide appointments, elections, and succession.
- **Review chairing arrangements:** Review future chairing options to ensure future leadership reflects ongoing governance needs and expectations.
- **Strengthen Forums and regional engagement:** Reinforce the role of the club forums (Fora) to improve input and feedback, with a review of the format, and alignment to regional development.
- **Enhance communications:** Establish formal communication protocols and channels for updates, decisions, and feedback between CRB, Rugby Development, Member Clubs and other governance bodies, including the SRU Board.

## Decisions Required by the SRU Board

1. Endorse the recommendation to retain the current CRB structure whilst exploring the viability of a more regionally orientated model.
2. Approve the creation of the recommended sub-committees.
3. Approve the development of a Board Improvement Plan with CRB and SCOG.
4. Approve further work on Fora structure and communication planning.
5. Agree to review chairing arrangements at the end of the current Vice President's term.

### Next Steps

- CRB to meet with SCOG to co-develop and implement the Board Improvement Plan.
- Sub-committees to be formed with appropriate membership, support, and governance.
- SRU Board to receive a follow-up report by December 2025 on progress and evaluation.
- SCOG to support implementation and act as advisors to CRB and SRU Board during the transition phase – with a view to a final report by June 2026.

*R. W. Frazer*

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*Sheriff Robert Frazer,  
Chairman,  
SRU Standing Committee On Governance*

*20 June 2025*

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1. Background

The Club Rugby Board (CRB) was formed following the AGM in November 2022 as part of the revised governance arrangements set out in the Crerar Report. It was established to be responsible for the formulation and oversight of the implementation of the strategic vision, mission and development of the club game in Scotland. It reports to and is accountable to the Scottish Rugby Union (SRU) Board.

The CRB was created 'out of the embers' of the Scottish Rugby Council to expedite a solution that could be supported and implemented relatively quickly. At the time it was communicated to the clubs, and other stakeholders in the wider community game, that the structure, membership and operation of CRB would need to be reviewed in due course to ensure that going forward it was fit for purpose – both now and in the future.

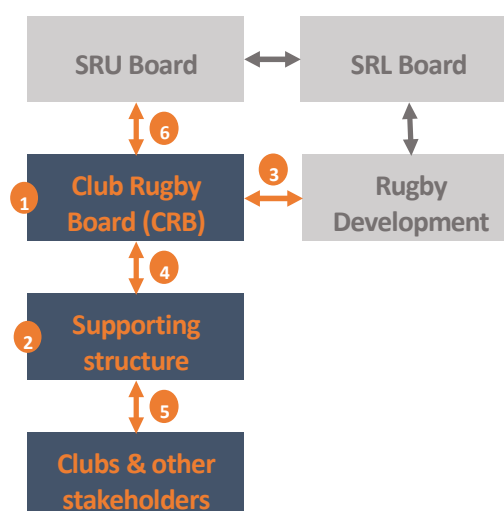
## 2.2. Defining ‘Club Rugby Governance’

For the purposes of this report, SCOG has defined Club Rugby in Scotland as the amateur tier of the sport, played by community-based rugby clubs and schools across the country. It forms the foundation of the Scottish rugby structure, operating below the professional and international levels, and is governed by the SRU. In essence, it is the lifeblood of the sport, providing playing, coaching, officiating, and social opportunities to thousands of people, and so forming the bedrock of the game of rugby in Scotland.

The primary stakeholders in Club Rugby are the clubs themselves – forming as they do the Scottish Rugby Union. Other key stakeholders include players, coaches, match officials, non-playing club members, schools, colleges, universities, volunteers and the local communities in which the clubs are based and supported by the Rugby Development Department (RDD) of Scottish Rugby.

Review work undertaken has focused on club rugby governance, in its widest sense. Ultimately, SCOG has looked at the structure and operational effectiveness of the governance arrangements that have been put in place to support the interests of the clubs. To that end, ‘club rugby governance’ includes the following:

1. *Design & operation of CRB, including sub-committees and the process in place for making changes, currently the CRB Election Rules*
2. *Design & operation of the supporting structure, currently the Fora*
3. *Oversight of Rugby Development’s role in club rugby*
4. *Communication to and from the supporting structure*
5. *Communication to and from clubs and other stakeholders*
6. *Communication to and from SRU Board*



As you will see in this report, SCOG has laid out its observations, insights, options and recommendations around each of these components of ‘club rugby governance’.

## 2.3. Standing Committee on Governance

SCOG in its present form was established consequent to the SRU’s Articles of Association (Art. 12.3) post the November 2022 AGM at which Member Clubs overwhelmingly voted for the adoption of a new governance structure following their approval of the Crerar Report.

The current committee members are:

- Sheriff Bobby Frazer (Chair)
- Nicola Johnston
- Mark Lindsay
- Dougie McAndrew
- Mark Walker
- Catriona Watt

SGOC's remit was firstly to review in advance of the 2024 AGM the new governance structure and ensure it was fully compliant with the various UK governance codes for sporting bodies and, secondly, to review the existing structure of the CRB and ensure its effective operation.

As far as the first part of that remit is concerned, and as reported to the AGM in November 2024 SCOG is satisfied that the existing governance structure is compliant with the relevant codes and that the current SRU model is fit for purpose, providing as it does clear oversight for the boards of Scottish Rugby Limited (SRL) and CRB.

In relation to the second part SCOG has met regularly over the past 18 months and carried out in depth consultations with many individuals involved in club rugby as well as with the Rugby Development Department (RDD) and various individuals within Scottish Rugby, including the office bearers. Further detail of the work undertaken is provided below.

Having completed the review process, SCOG is now in a position to report on its findings and make certain suggestions and recommendations for the future make-up of CRB and its decision-making abilities. Documents referred to throughout this Review Report are dealt with separately in Part 2 of this Report.

### **3. Scope & objectives**

#### **3.1. Focus of work undertaken**

SCOG was asked consequent to the remit given it by the SRU Custodian Board (dated 1 February 2024) to review how the CRB structure had bedded into the governance framework following its creation in November 2022.

The Review undertaken is not an assessment or analysis of the qualitative or quantitative work performed by CRB to date, and no benchmarking of its performance has been undertaken. Instead, SCOG has addressed the remit set by considering how as an organisation the main forum for addressing Member Club views and concerns has transitioned from the old Council structure operating under bye laws and a Trust Deed to an independent, standing committee of the SRU Board operating per the terms of the agreed Memorandum of Understanding.

In short, has the necessary transition demanded by the resolutions passed by Member Clubs in November 2022 been effective?

## 3.2. Suggested next steps

Given its remit SCOG reports to the SRU Board. However, this Review Report, as well as indicating the scope of the work undertaken to arrive at the conclusions illustrated, sets out options for further action. What action may be taken subsequently will, therefore, be for the SRU Board to determine, not SCOG.

## 4. Work done

Since being given the remit set, SCOG has consulted widely both independently through its own networks within Scottish Rugby, as well as via the offices of SRL and members of the Rugby Development Department. Given the candour of views sought, it should be mentioned that a significant number of those conversations that have contributed to the overall process were held on a non-attributable basis.

### 4.1. Documentation review

A detailed review of relevant documentation relating directly to Scottish Rugby has included detailed consideration of the following:

- The Crerar Report, March 2022
- SRU Governance: An explanation of the Governance Arrangements of Scottish Rugby, February 2024
- SRU Articles of Association, adopted November 2022
- SRL Articles of Association, adopted November 2022
- SRU Annual Reports (including relevant annual AGM papers), 2020 to date
- SRU Meeting Minutes (since November 2022)
- SRL Meeting Minutes (since November 2022)
- CRB Meeting Minutes (since November 2022)
- CRB Terms of Reference
- CRB Election Protocols
- Scottish Borders District Union Articles of Association, adopted August 2024
- Scottish Rugby Referee's Association Articles of Association, adopted August 2023
- RFU Governance & Representation Review – Consultation Paper, April 2025 •  
Various CRB / SRL (RDD) strategy, budget and departmental “restructuring” presentation papers

### 4.2. Consultation

As a part of its intent to consult as widely as possible, SCOG has undertaken the following actions:

- A survey of CRB members
- A survey of Forum members (and individual constituent members of each)
- “Progress Presentations” to SRU and CRB members



- Numerous meetings held with individual clubs and individuals involved in the delivery of services to the Scottish club game
- Discussion with various members of “the Fourth Estate”
- Discussion with various sponsors of the Scottish club game

### 4.3. Benchmarking & insights gained

Additionally, and to further inform SCOG’s consideration of CRB’s role, it has reviewed against the remit set, considered and consulted the following external sources (and their output, as relevant):

- The UK Sports Governance Code
- The 2018 Corporate Governance Code
- The Sports Governance Academy
- The IRFU (Irish Rugby Football Union)
- The WRU (Welsh Rugby Union)
- The FIR (Federazione Italiana Rugby)
- The RFU (Rugby Football Union)
- (the) Whole Game Union

## 5. Club Rugby Board

### 5.1. Role, size, shape & make-up of CRB

The CRB sits at the heart of the club rugby governance arrangements. Its role is as follows:

*“ ... the CRB shall oversee, on behalf of the Union, the formulation and implementation of the strategic vision, mission, and development of the domestic game in Scotland, including the allocation of resources from approved budgets to member clubs and other domestic rugby bodies and that responsibility for the successful implementation and monitoring of the agreed strategy for club and community rugby shall rest with the CRB in conjunction with the Rugby Development Department of SRL.”*

*(Clause 2.2, Memorandum of Understanding, November 2022)*

The CRB currently has 14 members (including the chair), representing the key constituencies of the club rugby game in Scotland:

- CRB Chair (Vice President)
- Match Officials Rep
- Women & Girls Rep
- Schools & Youth Rep
- National League Reps x4
- Regional League Reps x6

Additionally, the RDD Director attends all meetings in an ex officio capacity and the CRB Chair has the ability to request attendance by senior executives and others believed capable of contributing to matters tabled. CRB meets at least 4 times per year: standing or short-life sub-committees may meet as often as is required to fulfil remits set.

### 5.1.1. Current state assessment

From the initial survey of CRB members, together with subsequent consultations with members and club representatives, and our benchmarking of other governance arrangements – both in sporting and in a wider business context - the following key themes and opportunities have emerged with respect to the role, size, shape and makeup of CRB:

- **Role & objectives of the CRB.** Importantly, no one has challenged the fundamental role and objectives of CRB in our club rugby governance arrangements. On that basis, SCOG propose to leave this unchanged.
- **Size of CRB.** Our benchmarking of other Board/Committee arrangements and direct feedback from current and former CRB members, suggest there is a concern that it is too big to operate effectively as a decision-making body. Research consistently shows that the ideal board size typically falls within the range of 7 to 11 members. This size allows for sufficient diversity in expertise and perspectives, while also maintaining an effective decision-making process without the challenges of too many members. However, larger boards can clearly work effectively with the right level of organisation, preparation and discipline in the way they are set up and operate.
- **Alignment of structure to priorities and the growth of the grassroots game.** There is a recognition that folding the old Council ‘as was’ into the CRB was expedient, but it has not addressed the question of alignment to all the relevant constituencies, including to the way things are organised in other areas of Scottish Rugby, including RDD and Performance Pathways. With the men’s game representing 10 out of 13 game constituency positions, there is also a concern that this dominates the focus of discussion and debate. Furthermore, a number of individuals have raised concerns that with the men’s game representatives being aligned to league position, rather than the overall development of grassroots rugby in a particular region, that this misses an opportunity for a more cohesive approach to the growth of the game.
- **Skills, knowledge & experience.** Overall, there is a need to evolve the skill-sets and experience within CRB to better align its role as the “board” responsible for overseeing the strategy and finances of the domestic club game within the new governance structure and to address the ever-developing challenges facing the club game.

### 5.1.2. Key strategic decision

SCOG has explored a range of options to address the themes and opportunities outlined above. However, before making any decision around the size of the CRB, or changing the shape or make-up of it, SCOG believes there is a fundamental question that has emerged during its work that needs to be considered:

*Do we want to continue with the current model whereby the men's senior game is governed around league position, or do we want to take the opportunity to focus the development of the grassroots game – men's, women's, youth and schools – around a regional set up, aimed at promoting/growing the grassroots game based on geography?*

#### **Case for maintaining the current focus around league position for the men's game**

- Allows all levels of the men's game to be represented directly at the 'top table', recognising the significant differences in the game and in the running of the clubs through the levels – from the Premiership down into the regional and reserve leagues.
- By leaving the structure as it is, the focus is 100% on improving the effectiveness of how CRB discharges its responsibilities on behalf of the clubs, rather than being distracted by further structural changes.
- Significantly less upheaval – although SCOG believes changes might still be made to ensure operational effectiveness – specifically in the areas of skills/experience, reporting structures and communication protocols – adjusting what is in place at the moment rather than moving to a new regional structure will involve significantly less upheaval.
- Better aligns to the current league structure – 4 national leagues representing the upper echelons of the men's game.

#### **Case for a regionally orientated structure**

- Aligns to the way the rest of Scottish Rugby is approaching the game and the recently developed strategy for the club game.
- Greater decision-making power and flexibility of focus – an opportunity to develop a regional Board structure that aligns to the overall strategy for club rugby but is tailored to the specific demands and opportunities facing each region.
- Creating a regional strategy can lead to a more joined-up approach to sharing resources, mutually beneficial investment, connecting with the community outside of rugby, marketing the game, attracting commercial opportunities, as well as access to funding and other potential benefits.
- Potentially strengthens the connection to the clubs – both elite and grass roots – through active participation in regional boards and placing more decision making closer to the clubs.

Careful consideration therefore needs to be given as to how best to proceed at this time. Should there be a more pragmatic approach to the basics of good governance, or should there be a more transformational approach?

SCOG has considered these two different approaches in the practical options developed and set out in more detail below.

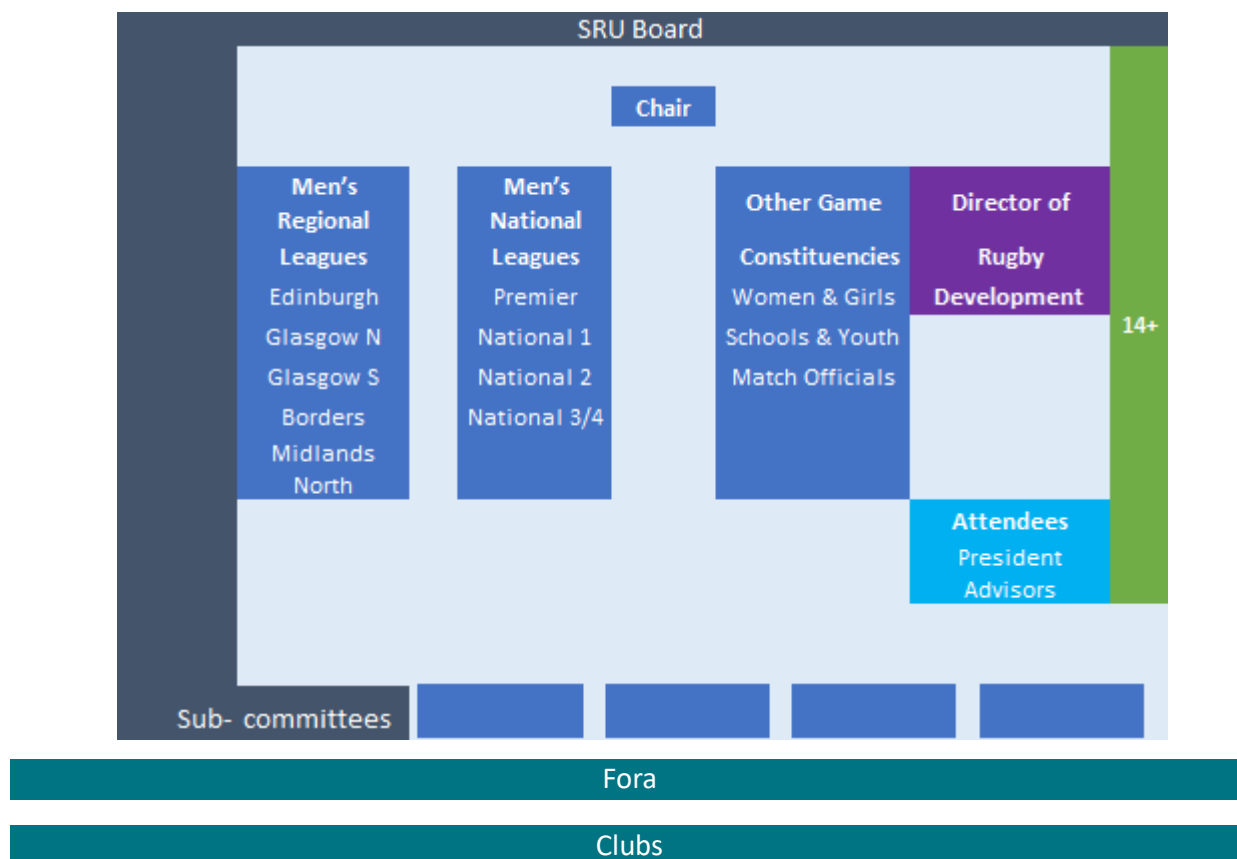
### 5.1.3. CRB design options

In this section, SCOG set out a number of potential options for the future size, shape and make-up of CRB, along with our thoughts on the respective pros and cons. In summary, the options presented below are:

Option	Overview
<b>Status quo: Legacy</b>	Leave CRB as it is and focus on making it work as effectively and efficiently as possible. Through use of sub-committees, enhanced communication and other improvements.
<b>Option 1: Legacy+</b>	Slimmed down version of Legacy option – 10 men’s game representatives down to 5, each with a wider remit. More balanced representation and less people round the table.
<b>Option 2a: Regional</b>	Strategic shift to a Regionally led model for club rugby governance and game development. All aspects of the ‘grassroots’ game led through the creation of Regional Boards.
<b>Option 2b: Regional+</b>	Builds on the principles of the Regional (2a) option but recognises the importance of having separate representation for Schools & Youth, Women & Girls and Match Officials.
<b>Option 3: Executive</b>	Radical option, aligned specifically to the central role CRB plays in setting and implementing strategy, financial budgets and oversight of the club game. Places operational matters in the sub-committees and supporting structure.

These are explored in more detail below.

### Status Quo: Legacy



- 14 members (including Chair) + Director of RD + attendees
- Work with the legacy structure that has all principal constituencies of the game represented directly in the CRB – including men's national leagues, men's regional leagues and women & girls.
- Regional representation is focused on men's regional leagues rather than the broader, strategic ambition of focusing the growth of the grassroots game-
- Although structure is left the same, there is a need to supplement the skills and experience round the table, with specific expertise and experience to provide greater balance e.g. Finance, Strategy or Board experience, or greater use of sub-committees.
- Focus is on working out the practicalities of effective debate and decision making with so many people around the table and driving improvements needed in defining the roles of the members and how they engage with and represent their constituencies.
- *Implications for supporting structure: look to extend the use of sub-committees and use/improve the existing fora structure*

### Pros

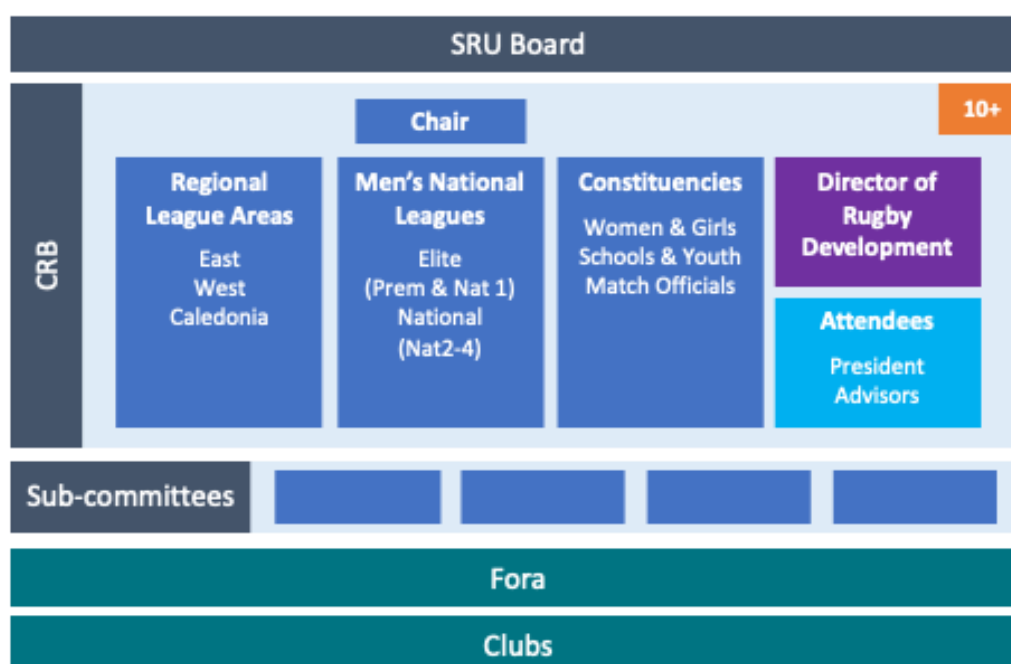
- Allows all levels of the game to be represented directly at the 'top table', recognising the significant differences in the game and in the running of the clubs through the levels.

- Better aligns to the current league structure – 4 national leagues representing the upper echelons of the men’s game.
- Short term focus is on improving the effectiveness of how CRB discharges its responsibilities on behalf of the clubs, rather than being distracted by further structural changes.

### Cons

- CRB continues to be dominated in number by the men’s game – 10 of 13 game constituencies represented round the table.
- Operational challenges of such a large board have already been highlighted through the CRB survey and subsequent discussions.
- Given its size it struggles to focus effectively on the bigger picture of strategic and financial matters.
- Delays opportunity to transform the leadership/governance of the club game.

### Option 1: Legacy+



- 9 members (including Chair) + RDD & attendees.
- Work within the philosophy of the legacy structure that has the principal constituencies of the game represented directly in the CRB, with the men’s game orientated around league position.
- Slimmed down board - 50% reduction in the number of people round the table.
- Wider remits for Area and Men’s Game roles.
- Geographic/regional league focus is lifted-up to Area level - aligns with RDD.
- Women & Girls and Schools & Youth are directly represented at CRB – reflecting their importance within the strategy of the club game.

- *Implications for supporting structure: aligning to the existing fora structure – need to clarify how it aligns and rolls up to the CRB.*

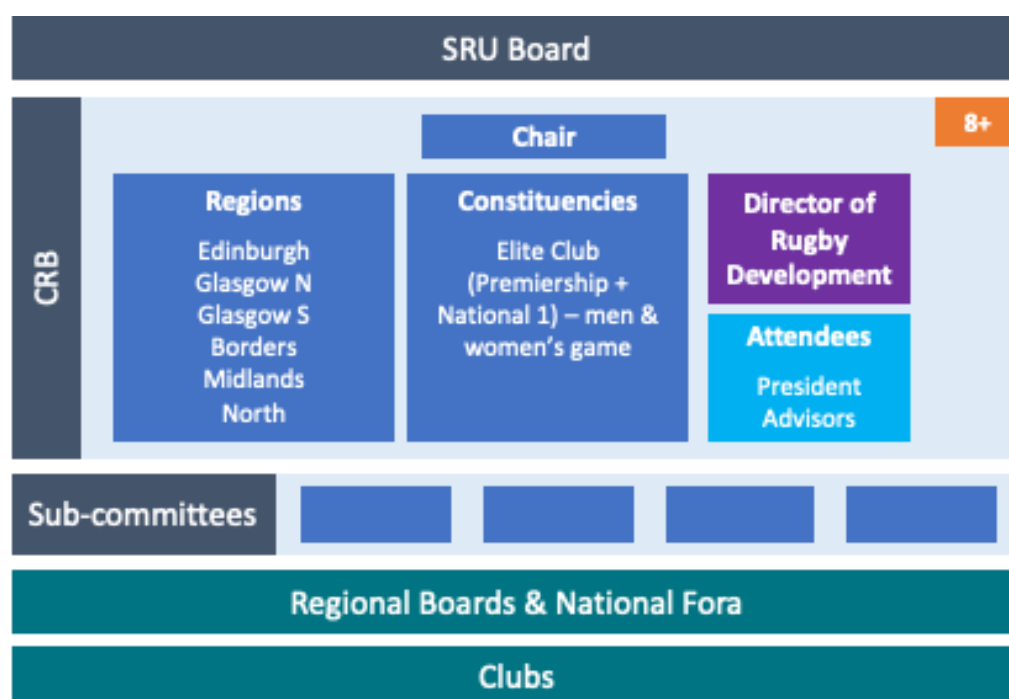
### Pros

- Smaller than current CRB model - potentially allows for a more strategic focus for the debate and decision making.
- More balanced - 5 of 8 game constituencies represented round the table.
- Recognises the importance of the “top end” club game in the performance pathway and in inspiring the wider grass roots game, as well as the different nature of the game at the top level – particularly since SuperSix disbanded.
- Aligns to the way the rest of Scottish Rugby is approaching the game –through Rugby Development and Pathways.
- Whilst some structural change is necessary, it is less that a move to a regional model – options 2a or 2b.

### Cons

- Lacks a focus on developing the ‘grass roots’ game through a regional lens – focus is predominantly through game-orientated constituencies.
- Area and Men’s Game reps have wider roles – specifically in terms of larger number of clubs contained within particular constituencies.
- Puts greater pressure on the supporting structure to operate effectively.

### Option 2a: Regional



- 8 members (including Chair) + RDD & attendees
- Change in philosophy – looks to promote and support regional autonomy for ‘grass roots’ aspects of the game.
- Focus on regions but also recognises the importance of the “top end” club game – both men and women - in the performance pathway and in inspiring the ‘grass roots’ game.
- Underpinned by the creation of standalone Regional Boards with autonomy to set direction and develop the game in their region – within the broader national strategy.
- Regional Boards to be chaired by those with a strong club rugby background, as well as credible business/professional experience – see section 6 below for further details.
- *Implications for supporting structure: matrix structure sits under the CRB – devolved Regional Boards leading the development of the game, with National Boards/Fora created to represent cross-region constituencies (Women & Girls, Schools & Youth, Match Officials, strata of men’s game, etc.)*

#### Pros

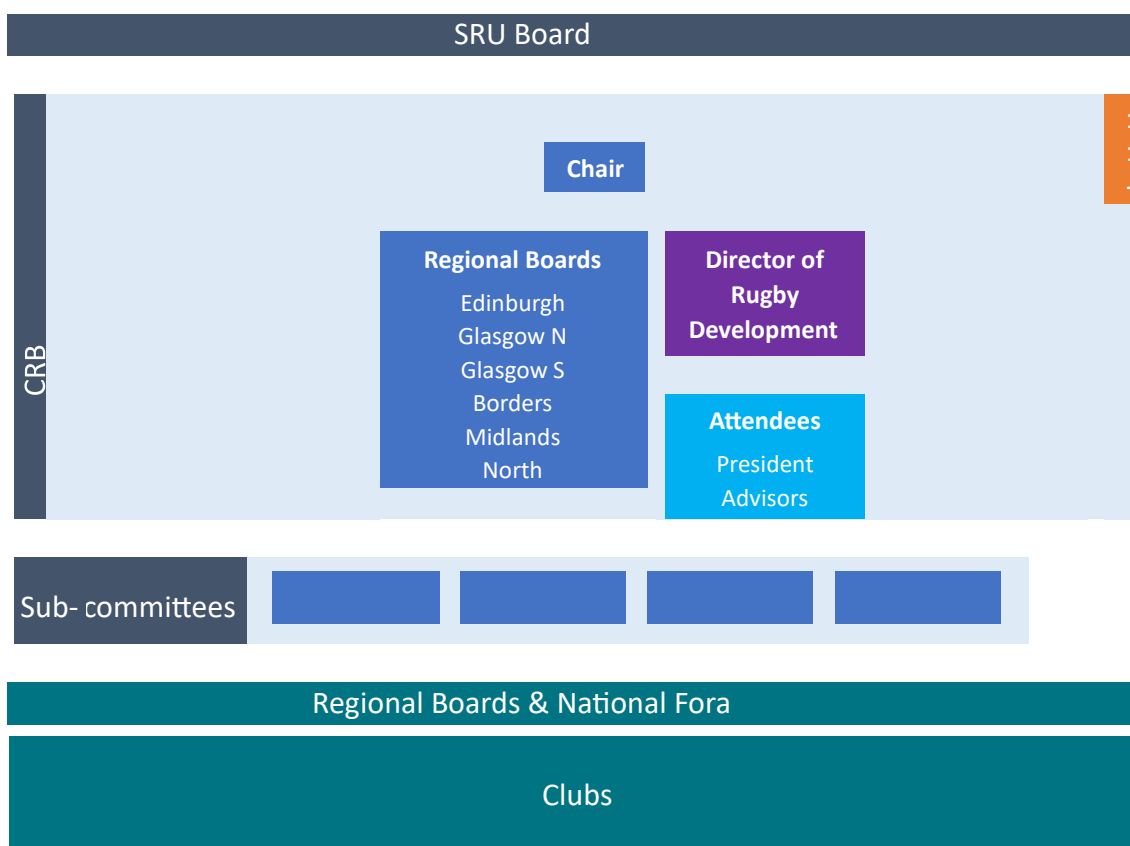
- Smaller CRB than Legacy+ - potentially allows a more strategic focus for the debate and decision making.
- Greater decision-making power and flexibility of focus at a regional level.
- Strengthens the connection to the clubs – both top end and grass roots.
- Recognises the importance of the top end club game – both men and women - in the performance pathways and in inspiring the wider grass roots game.
- Aligns to the rest of Scottish Rugby’s strategic approach through Rugby Development, Pathways, etc.

#### Cons

- Relies on the Regional Board Chairs to adequately represent all grass roots constituencies at CRB.
- Sourcing high quality Regional Board Chairs - significant commitment requires experienced operators.
- Risk that top end clubs do not properly engage at a regional level – which will require careful management.
- Regional boards will need access to resources – both people and financial – to discharge their responsibilities as designed.



### Option 2b: Regional+



- 11 members (including Chair) + Director of RD + attendees.
- Change in philosophy – looks to promote and support regional autonomy for ‘grass roots’ aspects of the game.
- Focus on regions but also recognises the importance of the elite club game – both men and women - in the performance pathway and in inspiring the wider ‘grass roots’ game.
- Regional Boards to be chaired by those with a strong club rugby background/interest, as well as credible business/professional experience.
- Top end representation is focused on the men’s game. Women & Girls rugby covered through a single member.
- Recognises the importance of Schools & Youth in the long-term strategy for the club game.
- Match Officials retain a direct seat at the table, reflecting their unique role and positioning in the club game.
- *Implications for supporting structure: creation of a Regional Board structure; with the National Forums for Schools & Youth, Women & Girls and Match Officials reporting directly into CRB.*

### Pros

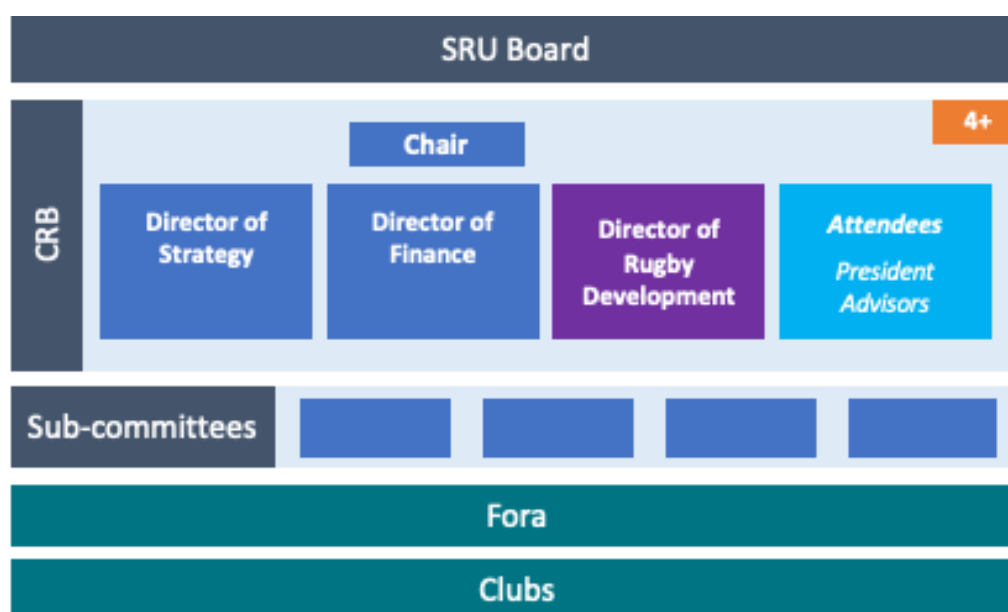
- Slightly smaller, more manageable CRB than current set-up – 14 down to 11.
- Greater decision-making power and flexibility of focus at a regional level.

- Strengthens the connection to the clubs – both top end and grass roots.
- Recognises the importance of the top end club game in the performance pathway and inspirational for the grass roots game as a whole.
- Aligns to Scottish Rugby’s approach through Rugby Development, Pathways, etc.
- Recognises the importance of Schools & Youth, Women & Girls and Match Officials in the long-term club rugby strategy.

### Cons

- Three more members round the table than the ‘Regional’ option – potential impact on operational effectiveness.
- Reliance on the Regional Board Chairs to properly represent constituencies in a joined-up and strategic way-
- Sourcing high quality Regional Board Chairs - significant commitment requiring experienced operators.
- Regional level will require access to resources – both people/volunteers and financial – to discharge their responsibilities.
- Risk that the top end clubs do not properly engage at a regional level – this needs careful management.

### Option 3: Executive



- 4 members (including Chair) + attendees.
- Slimmed down, strategically focused, Executive style CRB.
- Aligns explicitly to the central role in setting and implementing strategy and financial budgets, and oversight of the domestic game.
- Directors selected/appointed rather than elected but with a demonstrable track record of involvement in the club game.
- Directors’ positions salaried/remunerated on a part-time basis.

- Moves all operational matters into the supporting infrastructure - Regional and National Boards; setting this up from the outset is critical for success.
- *Implications for supporting structure: direct attendance at Fora meetings by each Director to “listen” on topics per a standing agenda and directly updating on areas of responsibility.*

#### Pros

- A light and nimble structure, capable of taking prompt action when required – short communication lines.
- Enables the CRB to focus on the strategic leadership of the club game, without getting tied down in operational matters.
- Focus on attracting high quality Board members with a powerful combination of business experience and a demonstrable track record in the club game.
- Opportunity to use Board members elsewhere in the Scottish Rugby governance arrangements – potentially strengthens the senior connections between the club game and the rest of Scottish Rugby.

#### Cons

- Heavy individual workload for the Directors.
- Real challenge in building strong communication links between the CRB members and those tasked with leading the varied constituencies of the club game, with no direct elected club representation.
- Potential expense involved in hiring external Directors.

#### RECOMMENDATION TO SRU BOARD

Having considered all five options SCOG is supportive of a regionally focused CRB, underpinned by Regional Boards – with a preference for Regional+ (Option 2b). CRB and RDD are also supportive of exploring a regionally orientated model, in line with the benefits set out above.

It is recognised that moving to such a model will require detailed discussions and consultations with the clubs and all other stakeholders. Working through the practical requirements of such a model whilst respecting the differing needs of the stakeholders, will take time.

Taking everything into account, SCOG recommends a relatively pragmatic course of action that aligns with the CRB’s and RDD’s views:

- Stick with the current structure (Status Quo: Legacy) and focus CRB in the short to medium term on making this work as effectively and efficiently as possible. See Sections 5.5 and 7 for further details.

- Work with the chair of CRB and Head of RDD with a view to moving towards a regional based model with clubs and other stakeholders being advised and consulted on such a change and transition taking place.

## 5.2. Chairing CRB

Under current governance documentation, the CRB is Chaired by the elected Vice President. As the Vice-Presidential term is 2 years, this is therefore the maximum term of the CRB Chair. As it stands, there is no opportunity for term renewal.

During discussions with stakeholders, the following key points emerged:

- **Term.** Whilst there are clearly benefits that can accrue from ‘freshening up’ the Chairperson every two years, the overwhelming feedback is that having the CRB Chair in position for longer would bring greater stability, deeper relationships, influence, cohesion, stronger governance, and the ability to lead through any key strategic changes - especially when supported by regular evaluation and a culture of renewal.
- **Time.** The role of the Vice President has grown over the past few years and there are significant demands on his/her time. Given the challenges facing the club game and the work potentially required to get the CRB and wider governance arrangements operating as effectively as possible.
- **Independence.** Having someone independent of the club rugby game to chair CRB could bring a fresh perspective to some of the deep-seated challenges facing the game. On the flip side, it is recognised that club rugby governance is very different to corporate governance, and an in-depth understanding of the dynamics and politics of the club game is essential. Furthermore, having strong relationships across all aspects of the game is critical.
- **Experience.** It does not necessarily follow that a future Vice President would have the necessary skills and experience to chair a strategically important committee such as the CRB. Such a decision could be taken by the CRB themselves.

Taking this feedback and insight into account, SCOG believes there are three possible options to consider:

### **Option 1: Status quo**

Assuming the Vice President is keen to take on the role of CRB chair, leave it as it is and allow the current Vice President to develop the role. If this option is chosen, SCOG recommends reviewing it at the end of this term and considering future.

### **Options 2: CRB appoint their own chair**

As the CRB is made up of individuals elected from the club game, including the Vice President, they could be left to vote for ‘one of their own’ to act as the Chair – to be subsequently ratified

by the SRU Board. This could mean that anyone on CRB could be the Chair, including the Vice President, provided the other CRB members support them. This self-selection approach would allow CRB to pick someone with the required time, experience, energy, relationships, etc.

If this option allowed for a 2- or 3-year term, but with the opportunity for renewal to a maximum term of 6 years, that would provide a level of continuity but also the opportunity to remove an individual if it wasn't working. This approach would require the need to consider someone's capability to chair when electing individuals to CRB. See section 5.4 for further considerations.

### **Option 3: SRU Board appoints independent chair**

Lastly, the SRU Board could appoint a completely independent chair. Working on 2+2 year or 3+3 term, this individual would be appointed on the basis they could bring a fresh, yet informed perspective to the challenges facing the club game. SCOG would anticipate a formal selection process, with a view to identifying and recruiting someone with a good knowledge of club rugby experience of working in sports governance, extensive Board chairing experience and time to dedicate to the role.

This may need to be a paid, part-time role to attract the right quality of candidates.

## **SCOG RECOMMENDATION TO SRU BOARD**

Based on the feedback from stakeholders, reviewing other sports governance arrangements and considering the views of the current President (former Vice President) and new Vice President, SCOG recommends sticking with Option 1 on this particular issue in the short term, with a view to potentially adopting Option 2 at the end of the current Vice President's term.

## **5.3. Use of sub-committees**

The opportunity exists for CRB to form both standing and "short life" sub-committees to address a variety of topics. This results from the provisions contained in the Memorandum of Understanding entered between the SRU, SRL and it. Additionally, it would provide CRB with the ability to obtain "best advice" and appoint individuals who are not members of CRB to assist any such sub-committee.

SCOG views sub-committees as smaller groups formed by the CRB, each tasked with focusing on a specific area of responsibility to a defined remit (e.g., finance, strategy, governance, etc.). Each would be chaired by a member of CRB and would be made up of suitably informed and experienced individuals. Ideally, they will be sourced from the Fora but could also be from individual clubs, SRL or other external organisations. They would report back to the CRB with recommendations, insights, or decisions, depending on the nature and level of authority delegated.

To date, there has been very limited use of sub-groups to help the CRB discharge its responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner. A Finance sub-committee has been established to bring additional finance expertise to the CRB and has been viewed as a success in discharging its responsibilities around annual budgeting and budget allocations.

Extending the use of sub-committees, would potentially allow CRB to operate more strategically and effectively by focusing expertise, improving efficiency, building leadership capacity, and enhancing governance. When well-structured they become a vital part of any well-functioning governance system.

There are a number of different types of sub-committees which could focus on different areas of the domestic game. These would include:

- **Board responsibilities** – with CRB’s primary role around strategy and budgets, creating Finance and Strategy sub-committees would allow for greater discussion and in-depth analysis.
- **Strategy alignment** – aligned around the 2024-2028 strategy pillars (‘Clubs of the Future’, ‘Aligned Pathway’, ‘Evolving Experience’ and ‘Igniting Interest’) e.g. subcommittees around Participation or Pathways.
- **Cross constituency matters** – there are a number of areas that are common to most or all game constituencies e.g. competitions, disciplinary, season structure, training & education, etc. These matters could be put together into a separate ‘Rugby’ subcommittee to take some of the weight off the CRB and its decision making

Additionally, SCOG recognises the potential effectiveness of specific, topic-focussed “short-life” sub-committees, with a limited timescale, to look at key areas of the domestic game. In this context, a sub-committee to examine the need for and to develop a national strategy for 7’s would appear to be an appropriate matter for just such a sub-committee.

### **SCOG RECOMMENDATION TO CRB**

Based on the feedback from stakeholders, CRB members and SCOG’s review of how other countries structure their committees, the following is recommended, as a starting point:

- **Finance** – already in place.
- **Strategy** – look at progress against the 2024-2028 strategy outlined above, as well as looking at how the strategy needs to evolve in line with changes in the overall operating environment.
- **Rugby** – to discuss and develop options around all domestic rugby matters, including well-being and participation
- **People** – a vehicle with a specific remit to monitor and evaluate election rules, address skills development and identification of “talent” both for and on behalf of CRB and its supporting structure (Fora).

In creating these sub-committees it is essential that the right people with the right experience, expertise and insight are involved. It is about getting the best available people in the room and round the table.

Furthermore, ensuring each is set up for success is critical. SCOG recommends the creation of Terms of Reference, a proper induction process, reporting protocols implemented and any other measures introduced to ensure they operate effectively and efficiently. See Section 5.5 for other committee effectiveness considerations.

## **5.4. Making changes to the membership**

The current approach to appointing CRB members is set out in the *'Rules for Election of Representatives to the Club Rugby Board'* (October 2023)

In summary, candidates are nominated from the constituency forums, essentially to act as the Forum Representative on the CRB. Nominations are formerly proposed and seconded by the clubs with an open election then taking place. If there is only one candidate, they can still be elected provided they are approved by a majority of the forum's member clubs.

Each candidate is assessed against a set of criteria – skillset & experience and 'good standing' – set out in the rules. These criteria are a 'shopping list' of capabilities around 'harder' things like rugby experience, governance experience, business experience, stakeholder management, etc, and 'softer' things like curiosity, open nature, 'can-do' mindset, confidence, etc. Candidates are expected to be able to demonstrate that they met some, but not necessarily all of these criteria.

Appointment to the CRB is for a three-year term, but members can seek reappointment for a further 3 years. However, they may not serve for more than 6 years in any twelve-year period.

There is no provision within the rules for the CRB to identify individuals with particular skills and experience, although individuals with particular skills/experience may be asked to attend meetings in order to assist discussions at the request of the Chair.

The process is therefore reliant on those making nominations or voting in elections being objective on their assessment of a candidate's skills and experiences in order to be elected. At present there is no skills matrix or objective assessment which is used to identify/elect candidates to CRB.

### **SCOG RECOMMENDATION TO SRU BOARD**

Overall, SCOG endorses the nominations and voting rules for CRB appointments (election or re-election) – they are robust and should ensure high-quality individuals are admitted as members of CRB. However, based on feedback from stakeholders, CRB members and a review of how corporate and other sports governing bodies manage Board appointments, SCOG believes there is scope to improve the current process by identifying and encouraging

candidates with a broad range of skills and experiences to complement their backgrounds in the domestic game.

Implementing a skills matrix process will help build an understanding of everyone's skills and experience – as relevant to their role on CRB – and will enable potential gaps to be identified and acted upon.

Having identified any gaps in the make-up of CRB, there should be provision within the rules that allow for the CRB to proactively seek individuals with certain skills and experiences that would add the balance of the Board To that end, SCOG recommends drafting amendments to the election rules to reflect this recommendation.

## 5.5. Effective operation of the CRB

Effective governance is about both design and operation. Having looked at a range of design improvement opportunities – role, size, shape & make-up of CRB, use of subcommittees, chairing and the means by which changes in membership take place – it is important to look at opportunities to improve the operational effectiveness of CRB.

The effective and efficient operation of a governance board/committee refers to how well it fulfils its defined role and responsibilities, while making optimal use of time, resources, and expertise. It reflects both **the quality of the board and committees work**—its clarity of purpose, quality of discussion, informed decision-making, and contribution to strategic oversight—and **how smoothly the Board functions**, including how it plans, conducts meetings, communicates, and follows through on actions.

Investing in the functioning of CRB will potentially deliver several tangible benefits:

- **Improved decision-making:** More timely, informed, and strategically aligned decisions.
- **Greater accountability:** Clear tracking of actions, decisions, and responsibilities.
- **Enhanced engagement:** Members feel their time is well-used and input is valued.
- **Organizational alignment:** Stronger integration between governance, operations, and member needs.
- **Risk mitigation:** Better oversight reduces the likelihood of issues being missed or misunderstood.

From the initial survey of CRB members and attendees in Spring 2024, subsequent discussions with current CRB members and other stakeholders, and our knowledge of board/committee operating best practices, SCOG identified a range of potential opportunities that could improve the effective operation of the Board. Some may have been wholly or partially implemented already by the new CRB Chair, and some may not be suitable; however, SCOG has laid out below our 'long list' of ideas for consideration:



Area	Specific Opportunities
<b>Clarify CRB Purpose and Role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the CRB's role and responsibilities. Determine whether anything needs to change or further clarified.</li> <li>Better define the relationship with Rugby Development – ensuring both parties are clear on their respective roles and how they will work together.</li> <li>Define clear success criteria and outcomes for CRB – ‘what will the effective operation of CRB look and feel like as a member?’</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish formal boundaries—what the committee owns, advises on, and delegates.</li> <li>Consider establishing CRB Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and/or operating standards.</li> <li>Update CRB Terms of Reference.</li> </ul>
<b>Setting Members up for Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish high quality induction process for all new members.</li> <li>Develop role profiles for members – generic and specific to individuals. This could include objectives and/or expectations of individuals.</li> </ul>
<b>Skills and Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document and assess skills and experience within CRB. Identify skills/experience gaps and determine how these will be bridged – e.g. future membership, training and sourcing external advice.</li> <li>Develop simple training and development plan – mix of team and individual support. It should cover both technical knowledge and insights, and ‘Board skills’.</li> </ul>
<b>Succession Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considering the skills gaps identified – both short and long term – and the rotation of individual CRB members establish a succession plan. This should include a clear view of what is needed, when, and how CRB plan to address individual succession requirements.</li> <li>The use of sub-committees will create a potential ‘shop window’ for future CRB talent and a way for skills to be accessed without full commitment to joining CRB.</li> <li>Succession is a key part of the ‘People Committee’s’ remit.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve Meeting Planning and Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create an annual plan for CRB – setting key focus areas aligned to the strategy, and how they will be dealt with through the structure of the agenda and individual meetings.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and publish a forward agenda/calendar.</li> <li>• Strict protocols around the provision and circulation of papers and other reporting to CRB.</li> <li>• Structure agendas around decisions, priorities, and risks.</li> </ul>
<b>Enhance Decision-Making Processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater use of pre-meeting discussions and effective delegation to sub-committees and the wider fora.</li> <li>• Clarify decision rights so all members understand what the committee can decide, recommend, or escalate.</li> <li>• Use structured processes like templates and decision logs to support consistency and transparency.</li> <li>• Ensure effective preparation by distributing materials in advance and prioritizing key decisions on the agenda.</li> <li>• Encourage inclusive discussion by balancing input, challenging groupthink, and ensuring all voices are heard.</li> <li>• Track and follow up decisions with clear actions, deadlines, and accountability to ensure implementation.</li> <li>• Continuously improve decision-making by reviewing outcomes, collecting feedback, and learning from experience.</li> </ul>
<b>Strengthen Committee Dynamics and Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a plan to strengthen collaboration, teamworking and 'team spirit'.</li> <li>• Host informal social events or dinners to build personal connections beyond formal meetings.</li> <li>• Rotate responsibilities such as meeting facilitation to build mutual respect and shared ownership.</li> <li>• Develop a shared Board charter or set of working norms.</li> <li>• Organize an annual offsite focused on strategy, learning, and relationship-building.</li> <li>• Encourage mentoring or peer-pairing between experienced and newer Board members.</li> <li>• Use external facilitators occasionally to support trustbuilding and group development.</li> </ul>
<b>Support Through Tools and Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a shared digital workspace (e.g., Teams, SharePoint).</li> <li>• Implement standard templates for all agendas, minutes, reporting, etc.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the use of asynchronous input tools (e.g., surveys, pre-meeting polls) to complement discussion and debate in and around meetings.</li> </ul>
<b>Commit to Continuous Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct annual reviews of CRB effectiveness – i.e. a selfassessment exercise against Board objectives, KPIs and/or operating standards.</li> <li>Benchmark against best practice. Network with Chair/board members in other rugby or wider sporting governing bodies. Leverage knowledge and insight within SCOG.</li> </ul>

It is important to note that further opportunities relating to improved communication within the club rugby governance arrangements are covered separately in Section 7 of this report.

### SCOG RECOMMENDATION TO CRB

There is recognition both within and outside CRB that improvements in the way it operates can be made. SCOG suggests that CRB review and discuss the ideas set out above with a view to developing a 'Board Improvement Plan'. SCOG would be happy to facilitate such a meeting and assist CRB with developing the plan.

## **6. Supporting structure**

### **6.1. The role of the supporting structure**

The term "supporting structure," as used by SCOG, specifically refers to the range of forums and other such working groups that sit beneath and provide essential support to the CRB, and its sub-committees. These include forums representing national leagues, regional leagues and other groupings, as well as several distinct constituency groups operating across the country. Collectively, they serve as the foundation upon which the CRB is built, given that it is from these groups that individual constituency representatives are selected to serve on CRB.

Each has a remit to consult with and represent an individual constituency on a regular basis in order to provide suggestion for action on matters of concern to each, and to provide feedback on suggested measures that CRB in conjunction with the RDD wish to take to further develop the club game.

To facilitate this, each operates to a general remit: the SRU / CRB Terms of Reference for Fora though certain key constituencies have developed additional operational procedures to meet specific constituency needs (see below). Additionally, to coordinate appointment to the CRB, all forums are subject to the election protocols set out in the CRB Election Rules when election / re-election of their representative is required.

## 6.2. Development of the supporting structure

As previously noted, the Crerar review originally proposed a CRB comprising in addition to the Vice-President sitting as Chair and with the Director of Rugby Development as a standing invitee a representative of each of the national leagues then existing (4), 6 regional representatives, and members representing Match Official, Women & Girls and a Schools & Youth i.e. 13 constituency focussed forums each with a “seat” at the CRB table.

Since then however, there have been a number of developments, notably the creation of National 4 and the formation of both the newly focussed Borders District Union (SBDU) and Scottish Rugby Referee’s Association (SRRRA). None of these developments have resulted in an increased number of CRB representatives, with both the Nat 2 and Nat 3 representatives undertaking to support the interests of Nat 4 clubs *pro tempore*.

## 6.3. Current Fora structure

To consider this specific issue, SCOG undertook a survey of all forums and relevant stakeholders. In excess of 60 individual responses were received from a variety of stakeholders across the domestic game.

That paper makes a number of specific recommendations for consideration in relation to the Forum supporting structure underpinning CRB. In summary these call for additional resources to be made available to all constituencies in terms of training, additional administrative support and the need to avoid “siloed-thinking” when it comes to addressing specific issues that have a cross-constituency impact. Together, the responses received, the developments referred to above and the wider issues raised other than if CRB is to be reorganised on a regional model that it would now be appropriate to realign the individual Forums as follows (12 members +):

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| • Premiership    | • Glasgow North Region                         |
| • National 1 & 2 | • Glasgow South Region                         |
| • National 3 & 4 | • SBDU (on behalf of the Borders Region)       |
| • North Region   | • Women & Girls                                |
| • Midland Region | • Schools & Youth                              |
| • East Region    | • SRRRA (on behalf of Ref’s & Match Officials) |

However, should it be determined that CRB be realigned along one of the regional models detailed SCOG would recommend a Forum structure as outlined below (15 members +), with each Forum marked with an asterisk, appointing 2 representatives rather than 1 as at present. This is because each of the Forums indicated will have a significant uplift in membership, resulting in a substantially increased workload.

- |                   |                         |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| • North Region*   | • Glasgow North Region* |
| • Midland Region* | • Glasgow South Region* |

- East Region\*
- Women & Girls
- Schools & Youth
- SBDU\* (on behalf of the Borders Region)
- SRRA (on behalf of Ref's & Match Officials)

## 6.4. Forum operations

At present, Forums (Fora) can be split into 2 broad categories: those that are league based and those with oversight of their constituency interests on a national basis:

- **League based Forums:** though business addressed at Fora meetings has broadened in recent times, there remains a sense that discussion remains focussed on men's 1<sup>st</sup> XV rugby. Whilst undoubtedly important, if CRB reps are to be furnished with the broadest information to present to the CRB, relevant discussion has to be widened:
- **Other "Forums":**
  - **Schools & Youth (S&Y):** effective representation of this constituency suffers from the size of its membership and a feeling that insufficient time is devoted to discussing its work and challenges. Consequently key stakeholders in the S&Y constituency feel left out of the consultation process. In this regard, the apparent lack of an overall development strategy for S&Y encompassing all aspects – from welfare to competitions, from season structure to engagement – needs to be developed with the input from the widest range of stakeholders.
  - **Women & Girls (W&G):** arguably the largest single constituency, W&G similarly suffers from a lack of overall stakeholder involvement in this hugely important and growing area of the game.
  - **Referee's & Match Officials (R&MO):** the SRRA, with whom responsibility rests for the appointment of the R&MO CRB Rep. It is well positioned to represent on both a regional (via its regional societies) and national basis. It is overseen by a number of well informed and operationally active individuals who serve both their own constituency as well as the wider club and community game.
  - **Scottish Borders District Union (SBDU):** the SBDU is a newly formed body of committed rugby-focussed individuals. Brought about to refocus "rugby interests" within a specific geographical area, sought to align those interests within the context of the wider needs of their community.
  - **Championship Committee (CC):** SCOG recognises that to retain its operational independence and the work it undertakes it is necessary that the committee be able to undertake its work without unnecessary interference or undue influence. However, SCOG considers there must be some oversight of its work and decision-making so recommends the formation of a CRB subcommittee to review its current structures and operating procedures.

### SCOG RECOMMENDATION TO CRB

Given the above comments SCOG suggests consideration be given to the following actions:

- Review individual constituencies following agreement on overall CRB structure (see 6.3 above) and restructure as necessary.
- Review current Terms of Reference.
- Creation of a training and support plan for office bearers.
- Increased alignment with SRL RDD appointed “leads”.
- Creation of a Schools & Youth Working Party.
- Creation of a Women & Girls Working Party.
- Encourage ad hoc attendance of relevant personnel e.g. SRL CEO, Custodian Directors etc.
- Regular meetings of Forum office bearers (at least one should be held “in person”).

## 7. Communications

### 7.1. The importance of communication in the governance arrangements

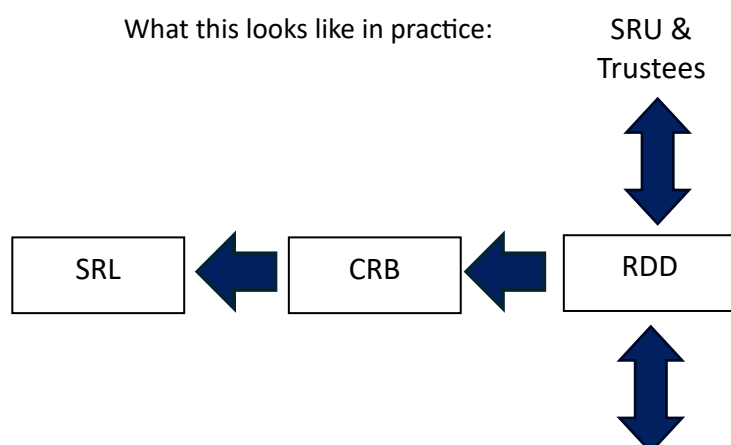
Communication plays a vital role in the effective governance of sports organisations at all levels, including local, national and international. Good and effective communication is an essential component in ensuring that organisations function as efficiently as possible.

It plays a crucial part in building and maintaining strong relationships; team building; resolving conflicts and setting and achieving goals. Good and effective communication facilitates collaboration, better engagement within and across the different organisations, with stakeholder, and most importantly, it helps to create a culture which is transparent, honest and which encourages feedback, discussion, the sharing of ideas and enhances good decision-making.

### 7.2. What are the key communications flows in club rugby governance

The governance structure of Scottish Rugby means that there are multiple communication flows in place. With regards to CRB, the key communication flows work both horizontally across from the Executive Level (SRL) and Rugby Development, (RDD), and vertically from the SRU Custodian Board and the Trustees, and to and from the fora and individual clubs. All parties involved have a responsibility to ensure that all communications are clear, comprehensive and timely.

What this looks like in practice:



Fora/Individual

Clubs

### 7.3. What communications issues are CRB facing?

From the feedback received from both the clubs, and from the CRB, blockages have arisen in key communication flows. There are multiple issues which stand in the way of good, effective communication. These are both internal and external and include:

- a lack of clarity, transparency and accountability in the communication, which can lead to public mistrust, media criticism and club dissatisfaction;
- irrelevant, inconsistent and confused communications, making it difficult to work out what the message is and leading to confusion;
- the existence of communication silos – when there is no communication between entities with common or overlapping constituency interest(s), and consequently “messages” are presented in isolation of other relevant interests;
- assumptions made about knowledge or lack of knowledge, behaviours and anticipated reactions to a specific communication;
- using inappropriate channels to transmit the communication, meaning that the target audience may not be reached or may have difficulty in accessing the message. This is especially pertinent with the increased use of social media.

The implementation of a thoughtful, well considered and thorough communications strategy, with specific guidelines as to its use, will address many of these issues.

### 7.4. How to improve communications?

As detailed above, the implementation of a communications strategy and guidelines will address many of these issues. The communications strategy should be clear, cohesive and it should be documented how it is aligned with the CRB objectives. It is effectively a roadmap to deliver the key messages from CRB, and to ensure consistent and impactful engagement with clubs and all other stakeholders.

It should have a strong focus on grassroots rugby, fostering community involvement, enhancing the profile of local clubs and aligning with the national rugby structure. A successful communications strategy should aim to increase visibility for the clubs, enhance engagement, improve relations between the clubs and the SRU and drive participation both on and off the field.

What steps should be taken to ensure that this is achieved?

1. **Every communication must have a clearly stated, very specific objective.** The more specific the objective is, the easier it is to direct the communication appropriately. For example, the objective could be to increase adult player numbers at grassroots level. As an objective, that is too high level, and not sufficiently tangible. A better objective would be to increase adult player numbers by, say, 5% over the next season, with the current number as the starting point. This detail means that at the end of the season, the performance can be measured and assessed. It is possible that the target has not been met, and thought should be given as to why not; it is also possible that the target has been exceeded, and again, thought should be given as to why this has happened.
2. **It is essential to identify the target audience.** For the CRB, the target audiences will include players of varying ages, parents, coaches, those running rugby clubs, volunteers, fans and supporters, the local community and potential sponsors and partners. Identifying which exactly of these allows the message to be tailored to ensure relevance and better engagement. Correct identification of the target audience also helps to engage stakeholders and to make them feel valued and part of the organisation. Stakeholder engagement is critical for the CRB moving forwards and is one of the main tenets of good sporting governance.
3. **What is the key message to be communicated?** A communication can include more than one key message, but the messages must be clear and concise and should align with the CRB objectives. For example, the message could be something as straightforward as the dates for the following season, or something significantly more complicated such as changes to the season structure, or changes to the laws of the game.
4. **How is the communication to be transmitted?** What channels and platforms should be used? This is where the identification of the target audience is absolutely crucial – there is no point in using social media for a communication if the target demographic does not use social media.
5. **Good communication does not happen in a vacuum.** It requires collaboration with other teams, in the case of CRB with Rugby Development (RDD), Scottish Rugby Limited (SRL) and the Scottish Rugby Union (SRU). All of these teams need to work together and need to keep each other informed of developments.
6. **In conjunction with the teams outlined above, the CRB should have a crisis communication plan in place.** The hope is that it is never needed, but having a strategy for handling unforeseen issues, especially negative ones, can prove invaluable if these situations arise.

Underlying the Communications strategy should be Communications Guidelines. These should ensure consistency, efficiency, brand cohesion and protection and quality control. Communication Guidelines have a generally accepted approach, which focuses on the 7 Cs. These are:

- Clear



- Correct
- Complete
- Concrete – specific and logical
- Concise
- Courteous
- Considered and coherent

To this SCOG would add “Channel” – choosing the most appropriate channel for the target audience to “hear” and receive the intended message.

In summary, a strong communication strategy for the CRB needs to focus on the grassroots level of the sport, elevating local clubs whilst also creating a robust, connected and engaged rugby community. By focusing on engagement, inclusivity, and community impact, a successful strategy can foster a culture of growth, participation and pride in Scottish Rugby from the ground up.

#### SCOG RECOMMENDATION TO CRB

SCOG recommends that CRB develop a communication strategy covering all communication flows within the club rugby game. This needs to be underpinned by a set of clear communication guidelines.