

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH RUGBY CLUB RUGBY BOARD  
HELD AT 5PM ON WEDNESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2025  
MONCREIFF SUITE, SCOTTISH GAS MURRAYFIELD  
& BY MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**Present:**

Keith Wallace	(KW)	President (online)
Hazel Swankie	(HS)	Vice-President
Jim O'Neill	(JON)	Glasgow South Regional Representative (online)
Gavin Stevenson	(GSt)	Premiership Representative
Eric Hugh	(EH)	National 2 (and National 4) Representative
Duncan Campbell	(DC)	Midlands Representative (online)
Ian Dalglish	(ID)	National 1 Representative
Mike Bruce	(MB)	Women & Girls Representative
Steven Halliday	(SH)	East Regional Representative
Scott Forbes	(SF)	Borders Regional Representative
Gib McMillan	(GM)	Schools Representative (online)
John Scott	(JS)	North Regional Representative (online)
Ed Crozier	(EC)	Glasgow North Regional Representative
Neil Sutherland	(NS)	National 3 (and National 4) Representative
Gavin Scott	(GS)	Director of Rugby Development

**In Attendance:**

Alex Williamson	(AW)	Chief Executive Officer
Chris Hildrey	(CH)	Head of Regional Development
Vicky Cox	(VC)	Head of Competitions & Compliance
Steve Turnbull	(ST)	Head of Rugby Development Operations
Holly Sinclair	(HSin)	Business Operations & Support Manager

**Apologies:**

Mhairi Hay	(MH)	Referees Representative
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**1. Introduction**

**ACTION**

**1.1 Quorum and Apologies**

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

She welcomed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to the meeting and introduced him to Members noting he would provide an update on key business areas and an opportunity for a Q&A.

She also welcomed the Glasgow North Regional Representative, the Premiership Representative and the National 2 Representative as new Members to the CRB and noted a full complement of the Board.

Apologies were noted from the Referees Representative.

The CEO then provided an update to Members (captured in item 2 of the agenda).

**1.2 Chair Opening Remarks**

The Vice President provided Members with an update on the SCOG review including the following:

- The agreed CRB structure would remain as a status quo for season 2025/26 with the introduction of sub-committees.
- Looking to explore the viability of a regional model structure of CRB for season 2026/27 to align with the Rugby Development department structure.
- The SCOG review was circulated to clubs on 18 September in Club Comms. This reviews remit was addressing the make up of CRB and was not looking at league structures.
- A working group had been formed to take forward the recommendations which comprised of representatives from: SCOG, CRB, the Rugby Development department and two SRU custodian board members. She noted a meeting was scheduled on 29 October to explore the viability of a regional structure of CRB.

She noted that the CCRC update would be referred to in item 5.12 and noted that discussions on Members attending Competitions Committees as observers only was put on hold.

She referred to the Women and Girls Strategy Review meetings and the Player Pathway and Coach Development Roadshows detailed in the Rugby Development department reports for Member attendance, encouraging all to raise awareness with their clubs to promote sign-ups on SCRUMS.

## **2. Update from CEO**

The CEO thanked Members for the invitation to the Meeting and provided an update on the organisation and its direction to Members. He noted his reflections and aims to become the leading union in World Rugby, which included the following:

- The aspiration to win the Men's and Women's World Cup.
- The need to use the stadium for purposes out with rugby.
- Scottish Rugby had met the financial targets set for season 2024/25 (but noted there was a still a loss).
- The SRU and SRL Boards, with the connect of CRB into SRL, was working well.
- Believable Path: noting these highlighted strategic imperatives which aligned to everyday work and had launched across the organisation earlier in October.

The CEO then discussed several key focus areas across the organisation and Members were asked for any questions:

**Women's Game:** he referred to the 4-year Women's strategy and noted all KPIs had been achieved, with the exception of one. He noted the need to bring Women's high performance players and investment back into Scotland's clubs, which would also provide a clear path for young female.

He noted several recent changes to the Women's game, including the number of contracted players, a new role of Managing Director of Women's rugby who would report directly into CEO, a new Head Coach and a Head of Women's Pathways who had recently been appointed. He noted the focus areas of the Women's game

including Celtic Challenge, WXV tournament, the first Women's Lions tour and the Women's Rugby World Cup.

**Men's Game:** He highlighted the recent changes to the Men's National team coaches, the Warriors Head coach contract extension and ongoing contract conversations with the Edinburgh Rugby Head Coach.

**High Performance:** he noted the aim was to create more focus and higher investment into fewer pathway players. He noted that one of the aims of Edinburgh Rugby and Glasgow Warriors environments was to produce good, home grown players. The challenges in High Performance were discussed including separating the National teams from the pathway, allowing the pathway to mature. The investment into nutrition was highlighted as a new focus area.

**World Rugby:** noted the USA would host the Women's and Men's World Cup in the USA and the opportunities to leverage this investment of rugby union into the country.

**Murrayfield Stadium:** an overview of new hospitality investments into the stadium were noted, including new bars and the refurbishment of the old Murrayfield Wanderers clubhouse. The need to invest into the stadium to ensure it was fit for purpose for the next 50 years and challenges around this such as liaising with government and with clubs to ensure it was sustainable in the long-term was noted.

Other pending developments; comments were provided on the status of other developments in the professional and high-performance game of a confidential nature.

**Philanthropy:** he discussed how he and the Director of Rugby Development had worked together on discuss how to drive more value into the club game from philanthropic donations, with the club game having several opportunities to commercialise assets. He further noted that the SRL board had established a funding working group and there would be opportunities to provide extra funding into the club game.

Member's questions on the CEO's presentation included the following:

The Premiership Representative noted the perception of the physical risks in the game and the challenges in trying to promote the game to obtain investment. The CEO noted the need to promote the positives of playing the game and highlighted research and positive changes World Rugby had implemented such as gum shields, for the game to become safer.

The Glasgow North Representative queried whether there was any pressure from the Government for Murrayfield to host both rugby and football, in order to secure funding. The CEO noted there was an openness for rental opportunities for the stadium.

With respect to R360, the Glasgow North Representative asked about Scottish Rugby's stance. The CEO noted that Scottish Rugby did not consider R360 to be good for the game in Scotland and were not supporting the concept.

The Glasgow South Representative questioned if there was any investment into Scotstoun Stadium. The CEO noted there were ongoing conversations with Glasgow Life and Glasgow City Council. He noted the need for Edinburgh Rugby and Glasgow Warriors to create high performance environments which could be used by a number of Scottish Rugby's training environments.

The Caledonia North Representative suggested the communication of key matters should be relay to CRB in advance of any release, for them to be able to discuss with and support clubs. The CEO noted the SRL board had also fed this back and there had been several learnings from recent communications such as briefing the press, and the need to provide clarity to key stakeholders such as the President, Vice President, CRB and the Rugby Development department.

The CEO left the Meeting at 17:55.

### **3. Actions**

#### *3.1 Actions from Previous Meeting*

- 3.1.1 It was requested by the Caledonia Midland's Representative for a summary of the minutes to be shared with clubs: **COMPLETE***
- 3.1.2 The Vice-President requested for the slide deck (Youth Market Research presentation) be shared with members: **COMPLETE***
- 3.1.3 Share contact details of CRB Members who would like to connect with the Marketing Consultant: **COMPLETE***
- 3.1.4 The Women & Girls Representative suggested his role should be considered in addition to those highlighted. The Child Wellbeing and Protection Manager provided the rationale for his exclusion from the current list and agreed to review this: **COMPLETE** – this has been reviewed and identified as a regulated role.*
- 3.1.5 The Premiership Representative emphasised the need to share the flowcharts as widely as possible and it was requested for these to be shared with Members for onward communication to their clubs: **COMPLETE***
- 3.1.6 The Child Wellbeing and Protection Manager noted that the auditor wished to speak with some CRB Members to better understand their roles and responsibilities and to help tailor training. Volunteers were requested to put themselves forward to the Vice-President: **COMPLETE***
- 3.1.7 It was agreed that a player and parent webinar (NTP) would be circulated to Members alongside the presentation slides: **COMPLETE***
- 3.1.8 The Glasgow South Regional Representative requested year-on-year tracking of Direct Club funding and clarification on the potential to redirect underspends. The Head of Rugby Development Operations agreed to share historical data for Direct Club and School funding: **COMPLETE***
- 3.1.9 It was agreed that an updated year-to-date budget position as at the end of the financial year (June) would be provided: **COMPLETE***

- 3.1.10 *The Borders Representative queried funding for clubs such as Clan Rugby. The Head of Rugby Development Operations confirmed that funding could be accessed through the Developing Clubs Investment Programme fund for Clans and minis-only clubs. Clarification was requested on whether the Glasgow Clan were an associate or member club: **COMPLETE** – confirmation they are an Associate Member Club*
- 3.1.11 *Player Payment Declaration: The Head of Competitions and Compliance asked members for discussion on which policy option should be explored further and agreed for implementation in the 2026/27 season. The Vice-President suggested that members reflect on the options provided in the paper and submit preferred options to the Head of Competitions and Compliance: **COMPLETE** – covered under agenda item 5.10*
- 3.1.12 *The Vice-President noted she would follow up with Members regarding the composition of the committee (CCRC): **COMPLETE***
- 3.1.13 *The Glasgow South Regional Representative requested if a meeting could be organised with the Chief Executive Officer and CRB Members to understand his direction for the organisation: **COMPLETE** – covered under agenda item 2.1.*

#### **4. CRB Quarterly Reports**

##### **4.1 Report from each CRB Member**

The CRB Quarterly Reports paper was taken as read.

Members were asked if they had any questions which required response from the Rugby Development Department to detail these separately to their quarterly report.

The National 2 Representative discussed the recent Development Officer investment process and suggested that communication around investment/non-continuation of investment could have been better. The Head of Regional Development noted he had provided a response to his question in the paper and suggested discussing the process separately for any learnings.

The Caledonia Midlands Representative noted there was particularly hard ground after a dry summer and noted several concussions relating to this. He noted there was good protocol with frozen ground but should dry ground from summer also be considered. The Director of Rugby Development noted that this would be reviewed with all injury data in January as a mid-season report.

#### **5. Business Reporting**

##### **5.1 Rugby Development Budget 2026-27**

The Rugby Development Budget 2026-27 paper was taken as read.

The Head of Rugby Development Operations provided members with a timeline of the budget approval, noting that a higher-level budget plan would be provided in the January CRB Meeting, seeking approval in the June Meeting. The successful budget process of the Rugby Development Department collaboration with CRB was noted.

Under reference to the paper, he noted that Rugby Development's Senior Leadership Team had highlighted key areas of budget alignment in line with the Believable Path including:

- Mini rugby
- Marketing the game (with a progress report on the Youth Marketing programme to be presented in January)
- Facilities, noting that the G&P Major Capital investments' Government funding is in its final year and the discussion of whether it should be realigned into different outcomes
- Investment into volunteers within the game (recruitment, retention, volunteer programmes).

He welcomed feedback from Members and requested feedback on if there were any gaps which had not been highlighted. Members' feedback and questions included:

The Glasgow South Regional Representative noted that some local authorities had developed funding streams (such as North Ayrshire's Challenge Fund) and suggested looking into these opportunities.

The Premiership Representative questioned how the Rugby Development Department worked alongside universities. The Head of Rugby Development Operations noted that university data was not recorded on SCRUMS unless they competed in a Scottish Rugby competition, and there was a lack of data points around university players. He noted the growth in women's rugby in universities and the need to support it further from a participation and pathway perspective.

The Schools Representative noted he would discuss offline with the Head of Rugby Development Operations an SQA level 7 qualification for Match Officials.

The National 1 Representative suggested the need to make mini rugby attractive and enjoyable to retain them throughout the game. The Director of Rugby Development noted the need to make the game fun throughout the ages for the continuity and retention of players. The need to measure and understand drop off, especially from 17–18-year-olds into tertiary education throughout the game was also noted.

The challenges of marketing the game was discussed, noting that an update on the ongoing Youth Marketing programme (which aimed to promote the benefits of playing rugby) would be provided in the January CRB Meeting.

## **5.2 Cashback Phase 7 Update**

The Cashback Phase 7 Update paper was taken as read.

The Head of Regional Development referred to the circulated paper, noting the application for Phase 7 had been submitted and it had passed the first phase and had progressed to the latter stages of the assessment process. He noted that if Scottish Rugby were offered the Phase 7 funding, the request from Members was for their approval for accepting it.

He noted that the money was ringfenced for this project and would not displace any other spend within the budget. He welcomed any questions from Members.

The Vice President encouraged Members to read the Cashback Annual Report for season 2024/25 and highlighted several key areas from the Cashback project.

Members were in agreement of acceptance of the Cashback fund, if granted.

### *5.3 Regional Reports*

The Regional Reports paper was taken as read.

The Director of Rugby Development noted that the game was overall in a similar place, year-on-year with some regional variations in participation and the number of games played.

### *5.4 Competitions & Compliance Report*

The Competitions & Compliance Report was taken as read.

With reference to the circulated paper, the Head of Competitions and Compliance noted there had been some challenges in the school and youth game, but overall competitions were in a good place and on track. She highlighted several upcoming finals such as the Women's Premiership, Boy's Schools Cup and National Youth Cup finals.

She noted planning had commenced for the Regional Youth Cup finals, pathway fixtures and season planning for 2026/27.

The Glasgow South Regional Representative noted his disappointment in the number of clubs who had withdrawn from the first round of the National Shield. He questioned if anything could be done to ensure commitment to play from teams. Members discussed that several games within the National Youth Cups had also faced issues with fulfilment of away games which could be a result of geographical challenges. The Head of Competitions and Compliance noted a holistic review/consultation was needed as this was a challenge faced across several cup competitions, to understand why they withdrew/do not fulfil fixtures. She noted the consultation would need to commence by January to influence next season and she highlighted the need for support from CRB for feedback and engagement from their foras.

The Rugby Development department also noted that some feedback from clubs with regards to challenges with the season commencing earlier and the need to get intel from clubs on when they want fixtures published to assist with planning for earlier fixtures. They also noted that more competitions and fixtures had been added to the season and there was a need to review with the clubs what they want.

The Vice President requested for the Head of Competitions and Compliance to draft questions which would need addressed to send to Chairs and Secretaries of the Foras for feedback at their meetings.

**VC**

### *5.5 Player Movement Discussion*

The Head of Competitions and Compliance noted that player movement would naturally occur throughout the game. She made reference to a protocol which had previously been created for player movement with regards to pathway, but not movement between clubs. It was noted that the topic of player movement had been raised by the Schools & Youth Competitions Committee.

The Head of Competitions and Compliance proposed forming a working group consisting of CRB Members and key stakeholders within the game, including clubs and schools who were key recipients of player movement. The need for a player-focussed protocol for how to work together in this space was noted, to help players be in the environment that were best for them. She proposed a timeline to be prepared for next season which would be data-informed.

It was noted by the Head of Competitions and Compliance that player movement had been looked at on SCRUMS but it would not detail the impact that movement had on a club. The Schools Representative suggested looking into this to analyse trends and the ability of clubs to understand the background of a player move.

Members provided examples of player movement and knock-on effects of a player moving, citing an example of some coaches not nominating for PDH in the fear of losing them.

The following discussions were noted as areas for the working group to consider:

- The need for improved communication between parent club and new player club.
- Conversations with emerging players and coaches need to follow good safeguarding practices.
- Independent schools taking players could be attractive to parents in the youth game.
- In the adult game there should be the option for players to move back to their original club if they don't get game play at a new club. He noted the example of the SFA's new initiative allowing players to move back to clubs.
- The need to look into whether there is an issue with enough player numbers in a club and could players be moving to a club where they're guaranteed games.
- Could certain clubs be associated with the perception of players needing to play there to proceed into pathway.
- Look into the whole team setup for whether coaches/support staff are also moving.

The Head of Competitions and Compliance suggested developing a protocol which would apply for adult and youth players.

Moving forward, the Vice President, Head of Competitions and Compliance and Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development would meet to address the above and formation of the working group.

**VC/HS**

## **5.6** *Championship Report Season 2024-25*

The Championship Report Season 2024-25 paper was taken as read.



## *5.7 State School Strategy Report*

The State School Strategy Report was taken as read.

The Head of Regional Development noted that the State School Strategy Report for the January CRB Meeting would have more information to analyse as a mid-point in the season.

Members discussed the feedback received on the State School Strategy, with the Head of Regional Development noting the general feedback from secondary schools was positive, with them noting the sustainability of the approach was appreciated and the clarity and processes were well-received, with a refreshing uptake of the rugby product within schools.

## *5.8 W&G Strategy*

### *5.8.1 W&G Strategy Report*

The W&G Strategy Report was taken as read.

### *5.8.1 W&G Strategy Review*

The W&G Strategy Review paper was taken as read.

The Head of Regional Development highlighted to Members the upcoming W&G Strategy Review Meetings, noting they provided time for representatives in the women and girls game to suggest possible direction for the next strategy. He noted they would run from 3 - 14 November and regional CRB representatives would be contacted by regional leads. The list of meeting dates was agreed to be shared with CRB Members. He made reference that the process of the strategy review was detailed in the paper and the outcomes of the strategy review meetings would be shared with CRB, after being reviewed by SLT, at the January CRB Meeting.

**HSin**

Members discussed the positive promotion of the women's game, with examples such as the Women's Rugby World Cup and celebrating women and girls in sports week, with the suggestion of sending representatives into schools during this week next year, to engage girls in the game and those not. It was noted the need to do this level of marketing in the women's club game also, with the Vice President noting it was on the CEO's radar. The Head of Rugby Development Operations noted the first round of the Youth Marketing campaign was targeted at the WRWC, with the aligned Turn Up and Play games, and how this would be built upon for upcoming events such as the Women's Lions tour.

## *5.9 Rugby Development Safeguarding Report*

The Rugby Development Safeguarding Report was taken as read.

The Vice President requested Members to promote and encourage sign-ups for the Child Wellbeing and Protection in Sport course.

**All CRB**

## *5.10 Player Payment Policy - DRAFT*

The Player Payment Policy – DRAFT paper was taken as read.

With reference to the paper, the Head of Competitions and Compliance noted it was a draft policy which was under review with Scottish Rugby's Legal team. She also noted an audit would take place for players who were coming into the country with respect to visas.

With reference to the draft policy, the Vice President suggested the note of no more than 2 club employees playing per match could be detailed in both the NCRs and the Player Payment policy.

VC

The Vice President requested a copy of the Premiership Participation agreement to be distributed.

ST

#### 5.11 *Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee*

The Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee paper was taken as read.

The Vice President noted the infancy of the Committee and several CRB Members (Caledonia North Regional Representative and National 2 Representative) were on the Committee.

She noted if any Members had questions, to refer them to her.

#### 5.12 *Championship Committee Review Committee (CCRC) Update*

The Championship Committee Review Committee (CCRC) Update paper was taken as read. The Vice President noted the review was due to be complete by the end of November 2025. It was noted that the next steps would include recommendations from the working group and an online single item agenda meeting would be setup to discuss this.

#### 5.13 *SBDU Future of Sevens Strategy (TOR)*

SBDU Future of Sevens Strategy (TOR) paper was taken as read.

The Vice President noted that with the structure of pathway now settled, a meeting would be setup with High Performance to inform them of the Future of Sevens strategy TOR.

The recent changes to GB Sevens were noted, suggesting more of a focus of Sevens in the Scotland pathway and a route for players to evolve into the National team. It was noted that there would be a representative appointed from High Performance to discuss a Sevens strategy for the whole of the game.

Referencing the paper circulated, the Borders Regional Representative provided Members with context to the paper, noting it was a collective response across all of Scotland. He noted the opportunities Sevens provided to players into High Performance and noted the potential for collaboration with High Performance representatives.

The Head of Regional Development noted the need to determine a timeline for this as several factors would need to be considered for the implementation of a new strategy to ensure it was supported and well resourced.

It was noted that the next steps were for High Performance representation to be confirmed and a meeting scheduled, for an update to be shared with CRB.

#### **5.14 CRB Member Questions for Rugby Development**

The CRB Member Questions for Rugby Development paper was taken as read.

The Director of Rugby Development referenced the new pathway structure, highlighting the National Talent Pathway representatives would support players within their clubs.

With regards to a question submitted and answered in the paper, the Edinburgh Regional Representative further queried whether composite teams would be allowed in the Regional Cups. The Head of Competitions and Compliance noted the need to first determine what the Regional Youth Cup finals would look like and regional teams would communicate this in due course. The Edinburgh Regional Representative added that it would be appreciated if there was an opportunity for players to play for their clubs on a Saturday.

In reference to a question by the National 3 Representative, the Head of Competitions and Compliance noted she was exploring the best way to share data on fixture fulfilment for each league in an efficient way.

### **6. Governance**

#### **6.1 Quarterly Regulatory Stats**

The Quarterly Regulatory Statistics paper was taken as read.

### **7. CRB Member Safeguarding Update**

No updates were given.

### **8. CRB Member Diversity and Inclusion Update**

The Head of Regional Development noted that a Moving to Inclusion update would be provided at the January CRB Meeting.

### **9. President Update**

The President provided an update to Members on several matters, as summarised below:

- i)* He noted his reflections on improved communication with the CEO in place, and a good governance structure.
- ii)* He and the Vice President attended the four Women's Rugby World Cup Scotland games and had also recently attended a World Rugby Assembly.

- iii) He highlighted key ongoing facilities upgrades to the stadium, including improved toilet facilities, water supply and new pitch.
- iv) He reminded all of the upcoming AGM and highlighted ways for clubs to vote.
- v) Noted the organisation had come a long way over the past year and overall things were going well.

## 10. AOB

### 10.1 CRB Introduction Paper

The Vice President referred to the circulated paper which the Caledonia Midlands Regional Representative created, to provide a consistent overview of the roles and responsibilities of CRB. Members noted the document was useful, with the Caledonia North Regional Representative suggesting adding key contact information such as who each CRB Representative, the Rugby Development contacts and Competitions Committee representatives. It was agreed for this to be added.

GS/HSin

The Vice-President noted there was a new CCO and a meeting had taken place on improving communication and links between SRU, SRL and CRB.

The Vice President further discussed the following AOB:

- She noted CRB benefits for season 2025/26 had been distributed with the paper pack and noted hospitality invites for the Argentina game had been sent.
- The possibility of CRB meetings being held in the daytime was discussed. It was suggested by the Director of Rugby Development that the January and June Meetings could be in the daytime. It was also suggested aligning a Meeting with a reason for Members to be in Murrayfield, such as a cup finals day.
- The Vice President suggested the CRB gathering outwith a Meeting (such as lunch before a meeting) to network and get to know each other further.

The Vice President asked Members for any AOB, which included the following:

- The Caledonia North Regional Representative questioned if CRB could meet with David Nucifora, which the Vice President noted was in hand.
- The Borders Regional Representative requested an update on the Club International competition. The Head of Competitions and Compliance noted she was in communication with several unions to determine the possibility of this. She noted challenges with the competition including costings around the programme.
- The Glasgow North Regional Representative questioned if there had been a consultation regarding the split of the Women's game, which the Head of Competition and Compliance noted the season structure had been agreed after a consultation process with the clubs and committees.
- He also noted his condolences to the family of Hugh Penman, with his recent passing.

- He commended Hollie Davidson on her recent appointments in the Women's Rugby World Cup and the upcoming Autumn games.
- The National 2 Regional Representative noted there was a long process time for PVGs. The Head of Rugby Development Operations noted that a new system was in the process of being implemented which should improve this.

#### **11. Chair Remarks**

The Vice President noted the CEO's openness to attend another CRB Meeting.

She also referred to the recently announced recipients of the inaugural Bill McLaren Foundation Bursary scheme.

With all business dealt with, the Vice President thanked all for their attendance and closed the Meeting at 8:20PM.

Next Meeting: TBC