

**MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH RUGBY CLUB RUGBY BOARD  
HELD AT 5PM ON WEDNESDAY 1 APRIL 2026  
MONCREIFF SUITE, SCOTTISH GAS MURRAYFIELD  
& BY MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**Present:**

Keith Wallace	(KW)	President
Hazel Swankie	(HS)	Vice-President
Jim O'Neill	(JON)	Glasgow South Regional Representative (online)
Gavin Stevenson	(GSt)	Premiership Representative (online)
Eric Hugh	(EH)	National 2 (and National 4) Representative
Duncan Campbell	(DC)	Midlands Representative
Ian Dalgleish	(ID)	National 1 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 (online)
Mhairi Hay	(MH)	Referees Representative
Gavin Scott	(GS)	Director of Rugby Development

**Apologies:**

Mike Bruce	(MB)	Women & Girls Representative
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**In Attendance:**

Neil Graham	(NG)	Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development
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
Lorne Crerar	(LC)	Chair of SRU Board
Paul Denton	(PD)	Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee

**1. Introduction**

**ACTION**

*1.1 Quorum and Apologies*

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

*1.2 Chair Opening Remarks*

The Vice-President noted that since the last CRB Meeting, it had been a positive few months, highlighting the Men's International games and the Inter-District and Club XV.

She welcomed The Chair of SRU Board to the Meeting, noting he would provide a summary of the governance structure of Scottish Rugby.

### 1.3 Lorne Crerar, Chair of SRU Board – Q&A

The Chair of SRU Board provided a verbal update on the governance structure including the background to change and the current structure, as noted below.

He noted to Members the need for change from the previous governance structure. He referenced the review in 2005 with several attempts to change the governance structure, noting there had been a degree of mistrust between clubs and Scottish Rugby. He noted that the governance reform had attempted to deal with the discrepancies and issues between the clubs and Scottish Rugby.

He discussed the current governance structure, noting how Scottish Rugby Union (SRU) was owned by and accountable to the member clubs as of 2022, which included all the assets of SRU (including the shares of Scottish Rugby Limited (SRL)). He noted that SRU delegated the running of Scottish Rugby as a business, to SRL, including the staff at Scottish Rugby. He noted the composition of the SRU board and their expertise, noting the role of the SRU Board were the custodians of the Scottish Rugby brand and were unpaid.

He highlighted the roles and responsibilities of the SRU including:

- The SRU own the assets of Scottish Rugby
- They are responsible for the approval of the budget and strategy, annually.
- They approve the appointment of the SRL Chair.
- Every quarter the SRU Board meet with the Executives of Scottish Rugby for updates on budget, strategy and any material matters of Scottish Rugby.
- He noted that the running of the domestic game had been delegated to the CRB, with the Chair of CRB reporting on progress and updates to the SRU board, including the mission, vision and allocation of resources to the club game in Scotland.
- He noted if there was to be a reduction to budget to the club game, it would need approved by the clubs. He noted that the CRB had sight of the budget and proposals for spend for the club game, in conjunction with the Rugby Development Department.
- He noted the accounts were overseen by the SRU board.

He reflected on the structure having been in place for 3 years, with new SRU and SRL Board members appointed in this time, with the aim to improve transparency to the clubs.

He noted that for the professional women's game, a joint working group had been setup between the SRU and SRL boards to look into the issues raised around the recent Women's Rugby World Cup, to take learnings from this. He noted the recent positive feedback from the Women's captain.

He provided update on the immediate horizon for SRU, which included the following:

- He noted that it had been challenging transitioning to the new governance structure, but Scottish Rugby were in a better place. He referenced a board effectiveness review was underway, looking into how the SRU Board could work in a more joined up way with the other boards.

- The redevelopment of Murrayfield, noting how the SRU would not do anything major without approval of the member clubs. He noted members of the SRU Board would be involved in determining the best proposal for the redevelopment of Murrayfield.
- The Scottish Rugby philanthropy project was underway, noting the SRU would be involved in this, alongside the CRB.
- He noted that the SRU's involvement and awareness of major projects was key as they were accountable to the owners.

He then highlighted longer-term term aspirations:

- He noted that he was in his second term as Chair of SRU Board with 2 further years to go.
- He noted his desire to continue a momentum of change and be the best we could be, noting that well-governed and organised organisations were good performing ones.
- He hoped that Scottish Rugby would aim to be the best organised and best performing rugby union in World Rugby, which would be accomplished through a combination of SRU, SRL and CRB.

He thanked Members for their work in the community game including the positive changes which they were making and the allocation and spend of budget.

Questions and comments were taken from the Members.

The Glasgow North Regional Representative noted the relationship between the SRL Chair and CEO, questioning how it had changed and if it had improved. The Chair of SRU noted that it was a good relationship, noting the clarity of who owned Scottish Rugby had helped to improve transparency.

The Glasgow North Regional Representative further asked for reassurance on not reducing the impact which CRB had, referencing this had happened to the Council Board. The Chair of SRU noted that it was a learning and it shouldn't happen again. He noted there was an ongoing review into the losses from back in 2022, and noted that this year SRL were predicting a breakeven at EBITDA level. He noted the finances were now transparent and detailed in the annual statement.

The Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee noted there had been improvement on the SRL Board and congratulated the Chair of SRU for this progress. He referenced the domestic game and asked the Chair of SRU for his thoughts on the future of it, including budget. The Chair of SRU noted he had received positive feedback on the domestic game and noted that the SRU board would look to the CRB for the knowledge to advise and inform on the game and what budget would be sufficient.

The Premiership Representative joined the Meeting at 5:25PM.

The Midlands Representative asked the Chair of SRU on his thoughts on improving and regaining a level of trust, and where it could get to. The Chair of SRU noted one of the challenges faced was communicating what had been achieved, noting the need to make it clearer and more accessible to the public on how the governance worked. He further noted how the quarterly SRU Board reporting included reports from the

other boards but there was a need to make the information more transparent on a better webpage.

The National 1 Representative asked if SRU foresaw a situation where the professional teams would become a separate entity. The Chair of SRU noted his hesitancy and referenced the WRFU model as an example of this and how it wasn't working as successfully.

The National 3 Representative thanked the Chair of SRU for the update. He noted he believed the breakdown of trust between clubs and Scottish Rugby had improved, however believed there was a breakdown between clubs and the Rugby Development Department and asked the Chair of SRU if he noted this. The Chair of SRU noted that the domestic rugby strategy should be delivered in collaboration with the CRB and the Rugby Development Department, noting this system lied between both to make the right decisions. The Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee added that the responsibility which the CRB had wasn't yet appreciated by the clubs, with the Chair of SRU noting that better communication should improve this. The Director of Rugby Development added that the last consultation for the Rugby Development Strategy was in 2023 when CRB was only recently setup. He noted the next strategy consultation would take place next year and CRB would be in a more established place to inform this.

It was noted by the Chair of SRU that the budget forecasting for Rugby Development puts Scottish Rugby in a good position as a union.

The Vice-President added that improved communication across all boards had been raised and work was ongoing to improve this.

The Chair of SRU left the Meeting at 5:40PM.

## **2. Actions**

### *2.1 Actions from Previous Meeting*

- 2.1.1 It was agreed for the Rugby Development Department to look into the possibility of offering schools and youth ticket offers. **ONGOING** – points raised by Members had been shared with CCO.*

Members further discussed the action, noting their frustrations at the outcome. The Director of Rugby Development noted there were tickets available for schools and youths for certain games. The Glasgow North Regional Representative asked how this decision could be overturned for them to be available for all games, with the Director of Rugby Development noting that it was not at the discretion of the CRB. It was agreed for the Vice-President to meet with the CCO to explore this further, with the suggestion of the CCO being invited to a future meeting or organising a single-item meeting with CRB.

**HS**

- 2.1.2 It was agreed for the Head of Safeguarding and the Vice-President to meet and provide suggestions of composition of the (Safeguarding) sub-committee to the CRB. **COMPLETE** – proposed composition shared with Members.*

- 2.1.3 *New Safeguarding recruitment process: Members requested user guidance to using the system which the Head of Safeguarding noting would be provided.* **ONGOING**
- 2.1.4 *Categorisation of 'coach behaviour' with the suggestion of determining how many of those reported had completed any safeguarding training and completed the PVG process The Head of Safeguarding noted she would investigate these statistics. The Referees Representative noted to additionally determine how many of the cases were rugby-related and how many were not. It was suggested for the language and definition of a 'case'/'reported' to be clarified.* **COMPLETE** – breakdown of statistics shared with Members.
- 2.1.5 *It was requested for the Head of Safeguarding to share the presentation with Members.* **COMPLETE** – paper shared.
- 2.1.6 *The Women and Girls Representative questioned a previously agreed action of marking which papers were for internal use only. It was noted that all papers going forward would be marked whether they were suitable for sharing.* **COMPLETE** – All papers will default to be taken as Private & Confidential (without the need to state this), however papers whose content can be shared with clubs will have: 'Suitable for sharing with your constituents' detailed on the cover page.
- 2.1.7 *The Head of Safeguarding noted she would share the Scottish Rugby Club Rugby Board Safeguarding training (delivered by Petronas Safeguarding on 14 January) presentation with Members to share with their clubs if appropriate.* **COMPLETE** – paper shared.
- 2.1.8 *The remit of CRB over safeguarding Scottish Rugby pathway programmes was questioned. The Head of Safeguarding noted she would discuss with the Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development where this responsibility would lie.* **COMPLETE** – oversight and responsibility would sit within CRB and safeguarding reports moving forward to provide safeguarding information regarding Pathway.
- 2.1.9 *The Glasgow North Regional Representative requested clarity on the 15%. The Director of Rugby Development noted a paper had previously been produced and shared with Members, which would be sent to all again.* **COMPLETE** – paper shared.
- 2.1.10 *With reference to team participation in the (Rugby Development Budget) paper, the Caledonia Midlands Representative requested clarification on the vocabulary of this, whether it refers to 15-a-side teams only or wider.* **COMPLETE** – Funding for team participation is for teams that take part in Scottish Rugby competitions. That includes AGLV-aligned teams for youth boys and girls (including Evolution events with attendance of a minimum of 7 players) and Womens Aspiring.
- 2.1.11 *It was agreed that the East region would pilot a method to engage more clubs in the consultation.* **ONGOING**
- 2.1.12 *In reference to a previously noted discussion, the National 3 Representative requested for invites from the various Competitions Committees to be sent to CRB to attend the meetings as observers.* **COMPLETE** – included within agenda item 7.4.

2.1.13 *The Head of Competitions and Compliance agreed to circulate a draft of the terms of reference which had previously been created, for Member feedback at the April CRB Meeting. **COMPLETE** – covered under agenda item 7.4.*

2.1.14 *The Vice-President noted she would meet with the Borders Regional Representative to determine membership of the (Sevens) group and timelines for the project that aligned with other work. **ONGOING***

2.1.15 *It was suggested for Members to encourage their clubs to take TTD out at the start of the season and increase their awareness of the ages that it covers. **COMPLETE***

Within the meeting, the Caledonia Midlands Representative suggested creating resources for clubs to highlight the importance and increase the understand of Temporary Total Disablement (TTD). It was agreed for the Rugby Development Welfare Manager to create this to detail TTD and the link with Murrayfield Injured Players Foundation (MIPF).

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It was noted by the Vice-President that the organisation was looking into the insurance policy and timelines around payments to players. The Glasgow South Regional Representative suggested inviting the Chair of MIPF to a CRB Meeting to explain the role and processes of MIPF.

2.1.16 *The East Regional Representative suggested highlighting to the community game the number of successful age banding applications this season. It was suggested for this to be relayed to clubs via Club Comms. The Head of Competitions and Compliance suggested this could be via Club Comms. **ONGOING** – summary to be shared aligned with changes to Age Banding policies.*

### **3. CRB Quarterly Reports**

#### *3.1 Report from each CRB Member*

Paper taken as read.

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

With reference to questions written to the Rugby Development Department and answered in advance of the meeting, the following areas were discussed:

The East Regional Representative referred to his question submitted to the Rugby Development Department and acknowledged the answer provided, however he noted that players shouldn't have been put in a position to choose between playing for their club or pathway, suggesting season planning should not have been scheduled in this way. He noted if there were clashes these should have been scheduled earlier in the season leaving the competition free to play for the club, noting the desire from clubs to win games, regardless of the competition being a development one. The Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development noted that clashes had been mitigated as much as possible and acknowledged the need to schedule further in advance (noting season 2026/27 planning was underway) and the need to determine the role of regional cups, having moved away from being a development fixture.

The Midlands Representative further added that communication in the Caledonia Area was good and any team who wanted to take part in the Saltire Energy Caledonia Youth Cup finals could do so without taking part in pathway training. He noted that the day was an excellent exhibition of youth rugby with positive pitchside behaviours displayed and games played.

The Director of Rugby Development added there was a need to be conscious of the player's journey and to ensure it was the right journey for them. He added that the split of pathway between pre-and post-Christmas had been valued by the club game.

The National 2 Representative referred to his request for breakdown of funding awarded to clubs, noting that a breakdown of awards to clubs would assist CRB in their understanding of the club funding applications, awards and greater support to clubs. The Head of Rugby Development Operations agreed to look into the process for sharing this breakdown, noting it could be provided following the end of the financial year. In addition, the Head of Rugby Development Operations offered to share with Members, details of club funding applications and decision process. The Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee added that it may be useful to share this breakdown as a longer window (3-5 years) rather than just a single year. The Head of Operations noted this had been done.

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The National 3 Representative noted that having fixtures scheduled on international game days, although available as standby dates, put the integrity of the league into a difficult position.

The Premiership Representative suggested inviting the Head of Performance Pathways to a future meeting or arranging a meeting, to address feedback he had received with regards to dropping of players from pathway, the level of participation and the numbers involved with the expectation to train during exams. The Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development noted any feedback relating to regional pathway should be feedback to him and his team and welcomed a discussion with any Members to understand the concerns raised. It was agreed for the Premiership Representative and the Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development to meet to discuss this further.

**GSt/NG**

The Borders Regional Representative made reference to Martyn's Law, noting his clubs were aware of the upcoming changes required in 2027 and suggested the need to support clubs in this space with tools and a framework. The Head of Competitions and Compliance noted she would meet with the Health and Safety team to support clubs to better understand what is required to ensure all would be compliant.

#### **4. Safeguarding**

With reference to the actions from the previous Meeting, it was noted that the proposed composition of the Safeguarding Sub-Committee would include:

- The Women and Girls Representative
- The Midlands Representative
- The Glasgow South Regional Representative.

There were no other matters to report or questions from Members.

## 5. Finance

### 5.1 YTD FY26 Budget Forecast Proposal

The Head of Rugby Development Operations noted there had been positive changes to the budget due to an SRL-led reforecast. He noted the Finance Working Group had been in discussions on how to reallocate this.

With reference to the paper, he noted the three proposed areas to reallocate the increase in budget:

- The largest increase proposed was for increased travel payments to clubs. He noted this would address feedback from clubs on the burden of travel costs for mainland fixtures, which would impact the greatest number of clubs.
- The second area of reallocation of budget would be to bridge the gap of funding ending for several Cashback environments, before the start of the new programme.
- The final area of reallocation of budget would be used for the setup costs of the new Scottish Rugby Foundation, which would be established in June.

Questions and feedback were taken from Members.

The North Regional Representative questioned why the travel fund top up would only be applied to mainland travel. The Head of Rugby Development Operations noted that nearly half of the existing travel fund was allocated to island travel. He noted that increased funding to mainland travel would impact most clubs in the fairest and most balanced way. The Midlands Representative asked if the rate of travel funding was going to increase or if there would be a lower range for travel funding. The Head of Rugby Development Operations noted this would be looked into within the next stage of the process.

With reference to a question raised by the Glasgow South Regional Representative on club rugby funding being allocated to the Scottish Rugby Foundation, the Vice-President referred to January's CRB Meeting Minutes noting budget would be allocated to establish the Foundation. The Head of Rugby Development Operations added that the Scottish Rugby Foundation was an exciting opportunity for the club game and could result in a long-term impact of increased funding to the game. The President added that the money raised by the Foundation would be ringfenced and not included within the 15%.

The Director of Rugby Development noted that a part-time consultant had been appointed until the Scottish Rugby Foundation was established in June, with a full-time role expected in place shortly after. The need for the role to have KPIs was discussed, with the Head of Rugby Development Operations noting these would be established, noting they would be accountable to the Trust of the Foundation, but supported by Rugby Development for line management. The Glasgow North Regional Representative noted he had sent the Director of Rugby Development options for fund raising under charitable status. He also suggested updates on the Foundation be provided to Members, with the role being invited to a future Meeting.

The Director of Rugby Development noted that the charity, in time, would become self-sufficient but until it was, there would be a need for support from the Rugby Development Department, suggesting it could take several years.

The possibility of accruing the increase in budget into the next financial year was questioned and if the additional funds were required to be spent this financial year. The Midlands Representative noted that this was raised at the recent Finance Working Group meeting. He suggested that with potential concerns such as rising fuel prices, an increase in club payments may be greater appreciated next season. The Director of Rugby Development added that it may be difficult to accrue due to the 15% allocation, and what the details around spend were. The Referees Representative suggested if any money wasn't spent, whether it could be added to the Scottish Rugby Foundation, to be utilised later.

Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee asked if there was a scenario of the reforecast instead being an overspend, if the Rugby Development Department would need to repay this from their budget. The Director of Rugby Development noted that it was a balance of risk and was dependent on how the pro and national teams performed. It was added that the understanding was that the Rugby Development Department were allocated at least 15% and it would need to go to SRU if it was lower. It was agreed for the Head of Rugby Development Operations to look into:

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- Whether the budget could be accrued into the next financial year.
- If there was a reforecast and it was an overspend, what the process for this was.

The Director of Rugby Development suggested for Members to think about what they would suggest doing in the event of any additional money if we were in the same position next season.

The Glasgow North Regional Representative asked for more information regarding the replacement Cashback programme. The Head of Regional Development noted that the current programme would continue until the end of the school year (June). He referenced there were ongoing, parallel conversations with the existing communities and noted enthusiasm with some of the schools (7-8 environments), to continue a programme post-summer. He noted several benefits to the situation including greater flexibility with our approach to the programme, greater opportunities to expand the programme, and the ability for a greater focus on rugby and away from some constraints associated with the Cashback programme. He noted the aspirations to invest in approximately 30 clubs, with approximately 5 new environments looking to start post-summer. He noted sportscotland had recently announced their additional funding structures which could help fund the new programme. He noted that a briefing of the programme would be complete over the coming weeks, with the Glasgow North Regional Representative requesting regular updates on the programme. The North Regional Representative suggested tracking the impact which the Cashback programme had on the clubs, communities and schools.

The North Regional Representative questioned if communication of the game could be done differently with additional money allocated to more resources and communications. The Head of Rugby Development Operations suggested an internal stakeholder mapping exercise was needed. In addition he acknowledged the request

to look into improved selling of and greater promotion of the game. He noted there were opportunities to support communication better and suggested this could be looked into through next year's budget allocation. The North Regional Representative asked for someone from the Communications team to meet with CRB to discuss this.

The Referees Representative suggested for those clubs who had applied for one of the funding streams and were unsuccessful, if the additional funding could be awarded to these. The Head of Rugby Development Operations noted that the readiness for a club to deliver a programme in a small window could be difficult.

The President noted his positive reflection on the financial detail at AGMs which was now provided, compared to previous seasons'.

It was agreed to proceed with the proposal as detailed in the paper, noting the need to determine what the process would be if the budget decreased, and for Members to think about what they wanted to do in the event of increased budget next year. Members were in agreement of the proposal in the paper.

## 5.2 *Club Rugby FY27 Budget Proposal*

The paper was taken as read.

With reference to the paper, the Head of Rugby Development Operations presented to Members the budget proposal for season 2026/27, highlighting key areas from the paper and noting it would be for soft approval and feedback at this Meeting. He noted that the indicative budget proposal had been informed from the two Finance Working Group meetings and the October and January CRB Meetings. With reference to the recent Finance Working Group meeting, he noted it had been positive, with good, critical feedback from the group informing the paper.

The following areas were highlighted from the paper:

- Direct club and school funding had increased. He referred to the loss of the Cashback budget, noting the Department had managed this loss, whilst increasing the overall direct club and school budget.
- He noted the budget for the Scottish Rugby Foundation, which would be a short-term commitment, but noted the importance to establish the Foundation to increase donations to the game.
- Male Inter-District (Pathway) budget had reduced by being more efficient in the investment into this area.
- The timeline and key dates for the budget approval process, noting the final proposal would be for CRB approval at June's Meeting.
- He noted the comparison from the current season's budget to 2026/27. He highlighted the increase in staffing cost would not include an increase in headcount but was for cost of living increase and ongoing benchmarking exercises.
- He noted two roles within the Department who weren't, to date, paid for within the 15% and would be included from next season onward. It was clarified that they should have previously been budgeted for within the Rugby Development Department's budget.

- Direct club and school support was reduced, highlighting the hard work of the rugby development department in ensuring budget was tightly managed when costs are increasing.
- In-direct club and school support included the Scottish Rugby Foundation and an increased spend to the match officials area of the game.
- With reference to the funding support to clubs, he highlighted an increase from the current season into the next, which did not include any additional funding from sportscotland. There would be an increase to team participation funding; the greater the number of teams that are supported, the greater funding and an increase to women's aspiring games.
- The addition of new funded roles for W&G State School Coordinators.
- The addition of the Cashback replacement programme.
- Facility improvements: he noted this coming season was the last year of the government funding and the need to look into review the future facilities investment, which would be discussed at the October 2026 CRB meeting. He also noted that the reintroduction of the Fast Track programme this current season, which was previously well-received and over-subscribed by clubs.

Questions and feedback were taken from Members.

The National 2 Representative noted the 30% increase in match official costs. The Head of Rugby Development Operations noted it reflected the MO society payments and expenses to MOs. The Referees Representative added that any increase in the government rate from 45p per mile, could have a significant impact on this amount.

Sponsorship and income generation was highlighted by the Midlands Representative as an area not detailed on the budget and was also discussed at the recent Finance Working Group meeting.

The Vice-President asked for an update on the progress of sponsorship deals. The Head of Rugby Development Operations noted good progress was being made, with several assets which were being targeted to sponsor. The Referees Representative noted that MO kit was previously sponsored and could be a potential avenue of income. The Glasgow North Regional Representative queried if there was monetary value against the assets, with the Head of Rugby Development Operations noting there were rights, benefits and monetary value, consistent with the approach of SRL commercial department. It was agreed for the PowerPoint presentation detailing this to be shared with CRB.

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## **6. Strategy**

### *6.1 State School Strategy Report*

The paper was taken as read.

The Director of Rugby Development noted the State School Strategy was progressing well but acknowledged that the communication of it was difficult, due to games taking place on a Wednesday afternoons, but there was a need to better publicise it.

The Head of Regional Development discussed the measures used for monitoring the State School Strategy, including those who had full game play opportunities. He highlighted several plans for the coming season, including:

- The programme would include 4 new State School mid-week leagues, between 35-40 State Schools that had not been in the programme before.
- The Challenger Series would be adopted as a Scottish Rugby competition.
- To date, it was predominately male teams involved, referencing the need for investment into the new W&G State School Coordinators, to ensure the girl's space was supported.
- He noted the challenge of ensuring players transitioned to clubs from the schools.

The Midlands Representative added he had recently attended a State School event at RPC Dundee, noting a successful, welcoming event. He suggested increased communication to CRB regarding such events to enable them to attend.

The East Regional Representative further noted on the success of the State School programme with several State School players having transitioned into the Pathway, noting the need to promote these success stories.

## 6.2 *Women & Girls Strategy Report*

The paper was taken as read.

The Head of Regional Development noted the key areas of focus for the next Womens and Girls strategy had been identified and the new strategy was on track for a draft at the end of April. He noted his thanks to an external engagement group for informing this and providing feedback.

The Glasgow South Regional Representative noted his concerns over scheduling women's games on key family-oriented dates such as Mother's Day and Easter.

With reference to the paper, the Midlands Representative noted one of the success measures was around a club with a full pathway. He noted that if this was a target whilst trying to grow the women and girls game, it could promote bad behaviours. He suggested celebrating as many players as possible who wanted to play the game by finding playing opportunities and to collaborate/create composite teams. The Director of Rugby Development noted there were clubs who were collaborating well, but acknowledged there was a balance needed to ensure sustainable clubs and communities.

The Head of Regional Development made reference to plans which were underway for next season for a greater aligned girls programme with pathway, with the intention of an integrated Inter-District programme which would allow 6 regional teams to come together.

The Referees Representative noted it could become challenging for the players who weren't selected into pathway to play or remain in the game with a reduced size of team.

With reference to the paper, the Vice-President noted there were some discrepancies between the targets and current progress. The Head of Regional Development noted we were on track but highlighted several challenges with teams collapsing or

withdrawing. He noted the need to look into the terminology in the report to provide clarity.

The East Regional Representative asked if there was a process for clubs with regards to composite teams, referencing the need to provide guidance on how to create the team, in addition to how to exit. The Head of Regional Development added that a flowchart process is available.

### 6.3 Strategy Group Update

The Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee provided Members with a verbal update on the most recent Sub-Committee Meeting, held on 10 March.

He noted that the meeting focussed on the Ignite Interest strategic pillar, reviewing several KPIs and the Marketing approach, highlighting the following:

- Whether playing the game in a season plugged a gap or represented genuine growth.
- Where dropout occurred in the funnel.
- Whether the strategy should focus on retaining players as much as attracting new ones.
- How to improve collaboration between clubs and the national marketing team.
- How engaged clubs were in the national campaign versus local initiatives.
- Different roles of parents in continued engagement.
- The quality of the first experience at a club for both players and volunteers.
- The offering of whole family experience on involvement with a club.
- The influence of perceived safety in the drop off at mini-youth rugby.
- The effectiveness of Development Officers and the return on investment

He noted there was a discussion on the effectiveness of Development Officers and the return on investment which included the following:

- How true impact should be evaluated.
- How are they benchmarked against similar roles in other sports.
- Whether there was a fair spread of DOs across the country.
- Was there sufficient time and capability within the local management of DOs.
- The quality of DOs, in particular where it was a role within a 1<sup>st</sup> team player.
- Whether a career path existed for DOs.

The next steps were highlighted:

- The next meeting would discuss the Evolve Experience pillar.
- It would focus on the top 5 KPIs per theme which made the greatest impact.
- The Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee would meet with Mark Walker, SCOG in early April to discuss the effectiveness of the Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee.

**Rugby Sevens working group:** He further updated members on the Rugby Sevens working group. He relayed the members of the working group, noting they had discussed the draft ToR, noting several amendments which would be for approval. It

was agreed for SCOG to approve the ToR, to then be shared with the Vice-President to distribute to CRB.

He noted the next meeting for the working group was scheduled for mid-April, noting the group would be short-term. He noted that the framework would align to the Scottish Rugby strategic pillars and would be circulated for agreement in November 2026.

## **7. Rugby**

### *7.1 Strategy Key Measures Progress Tracker*

The paper was taken as read.

With reference to the paper, the Director of Rugby Development noted the majority of the areas tracked were progressing well. He made reference to the active player numbers, highlighting that youth boys and girls had increased year on year and adult male numbers were similar to last year. He questioned if, in the next strategy, we need to be more adventurous to attract more adult males to the game. He noted a small decline in adult women this season, noting some clubs had folded and the Rugby Development Department would look into this data further.

He noted there was good growth for youth boys active playing numbers in most regions but acknowledged the need to explore the data further. He noted that with moving towards the new 30-40 schools in new leagues (referenced above), some numbers may not grow depending on how they were categorised. He referenced that the targets set for this season were high.

He summarised that overall we were in a good position to look into the problem areas and those of success to understand these greater.

### *7.2 Regional Reports*

The paper was taken as read, with no questions from Members.

### *7.3 Competitions & Compliance Report*

The paper was taken as read.

The Head of Competitions and Compliance highlighted that the Department were in the process of reviewing this season in conjunction with planning for next season. She noted there were current challenges with fixtures rescheduled for May (nationally and regionally), which has led to frustrations in clubs and leagues.

She noted the success of the recent East Youth Cup and Saltire Energy Caledonia Youth Cup finals, with several West Youth Cup finals needing rescheduled due to bad weather.

She provided Members with an update on season 2026/27 planning, highlighting the following:

- There had been close collaboration with the Men’s Premiership and National 1 foras, informing the season structure, including the Scottish Cup.
- Meetings with National 2, 3 and 4 would take place shortly.
- She noted some recent challenges with Caledonia 1, with CRB and the Rugby Development Department meeting with several clubs in the Area in due course.
- East: regional league clubs were meeting at the end of April.
- West: regional league clubs were meeting mid-April.
- Reserve Leagues: inter-city and regional reserve leagues – review was underway. This included the application of the Border Reserve teams.
- Womens game: she had recently met with the Premiership teams, aligning with Celtic Challenge. She referenced the ongoing changes in the High-Performance space.
- Youth game: she highlighted the concluding process to expand the Open Conference and processes soon to be underway to look at the wider schools and youth game.

She further provided an update on player movement. She noted that following the first meeting, a draft explanation on how we would expect players to move between clubs, to understand the impact to each other, was shared. She noted another iteration of the document was to follow, adding that dual registration would be included in the competition rules. She noted the need for clubs to have honest conversations between each other to determine the best thing to do.

The Borders Regional Representative raised a question on how the SBDU could be included in season structure meetings. The Vice-President suggested for a meeting to be arranged between her (Vice-President), the Borders Regional Representative and the Head of Competitions and Compliance to discuss this in more detail.

HS/SF/  
VC

The National 1 Representative noted National 1 clubs had fed back that their proposals for the season structure had not been included in any proposals put forward. The Head of Competitions and Compliance highlighted where National 1 proposals had been incorporated. She noted the need to bring both groups together to determine how all areas were structured with a meeting scheduled for 8 April. She requested feedback from the National 1 Representative regarding areas which his clubs didn’t believe were reflected in the proposal, so she could address it at the meeting later in the month. The Director of Rugby Development noted the need for both Leagues to work together as a group to propose realistic suggestions for the season, whilst being mindful of constraints.

#### 7.4. *Competitions Committee Terms of Reference & Structure*

The paper was taken as read.

It was agreed for any questions to be submitted to the Head of Competitions and Compliance and a meeting would be scheduled to respond to them.

VC

The Head of Competitions and Compliance noted the Competitions Committees were sent the paper for awareness, noting that it would be discussed at this CRB Meeting. It was requested for any feedback from the Competitions Committees to be collated by Members and sent to the Head of Competitions and Compliance.

## 7.5 Female Pathway Update

The Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development provided a verbal update on the female pathway, noting a similar process was conducted for the male pathway several years ago.

He referenced the close collaboration with the Head of Women's Performance and Pathways to review Rugby Development's female pathway (Inter-District) programme, how it linked to the club and school game and the identification and support to female players.

He noted the aim was to share the outcomes of the full review in more detail in summer, once approved by the High-Performance Department. He noted the U18 game would be most impacted, and they were looking at an integrated season going forward with Inter-District games scheduled throughout the season. This structure would avoid removing girls from the club game post-Christmas. He noted the U18 girls competition had recently struggled, with the restructure aiming for better fulfilment.

## 8. People & Governance

### 8.1 SRRRA Report from SCOG

The Vice-President provided an update to members as followed:

"I wanted briefly to update the Board on the position regarding the review of the constitutional arrangements of the Scottish Rugby Referees' Association.

Following contact made by me on behalf of CRB to the SRU Custodian Board, a full remit for that work was prepared and referred to the Standing Committee on Governance. SCOG has now completed that task and submitted its final report, which is now, quite properly, in the hands of the Custodian Board.

That report will be considered formally by the Custodian Board. Following this and with the Custodian Board's authority, I will be able to share the report with the CRB representative to match officials and also with any other CRB members who may wish to read it.

Having now seen the report, I do think it is fair to say that the analysis undertaken by SCOG appears to have been extremely thorough and carefully considered. It seems to me to be grounded both in common sense and in current governance thinking, while also recognising the history, contribution and practical realities of the refereeing community in Scotland.

I should stress, however, that circulation of the report would be for information only. Neither CRB nor the Custodian Board is being asked to act on the back of SCOG's report. The purpose of the exercise was to provide an independent governance review and a set of recommendations to assist an associate body of the SRU. What action, if any, follows from that work will be a matter for the SRRRA and its own membership to consider and determine.

I nevertheless felt it important that CRB should be aware of where matters have reached, not least because it was through contact made on this Board's behalf that

the matter was taken forward in this way. In due course Board members may therefore wish to read the report simply to understand the outcome of the exercise and the recommendations it contains. If anyone would like a copy, let me know.

For present purposes, however, this is really an update on process and current position rather than a request for any decision or intervention from this Board.”

She noted once the Custodian Board had approved the report, she would send to the Referees Representative to share with the SRRRA.

The Glasgow South Regional Representative asked if the changes would need to go to an AGM to approve. The Vice-President noted that the SRU didn't have jurisdiction over the SRRRA but it was instead a request from the SRRRA for SCOG to review.

## **9. President Update**

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

- i)* He had recently completed his 3<sup>rd</sup> tour of the clubs and noted some good innovation at the clubs, showing many positive aspects.
- ii)* Scottish Rugby Foundation: he noted the application was in a position to be submitted to OSCR, which would take approximately 90-100 days to be processed. He noted there could be up to 10 Trustees appointed to the Foundation, with the following confirmed:
  - Chair: Alex Whelan
  - Treasurer: Keith Wallace
  - Secretary: John McGuigan

He noted he had recently met with the interim consultant brought in to setup the Foundation, and how it would take time to see the benefits. He asked if anyone had any appropriate contacts who would be suited to the role of Trustee, to contact him.

## **10. AOB**

The Glasgow North Regional Representative noted that Strathendrick Rugby Club were celebrating 50 years as a club and asked for Scottish Rugby's recognition of this.

He further asked if the other societies were going to rejoin the SRRRA. The Referees Representative noted Highland would look to rejoin and Edinburgh may re-engage post-AGM. The Borders society at this point wouldn't fully re-engage.

The East Regional Representative updated Members that he and the Borders Representative had recently met with the East regional teams regarding the NCRs, noting it was a positive meeting. He noted that Hawick had proposed a change to the regional NCRs, suggesting clubs should not be able to input into NCRs outwith their league. It was agreed for the East Regional Representative, the Borders Regional Representative and the Head of Competitions and Compliance to meet to discuss a framework for this.

**SH/SF/  
VC**

The Vice-President noted several pilots were underway in the East and Caledonia areas and suggested to CRB Members to meet to review these.

The Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development updated Members on the Community Game Conference registrations, noting several guest speakers were to be announced. He noted Scott Meenagh (GB Paralympian) had recently been announced as a guest speaker and thanked members for promoting the conference.

The Director of Rugby Development updated Members on the expansion of the Open Competition, noting the clubs and schools who were successful in their applications, adding all who applied would be contacted that week, with feedback provided to those whose applications were not successful.

The Head of Rugby Development Operations highlighted to Members the mandatory cybersafe e-learning training which had recently been released, requesting all to complete this.

**ALL CRB**

With reference to the NCRs the Head of Competitions and Compliance thanked Members for promoting this consultation, noting the feedback was high this season with a theme of feedback requesting for a reorganisation of the documents. She noted that draft 2 would be announced towards the end of April.

She also noted Silver Saturday on 25 April, with invites and an ask for presentations for CRB being sent shortly.

The Premiership Representative noted the need for more pro-player engagements in clubs and schools to better promote the game, give players a profile in the community game and a mechanism for this. The President noted he would discuss this with Edinburgh Rugby, Glasgow Warriors and the Director of Rugby Development to determine a process for this.

**KW/GS**

The Vice-President provided an update on the SCOG review of CRB, noting a final draft had been sent to SCOG Members with a meeting to be arranged for mid-April to review feedback. She noted a Microsoft Teams call would be organised thereafter with CRB and SCOG. She noted the process was running slightly behind schedule.

## **11. Chair Remarks**

With all business dealt with, the Vice President thanked all for their attendance and closed the Meeting at 8:45PM.

**Next Meeting: 10 June 2026**