MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH RUGBY CLUB RUGBY BOARD
HELD AT 5PM ON WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE 2026
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 (online)
Eric Hugh	(EH)	National 2 (and National 4) Representative
Duncan Campbell	(DC)	Midlands Representative
Ian Dalgleish	(ID)	National 1 Representative
Steven Halliday	(SH)	Edinburgh Regional Representative
Scott Forbes	(SF)	Borders Regional Representative
Gib McMillan	(GM)	Schools Representative (online)
John Scott	(JS)	North Regional Representative
Ed Crozier	(EC)	Glasgow North Regional Representative
Mike Bruce	(MB)	Women & Girls Representative (online)
Gavin Scott	(GS)	Director of Rugby Development

In Attendance:

Neil Graham	(NG)	Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development
Chris Hildrey	(CH)	Head of Regional Development
Steve Turnbull	(ST)	Head of Rugby Development Operations
Holly Sinclair	(HSin)	Business Operations & Support Manager
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 thanked all CRB Members, clubs and communities for their efforts across the season. She noted her appreciation on calling upon Members throughout and their input and feedback provided.

She provided an update on key events and developments since the last Meeting including the following:

- The recent Community Game Conference had taken place with over 500 attendees, 26 workshops and a strong programme of keynote speakers. She thanked the Rugby Development Department for their work in organising the conference, noting how clubs appreciated the day.
- There had been a recent online Women and Girls performance pathway webinar, which over 300 people joined.

- SCOG review: she noted there had been a small delay with SCOG's review of CRB, with the updated timeline to have the draft proposal to CRB in mid-July. She suggested an online Teams call to discuss the update at that point in time.
- She noted it had been a productive season for CRB, with the Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee in attendance at the Meeting to update on the Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee.
- CRB Membership updates included:
    - The National 2 (and National 4) Representative would remain as Eric Hugh
    - The National 1 Representative would remain as Ian Dalgleish

With regards to the International Club Ticket policy, she thanked Members for their feedback and patience and noted they are in a positive position to move forward.

2. Actions

2.1 Actions from Previous Meeting

2.1.1 *It was agreed for the Vice-President to meet with the CCO to explore this [schools and youth ticket offers] further, with the suggestion of the CCO being invited to a future meeting or organising a single-item meeting with CRB.* **ONGOING.** The Vice-President noted that schools and youth ticket offers would be available for the Fiji and Japan games, with more information on these to follow in due course.

2.1.2 *It was agreed for the Rugby Development Welfare Manager to create this to detail TTD and the link with Murrayfield Injured Players Foundation (MIPF).* **IN PROGRESS:** This work will be completed over the summer. For awareness we have just changed insurance brokers so a review of all resources will need to be completed over this same period.

2.1.3 *The Head of Rugby Development Operations agreed to look into the process for sharing this breakdown [breakdown of funding awarded to clubs], 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.* **IN PROGRESS:** This will be a new process and report that will be shared with CRB August/September.

2.1.4 *It was agreed for the Premiership Representative and the Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development to meet to discuss this [feedback relating to regional pathway] further.* **COMPLETE***:* The Premiership Representative and Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development met online (14/4/26) to discuss matters. Main points raised:
• Need to continually strengthen comms with non-selected players and their parents
• Can we profile players' journeys through and beyond the pathway to showcase the 'rocky road' and non-linear trajectory of a players journey

2.1.5 *It was agreed for the Head of Rugby Development Operations to look into:*
• 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.
COMPLETE: First, it is very unlikely that there will be a reforecast within the financial year that could create overspend of the 15%. Accounts are accrued in November, so going forward we will always know the true 15% in Nov at the latest. If at that point

we see a CRB April 2026 Meeting Actions change in forecast, the process needs to be a re-forecast that is shared with the Finance Committee, then the CRB. The re-forecast creating additional monies this FY was an exception and due to an accounting error.

2.1.6 *Sponsorship of assets: the Head of Rugby Development Operations noted 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.* **COMPLETE**

2.1.7 *SBDU involvement 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.* **COMPLETE:** The Borders Regional Representative and Head of Competitions and Compliance discussed in detail the challenges involved. The Borders Regional Representative attended Currie Prem/Nat1 season structure meeting to support ongoing activity on this topic.

2.1.8 *Competitions Committee ToR: 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*. **IN PROGRESS:** The Head of Competitions and Compliance anticipated approval to be given by 29 May following meeting with CRB and further follow up with Vice President.

2.1.9 *Club input into NCRs out with 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.* **IN PROGRESS:** The Head of Competitions and Compliance was discussing with Edinburgh Regional Representative and Legal & Governance

2.1.10 *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.* **ONGOING**

2.1.11 *Pro-player engagement in clubs and schools: The President noted he would discuss this with Edinburgh Rugby, Glasgow Warriors and the Director of Rugby Development to determine a process for this.* **ONGOING:** The President and Director of Rugby Development are still in progress. There is a commitment to share pro-team appearance stats on player appearances for board meetings next year to provide updates.

3. CRB Quarterly Reports

3.1 *Report from each CRB Member*

The paper was taken as read.

With regards to the 4-way tie in the Borders League, the Borders Regional Representative noted they had trialled removing bonus points this season but would look to review this for next season.

The National 1 Representative referenced the play off discussions between 9th in Premiership and 2nd in National 1 for season 2026/27. He noted the discussion was overturned after Premiership teams requested for this not to happen, with the National 1 clubs not consulted regarding the decision. The Vice President added that feedback had been gathered from the National 1 clubs who were not involved in the discussion and would provide a letter to the Rugby Development Department. It was agreed for a review of this process to take place with the Director of Rugby Development and the Head of Competitions and Compliance. **GS/VC**

3.2 CRB Member Questions for Rugby Development

The paper was taken as read.

The Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development referenced the Community Game Conference, noting all workshops (with the exception of 2) were filmed and would be distributed over the coming weeks. He noted that the Head of Athletic Performance and Sports Science and his team had developed several resources which would be disseminated to the game. He also noted that several new workshops and courses had been developed in this space.

With reference to his submitted question, the Midlands Representative noted his thoughts on the operational communication around the competitions space needing to improve. He highlighted challenges caused by weak communication and the increased time he and the North Regional Representative spent on addressing these issues. The Director of Rugby Development requested for Members to share the issues they've experienced in this space to improve processes and communication. He noted that the Rugby Development Department were not always the lead of communications channels (such as Legal and Governance decisions).

Members further discussed whether it was the NCRs which people disagreed with and problems arising from these. Members noted that it was not necessarily the rules but the communication around competitions releases. The Midlands representative added that the Competitions team's focus should be on getting games played in a way that works, but there had been several challenges around the communications and implementation of the rules. He suggested the tone of voice in communications could be improved and suggested including courtesy calls to clubs with decision that affect them. The North Regional Representative added that he feels the Competitions team could further listen to CRB Members and their inputs, suggesting if the team needed to be greater resourced to facilitate better communication.

The Director of Rugby Development noted that the Competitions Committees also played a role in the process of communicating information to clubs. The Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee questioned why the role of Competitions Committee didn't sit within the Rugby Development Department, but instead with volunteers. The Director of Rugby Development questioned if a wider review of the system was needed.

The Head of Rugby Development Operations added that a new communications role was being advertised, which would have a focus on communicating competitions. He noted that the current structure of the role made it challenging at times to focus on this due to the vastness of the role.

It was agreed for the Vice President and the Director of Rugby Development to continue the discussion out of the Meeting and to propose a plan to move forward. **HS/GS**

With regards to communication, the Vice President noted that work was underway from a company perspective to improve webpages as noted at the last Meeting.

The Premiership Representative joined meeting at 5:20PM.

With reference to his submitted question of supporting match officials, the Midlands Representative noted the need to ensure MO's felt part of the game. The Vice President noted the first SRRA meeting would take place later in June. She added that the SCOG review of the SRRA constitution which had been conducted earlier in the year was going to be readdressed by the new SRRA President and that the VP has given the new SRRA President contact details for the SCOG members who were the authors of the review for further conversations.

With reference to his submitted question regarding the October standby weekend, the Edinburgh Regional Representative noted that CRB Members had consulted with their clubs but they felt their feedback had not been listened to. He raised the issue of the welfare weekend being rejected by the East Region clubs but it had been added under another name, meaning the clubs felt their feedback was not being listened to. The National 1 Representative added that there had been no discussion from the Competitions team after feedback had been provided by his clubs. The Director of Rugby Development suggested for the Rugby Development Department to provide responses to the feedback provided by clubs. The Vice President noted similar experiences with the National 2, 3 and 4 foras. The Director of Rugby Development added that the process of NCR consultations should include feedback after each round. Update from Vice President post-meeting: a CRB Teams call with the Head of Competitions and Compliance would be held on 1 July to discuss NCR's and the foregoing concerns from CRB members.

He further added that the Head of Regulation was retiring in summer. He noted processes were likely to change with the new appointment, and CRB could be part of this review.

It was noted that no communication or marketing team members were able to attend the current meeting. The Head of Rugby Development Operations noted he had responsibility for the communications and marketing plans for Rugby Development, aided by central support. The suggestion of changing the communication methods and ideas for the club game was noted by the North Regional Representative with the Head of Rugby Development Operations noting this would be discussed later in the agenda. The Vice President noted she would invite the Chief Customer Officer to a future CRB Meeting. **HS**

4. Safeguarding

4.1 Quarterly Safeguarding Update

The paper was taken as read.

The Midlands Representative provided Members with a Safeguarding update, including the following:

- The Safeguarding Sub-Committee had been set up.

- Safeguarding reporting would occur every 3 months, noting this wasn't concurrent with CRB meetings, so could produce a reporting lag to CRB Quarterly Meetings. He noted the sub-committee would provide updates in the interim periods to Members.
- He noted the biggest challenge leading to non-compliance in clubs was due to the high training hours required for Club Safeguarding Officers. Utilising the Petronas system to reduce workload was noted, in addition to a potential .25 FTE contract to deliver training.
- He confirmed that Pathway concerns didn't involve Scottish Rugby staff and the Sub-Committee could sample cases.
- He reiterated to Members that the responsibility for Safeguarding the club game laid with all CRB and not just with those on the sub-committee.

The Women and Girls representative added that the Sub-Committee were satisfied with the direction the group were moving, completing obligations as best they could.

The Glasgow South Regional Representative noted the need for a replacement for him in the Sub-Committee. The Vice President thanked the Glasgow South Representative for his contribution to this committee and noted she would discuss this with the President out of the Meeting.

The Head of Regional Development noted the need to understand if Scottish Rugby's safeguarding processes were working well from a club's perspective. The President questioned if the Sub-Committee knew which clubs weren't compliant to support them and to understand why. The Midlands Representative added that the Head of Safeguarding understood why clubs weren't compliant and the Sub-Committee had visibility of which clubs were not compliant. The Head of Regional Development added that with constant movement of Safeguarding Officers in clubs it would be difficult for 100% compliance. The Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development referenced that the coaching minimum standard RugbyRight course also did not reach 100% compliance due to factors such as turnover throughout the season but noted there was a Safeguarding section within the course.

5. Finance

5.1 Season 2026/27 Budget Plan

The paper was taken as read.

The National 2 Representative provided Members with an update on the recent Club Rugby Finance Committee held online in May, highlighting the following:

- He was appointed Chair of the Club Rugby Finance Committee (previously titled Finance Working Group) with the ToR for the role finalised.
- He noted an impressive composition of experience within the Committee members.
- The 15% was discussed and noted the attempt to make it more digestible. He noted he and the Head of Rugby Development Operations would shortly meet with the CFO to refine the budget.
- The meeting purpose was to look at the 2026/27 budget with the input from the meeting factored into the Season 2026/26 Budget Plan paper sent to CRB Members.

With reference to the paper, the Head of Rugby Development Operations provided an overview highlighting the following:

Budget summary:

- The budget total which the Rugby Development Department were working towards, noting the 15% was not for debate, but to show clarity on the revenue numbers that make the budget.
- Targeted in-season revenue through commercial, ticketing and sportscotland new monies.
- Referencing the year-on-year comparison from last season, staffing costs had increased but headcount remained the same. This was due to business-wide benchmarking, cost of living increase (to be confirmed by the business) and the two roles (Rugby Development Communications and Discipline) now reflected within the Rugby Development budget.

Direct Club and School funding:

- He noted it had not significantly increased, but highlighted a top-up amount to this area.
- Cashback restricted funding had been removed, which was awarded to only 13 environments.
- Increased investment into the Club Investment Fund, directly aligned to participation funding and mini rugby.
- Increase in Growth & Participation funding.
- New roles of Women and Girls State School Coordinators.
- Continuation of the small facilities grant (Club Sustainability Fund: Fast Track).
- The sportscotland application would likely result in increased investment into Direct Club and School funding with more clarity to come over the coming months. It was noted that some of this would be restricted funding.
- He referenced a proposed change in framework to the travel funding budget. He highlighted the journey taken to refine the travel funding budget and framework over the past few seasons, noting that this was dynamic each season due to fixtures not being completed and under-forecasting for the past two seasons. He proposed adding an additional layer of distance of travel for fixtures for next season (mileage of 49-99 miles).
- With reference to the process recently undertaken to transfer to new insurance brokers (Gallagher), it was highlighted that the business had been paying for the schools and MO accident insurance, which needed to be transferred to the Rugby Development budget, under the 15%.

The Vice-President requested a copy of the schools accident insurance policy. **ST**

Programme spend:

- Programme and event costs had been reduced, being informed by actual spend this season and re-prioritisation and efficiencies for finals events, regional programmes and pathway.
- Areas of budget increase and re-apportion included injury surveillance, marketing and comms and MO recruitment and development.

He concluded that the budget proposed in the paper was prudent and didn't have significant change from the previously shared budget paper in April's CRB Meeting. He noted the proposed budget was a refinement from the feedback received from the October, January and April CRB Meetings and feedback from the Club Rugby Finance Committee

Questions and feedback were taken from Members.

The Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee noted good transparency in the numbers provided. He referenced the two staffing roles and insurance which was previously paid by the wider business, and asked for the breakdown of the costs. The Head of Rugby Development Operations provided these on the night.

The turnover number was confirmed as protected.

With regards to the changing of insurance brokers, the Glasgow North Regional Representative noted his concern that CRB had not been formally notified and given notice of change of this and the communication to the Murrayfield Injured Players Foundation was not sufficient, as this impacted the charity.

The Edinburgh Regional Representative referenced the funding towards the Women's Aspiring Leagues, with the Head of Rugby Development noting it was added to provide continuity and to support the development into the Womens National League.

The President noted his thanks for the adjustment for travel for National 4. He added the income of ticketing and commercial partnerships should be included in the budget. The Head of Rugby Development Operations noted he would arrange a meeting with the Chair of the Club Rugby Finance Committee and the CFO, and they would be included in these discussions. **ST/EH**

The Director of Rugby Development thanked all involved for their work on the budget, with the Club Rugby Finance Committee making efficiencies in a time of inflationary pressures. He noted the Rugby Development Department organised several events and requested input and suggestions from CRB over the coming season on how these could be run, with any financial efficiencies then being put back into the game.

The Vice President noted the good work the Club Rugby Finance Committee had undertaken since 2024 with scrutiny of the budget, noting her comfort in the Committee bringing the budget to CRB for approval. She thanked the Head of Rugby Development Operations and the Committee for their work and to the National 2 Representative for taking on the role of Chair.

The North Regional Representative noted the skillset required in CRB to ensure the sub-committees run efficiently. The Vice President noted the efficiency of several groups, referencing the Club Rugby Finance Committee and the Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee were working well.

Members were asked for their approval of the proposed Season 2026/27 Budget Plan. Members were in agreement and approved the budget.

The Midlands Representative noted the need to communicate the areas associated with funding to the game. The Head of Rugby Development Operations noted the process of the breakdown of funding to clubs and schools from season 2025/26 was underway, with the plan to communicate this to the game towards the start of next season.

5.2 Sportscotland New Monies Update

Update provided within other agenda item discussions.

6. Strategy

6.1 State School Strategy Report

The paper was taken as read.

The Head of Regional Development noted the need to review the ASIDE model (used to assess and grade rugby development within schools). He noted the model had been successful across the State School Strategy but there had been difficulties with it and its simplicity. He further noted the team were at capacity with the number of schools that could be supported under the current model, with the new model linked to several funding streams to help move through the final year of the strategy.

The Edinburgh Regional Representative queried if there was a risk to club support if local authorities provided more funding for Development Officer (DO) roles directly, with them controlling the direction of workload. The Head of Regional Development noted if local authority funding increased it could provide greater career progression for these roles. He added some of the new sportscotland funding had been granted to local authorities to help fund the roles, which would be generic roles working with several sports, meaning the role would not clash with what Rugby Development wanted to deliver. The Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee asked where the responsibility would lie for connecting in with the new roles and noted the need for clubs to take more ownership in this area. The Head of Regional Development added that the Rugby Development Department would be signposting clubs to these roles to facilitate this.

The Head of Regional Development updated Members on a recent meeting which took place with sportscotland, presenting them with club business cases. He noted the high-quality content of the funding application to sportscotland from the 12 business cases, with positive feedback from sportscotland on the level of data and connect Rugby Development had with clubs through the regional infrastructure. He added that clubs didn’t have the capacity and expertise for the funding applications, but with the expectation for clubs to take this on.

He further noted the sportscotland funding breakdown with the Rugby Development Department contributing to some of the spend for future projects, feeding back to sportscotland with the monitoring of spend. He referenced the timelines around the funding deadline and the reflected on the positive alignment of information from the clubs and the Rugby Development Department to progress quickly with high-quality applications.

The President noted his thanks to those involved in the State School Strategy and noted the need to increase the communications of the good messaging of this strategic area.

6.2 *Women & Girls Strategy Report*

6.2.1 *Women & Girls Strategy 2022-26*

The paper was taken as read.

The Director of Rugby Development noted the Women and Girls Strategy was a business-wide strategy, influencing the club game, pathway and wider organisation.

6.2.2 *Women & Girls Strategy 2026-30*

The paper was taken as read.

With reference to the consultations with the club game earlier in the season, the Director of Rugby Development noted he would have liked more women to have been involved in the consultations. He noted the positive tone of the meetings and the need to keep up the momentum.

He updated Members on the timeline for the Women and Girls 2026-30 strategy, with the proposed strategy put forward to the SRL board in August.

The Glasgow North Regional Representative asked who the Managing Director of Women's Rugby reported into. The Director of Rugby Development noted she reported into the CEO. He noted the development of the strategy had been collaborative between the Rugby Development Department and the Managing Director of Women's Rugby. The Glasgow North Regional Representative suggested inviting the Managing Director of Women's Rugby to a CRB meeting.

The Director of Rugby Development noted good improvements in several areas of the girls' game, referencing that the U16s and U18s competitions wouldn't have been possible at the start of the current strategy. The Edinburgh Regional Representative noted several challenges in the female space this season but also several good improvements in the East. With reference to the Female Advisory Group meetings in his region, he noted one meeting only had two clubs represented at it. He suggested looking at the invite lists to target those to invite.

The North Regional Representative asked if CRB membership should include more women to balance the growth in this area, which the Glasgow North Regional Representative and other Members agreed with. The Vice President noted that the SCOG review was looking into regionalisation but also for each fora to represent the whole game, within their forum agendas, not just the male game. She also referenced the need to look at CRB skillsets going forward as part of SCOG review, but noting the requirement to appoint the best person into each role.

The Women and Girls Representative noted a lot of good work, meetings and stakeholder engagement from all parts of the game during the consultations. He noted the changes proposed for the 2026-30 strategy had been well thought out. He added that the West Women and Girls Advisory Groups weren't well attended and suggested expanding the membership. It was agreed for the membership to be looked into, to increase participation in the groups. The Head of Regional Development noted the need to look into female leadership at the next strategy. **CH**

The Midlands Representative added that in the Midlands there was good collaboration across clubs in the women and girls games to help get games played and suggested replicating this in other regions.

6.3 Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee Update

The Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee provided a verbal update to members, noting the Sub-Committee had recently met and looked into the Evolve Experience pillar. The following discussion areas were highlighted from the Sub-Committee meeting:

- They discussed the transparency around the headline areas reported, noting the suggestion to not group active playing numbers as this did not celebrate successes of the women and girls and state schools' numbers. He referenced the challenge in adult male numbers, noting the need to celebrate successes and acknowledge challenges.
- The clubs and success of clubs: he noted good conversation in relation to celebrating successes of clubs that were thriving. The support to the next generation of role bearers and those running and managing clubs was discussed, including where they would come from, the need to ingest new thinking and whether people were staying in roles for the right reasons.
- Club development planning workshops: how could they be effective and volumes around these.
- The transition of youth to adult, noting concern with regards to adult male numbers.
- Pathway progression: the downside of pathway with regards to rejection and potential dropout of youths.
- Hoarding of youth players in certain clubs: how well supported were players in each youth group, especially those who had several teams at the same age group if there were no games to play locally as a result of this.
- The next meeting would take place at the end of August focussing on the strategy pillar Clubs of the Future, with a report for CRB at the October Meeting.

The North Regional Representative noted that it can take time to become familiar with how the Board operates, when joining as a CRB Member. He noted some frustrations with recurring conversations in the Sub-Committee. The Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee noted the need for the Sub-Committee to understand what happens at CRB level and suggested the need to revisit the composition of the Sub-Committee membership.

6.4 Future of 7s Strategy Sub-Committee Update

The Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee updated Members on the first full 7s Strategy Sub-Committee meeting which took place on 1 May. He noted that the Midlands Representative, the Borders Regional Representative, the Head of Regional Development and Keith Robertson were members of the sub-committee, with a further member to be added at the Sub-Committee's next meeting. He referenced a workshop which took place in March 2025 which formed the starting point for the themes of key obstacles and strategic pillars for 7s to be successful. He noted that the group was not to create a new strategy but a plan.

He highlighted the 4 key themes from the meeting:

- Fixture calendar: where 7s fits into the calendar in relation to welfare weekends, play offs and cups.
- Supporting clubs with regards to volunteers: with more demand on organising events, is the volunteer base available and ready to support.
- What did this mean for the players: noting the need to be clear in what the sub-committee was setting out to do, considering factors such as whether there was a pathway for players, is the game fun and ensuring participation numbers.
- Whether the strategy would be supported at Scottish Rugby level with regards to pinnacle tournaments and wider support around this.

Members discussed the benefit of 7s competitions for Match officials, with some noting it was beneficial to their pathway. The Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development noted there were several challenges which 7s refereeing had, with World Rugby separating the referees. He referenced ongoing discussions to offer a 7s referring workshop or course, in addition to a coaching 7s courses.

The Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee noted the next steps would be for members of the Sub-Committee to get input and feedback from clubs across Scotland to inform the strategy.

The Borders Regional Representative noted the need for a representative from the women and girls game in the Sub-Committee.

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 highlighted the following areas:

- Players added to teamsheets had met the target due to uptick in youth boys games.
- He noted there had been an increase in boys and girls youth participation.
- The active female adult players had remained stable.
- The decline in active adult male players needed to be addressed. He noted this was a global trend, with the playing patterns of adult males had become more flexible and there was a need to consider how we addressed this in competition fixtures. He noted the membership numbers were similar to previous seasons, but players were playing less games, with increased pressure on reserve teams and consequently more infrequent games played. He referenced several unions who were not facing these challenges, noting an example of the Irish structure which may have supported the adult male game.

The Borders Regional Representative added that further research into French grass roots rugby could be of assistance in helping develop and increase participation and games being played at grass roots level by introducing games at lower levels with no contest scrums. This could also have the potential to reduce insurance premiums.

The Director of Rugby Development summarised that the Rugby Development Department were doing what was set out to achieve in the strategy but it was not increasing adult playing numbers. He noted the success of State School strategy would have an impact in a number of years' time. He suggested the need for rugby clubhouses to attract and retain youth players.

The North Regional Representative asked if we were being brave enough as a nation. The Director of Rugby Development noted there had been attempts to bring about change in several areas, but acknowledged the need to bring the game with us. The Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development added that the pace of change would also need to be a consideration and noted if enough time is allowed to think creatively and brave due to how busy the season is. The Director of Rugby Development highlighted the role CRB could play in bringing clubs along with change and setting the tone in their respective clubs.

The National 1 Representative added that the physical size of players at club level could be a factor in attracting and retaining players. The Director of Rugby Development noted the need for increased strength and conditioning in clubs.

The Midlands Representative added his reflection from Caledonia male adult engagement was their willingness to play on a Friday and Saturday and bringing forward games.

The Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development added feedback from pathway players was that the youth structure and length was very different to the offering of adult rugby. He noted this was a challenge, with student rugby providing an attractive offer as it was similar to the youth structures.

It was suggested by the Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee to move the strategy agenda item higher in the CRB Meeting agenda for better discussion.

7.2 Regional Reports

The paper was taken as read.

The Head of Regional Development noted the months of April and May had been a busier than usual period for his team, with a lot of fixtures for S1-3 and sportscotland funding applications.

He noted the winding down of Phase 6 of the Cashback programme, noting it's success as a programme with the Rugby Development Department exceeding targets set, and Inspiresport impressed by the outcomes. He updated Members on the upcoming Cashback annual report, which would be shared in due course. He noted the Beyond the Try Line report would replace the Cashback report with Rugby Development having greater control over this.

7.3 Competitions & Compliance Report

The paper was taken as read.

The North Regional Representative asked if the 2026/27 season being completed in May was finalised, suggesting it was late and players may be burnt out by this time. The Director of Rugby Development noted that it could end earlier but it would require compromise elsewhere in the season, such as reducing the number of games or breaks due to international game scheduling. He noted that it had taken a year of consultations to get to this stage.

The Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development referenced the season structure review in 2019, noting one of the suggestions was to finish the season before April by giving up standby weekends, play-offs and having the Inter-District and club games being played at same time. The need to design principles around the game was noted if the season was to shorten.

The need for clubs to compromise was discussed, suggesting the need to go to the game with solutions. It was suggested if the game could not reach a consensus, the role of CRB would be to make the decision.

The Midlands Representative suggested building upon the Game On simple principles and making the decisions easy for clubs to make.

The Edinburgh Regional Representative questioned if parts of the game were being protecting which don't need to be, or should be revamped.

He further added that Competitions had not taken forward some of the pilot suggestions, supported by the clubs, for the East Reserve League, with the President noting his disappointment.

The Premiership Representative noted issues with clubs having self-interest in these discussions and there being no penalty for clubs not playing in Cup Competitions. He noted the need to be flexible to fulfil the season structure for 2026/27 and for CRB to manage as best they can this season.

With reference to the match official appointments at Silver Saturday, the Glasgow North Regional Representative noted the West society felt concerned at not having an official represented. The Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development noted the appointments allocated the right officials to the right game, rather than selected with a geographical spread. Despite these assurances the Glasgow North Regional Representative suggested if pure true equitable merit had been the basis for appointing, then the zero allocation to West Society Refs to matches on Silver Saturday could not be justified. It was suggested for the Glasgow North Regional Representative and the Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development to discuss this out with the Meeting if required.

7.4. Marketing & Communications Update

The paper was taken as read.

With reference to the paper, the Head of Rugby Development Operations noted it was a high-level plan-on-a-page for what the Rugby Development Department aimed to achieve next season, through the deliverable and key measures, and how it will be actioned via the critical actions.

He highlighted key areas of focus for season 2026/27:

- Youth marketing programme: this had commenced this season, with the campaign focused on targeting 8-14-year-olds. Next season would target both new and existing audiences, with more locally targeted campaigns linked to existing regional and club programmes.
- Live streaming of competitions and events: he was currently in the process of reviewing proposals to enhance the promotion and visibility of domestic competitions via live streaming next season across the youth and adult games, with the aim to expand into school festivals and regional competitions. He noted this should increase the number of games and feature matches available to view. It would additionally create a significant amount of promotional content which could be amplified through social media platforms.
- The Clubhouse: a bi-monthly e-zine aimed at engaging volunteers, parents and players with tailored content to promote the benefits and values of rugby. He noted it would reach a broader audience than club comms with the option for all to subscribe. He highlighted the four core pillars of consistent content would include: Community appreciation, Community-led impact stories, Rugby Development strategy updates and impacts, and thought leadership via input from experts in the game to provide insights into certain areas and topics.
- Promote the benefits of rugby: Beyond the Try Line was highlighted as an example to promote the benefits of the game with objective evidence.
- Pro-Player Ambassadors: engage the stars of the game out in rugby communities more. He noted several examples of where this already happens, such as leading coaching workshops, with the aim to have ambassadors from the game at our Rugby Development events and align some players to our programmes such as mini rugby to help activate this. The opportunity to monetise these events was suggested by the Chair of Club Game Strategy Sub-Committee.

It was agreed by Members for the Marketing and Communications Update to become a standing CRB Meeting agenda item.

The North Regional Representative asked if there is a database of everyone who comes to Murrayfield and suggested targeting them with information on their nearest club.

7.5 Female Pathway Update

The Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development provided a verbal update on the female pathway, noting the below:

- He thanked those who dialled into the recent webinar which detailed the changes in the female pathway. He noted an ongoing review on the women's pathway over the past 6 months, which had resulted in the recommendations provided.

- He noted the impact which the changes would have on the Rugby Development Department structure, with three roles at risk of redundancy. He noted two members of the Rugby Development Regional Pathway team had been appointed into High Performance Department roles and one member had chosen to leave the business. He noted three roles were now vacant within the department, moving towards a structure of each region having a pathway manager leading it.
- He highlighted some responsibilities of the roles would include producing a good depth and pipeline of boys and girls players for the High Performance Department, in addition to coach development within clubs.
- His team were working with High Performance Department colleagues for a timeline for when their new structure would be implemented, noting a current pause in female pathway activity.

8. People & Governance

No Updates were provided.

9. President Update

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

i) Progress on the Scottish Rugby Foundation was going well with the application proceeding to OSCR. He expected more information to be available in July. He updated Members that a preferred candidate had been selected for the role of Head of Philanthropy and thanked the Head of Rugby Development Operations for his work in this space.

ii) He noted the upcoming National team games including the Nations Championship and U20s Junior World Championship.

10. AOB

The Vice President thanked all Members for their input this season and noted her desire to strengthen the game next season. She thanked all in the Rugby Development Department for their collaboration in improving the game.

She thanked the Glasgow South Regional representative for his contributions and service over the past six years, noting it had been a pleasure working with him. The Glasgow South Regional Representative expressed that it had been an honour and a privilege to represent his clubs over the past six years. He noted that he had greatly enjoyed working with Council and CRB members. He also extended his thanks to the Director of Rugby Development, the Area Director – West and his team, in addition to the Head of Competitions and Compliance and her team for their hard work and support. He concluded by wishing the President all the best for the remainder of his presidency and expressing his support for the Vice President in her upcoming term as President.

The Midlands Representative noted the need to create a protocol for playing on a dry, hard pitch. The Director of Rugby Development referenced the ongoing injury surveillance project which commenced this season, had indicated a higher incidence of injuries at the start of the season. It was noted that no definitive cause could yet be attributed to this trend as competition readiness is also a factor at this point in the season. It was agreed that monitoring the progress of the injury surviellance project would give better insight along with exploring a protocol that could help define acceptable pitch conditions and provide better support going forward.

The Director of Rugby Development provided members with an update on the injury surveillance project being undertaken in partnership with the University of Edinburgh. He noted that the PhD student would continue to be employed on this project to ensure ongoing data collection to inform discussions across the game. He advised the CRB that they required additional teams to participate in the project, highlighting that the reporting commitment was approximately 20 minutes per week per team. He noted that participating clubs would receive quarterly injury surveillance reports for their teams. It was suggested for CRB members to identify clubs within their regions to take part and inform the Director of Rugby Development of these clubs.

The Director of Rugby Development noted to Members of an upcoming celebration of life for Scott Hastings, with invites to follow.

Borders Regional Representative asked for the following to be noted within the minutes, in respect of Stuart Cameron (Borders Rugby Radio) stepping down after nearly 20 years where he had made significant contribution in his coverage of the game not only within the Borders but the wider game in Scottish Rugby. He noted his coverage in promoting club rugby was going to be sadly missed and left a huge void in promoting our club game at all levels.

The Edinburgh Regional Representative suggested the feedback process for deselected youth pathway players should be looked into. He suggested not requesting them to complete feedback prior to receiving it. The Head of Regional Pathways and Game Development noted it would be looked into for next season, acknowledging the need to continue to improve this space and to manage the transition as best as possible. He noted the data for the past few seasons could be looked into, to see how many PDH players who were involved in pathways were still playing as adults, compared to those not selected. He further noted the need to equip clubs to understand and support the feedback from the coaches.

The Glasgow North Regional Representative referenced youth club rugby, with several clubs having strong playing numbers but not having games at the weekend. He noted the need to keep them engaged with a different club game at the weekend. The Edinburgh Regional Representative noted that youths could be dual registered with clubs, which may help facilitate this.

The Glasgow North Regional Representative asked for an updated roles and responsibilities document for CRB Members. The Vice President noted this was part of the ongoing SCOG review and would be sent in due course.

The Glasgow North Regional Representative suggested scheduling a CRB meeting outwith the quarterly meeting, inviting Rugby Development Colleagues. **HS**

With reference to the recent club ticket policy, the Glasgow North Regional Representative noted both he and Club Shareholder/Members felt devalued in the process and the categorising of clubs should have been done in conjunction with CRB consultation. He noted after much lobbying that the correct outcome of ticket allocation had been enacted. Requesting the need for all associated parties within the SRU to fully discuss and communicate any subject which affects Shareholder Clubs via the CRB directly.

The Glasgow North Regional Representative noted his thanks to the West Regional Development team for the recent Stakeholder Meeting at Hamilton Rugby Club.

The North Regional Representative asked for an update on CEO. The Vice President noted that the CFO was acting as interim CEO, with a strong Scottish Rugby Leadership Team (SRLT) sharing responsibilities. The Director of Rugby Development added that the business was in a good position financially and if there were any concerns to speak with him directly.

11. Chair Remarks

With all business dealt with, the Vice President thanked all for their attendance and closed the Meeting at 8:30PM.

Next Meeting: 28 October 2026