

FOR PUBLICATION

**MINUTE OF QUARTERLY MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH RUGBY COUNCIL
HELD BY MICROSOFT TEAMS
AT 5.00PM ON MONDAY 30 AUGUST 2021**

Present:

Ian Barr	(IB)	President
Colin Rigby	(CR)	Vice-President
Alistair Forsyth	(AB)	Borders Representative
Bobby Frazer	(BF)	National 3 Representative
Bob Richmond	(BR)	North Regional Representative
Eric Hugh	(EH)	National 2 Representative
Gerry Tosh	(GTo)	National 1 Representative
Gordon Thomson	(GT)	Premiership Representative
Hazel Swankie	(HS)	Midlands Representative
Ian Rankin	(IR)	Co-opted Representative (URC)
Jim O'Neil	(JON)	Glasgow South Regional Representative
John Halliday	(JH)	Co-opted Representative (Rugby Europe)
Jonathan Anderson	(JA)	Schools Representative
Kenneth Knott	(KK)	Referees Representative
Malcolm Offord	(MO)	Scottish Exiles Representative
Murdo Gillanders	(MG)	Edinburgh Regional Representative
Rosy Hume	(RHu)	Women's Representative
Willie Gardner	(WG)	Glasgow North Regional Representative

In Attendance:

[REDACTED]	(XX)	Senior Solicitor & Council Secretary
John Jeffrey	(JJ)	Chairman of the Board
Gavin Scott	(GS)	Director of Rugby Development
[REDACTED]	(XX)	Head of Training and Education
Robert Howat	(RHt)	General Counsel & Company Secretary

Apologies:

Gavin Hastings	(GH)	Co-opted Representative (British and Irish Lions)
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1. Introduction**ACTION**

The President welcomed Council Members and invited guests to the Meeting. He noted a quorum was present and opened the Meeting at 5pm.

Apologies were received from G Hastings.

2. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of 14 August 2021 were **APPROVED**.

3. Quarterly Review of Board Matters**2.1 Chairman Update**

The Chair provided the Council with an update on the business of the Board. The following points were noted:

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- The Board had recently met and had focused on, amongst other matters, the return to rugby and preparation for the AGM.
- **[REDACTED – COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE]**
- He highlighted that the Women's National Team were currently in a tournament.
- He also noted that it had been decided the Hall of Fame would have a women's selection going forward. The nominations would go to Board for approval.
- **[REDACTED – COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE]**

The Chair invited questions and the following points were noted:

- **[REDACTED – COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE]**

The President thanked the Chairman for his update.

The Chairman left the Meeting at 5.20pm.

2.2 *Regulatory and Company Secretary Report*

The Company Secretary referred to his circulated Report which was taken as read. The following points were highlighted:

- Various competition-related approvals had been dealt with by a Board sub-committee. A set of National competition rules were now ready for approval following a consultation period. Super6 tournament rules and player protocols had also been approved. The Company Secretary thanked the President, W Gardner and B Richmond for their contribution to the subgroup.
- It was noted that the arrangements for the joint Board and Council session had been circulated. Covid-19 protocols would be in place to keep Members as safe as possible, and these would be highlighted to Council Members before entering the Stadium.
- It was highlighted that similar Covid-19 protocol would also be in place at the upcoming AGM. It was noted that social distancing measures would be in place which would mean additional audio-visual provision was required so all attendees could see and hear all business at the meeting.

It was noted that the AGM paperwork would be reissued to Members ahead of the resumed AGM. This would be discussed at the upcoming Joint Session.

- The domestic season was underway and the Discipline Panel had already dealt with a few cases.

During questions the following points were noted:

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- In response to a question, it was noted that, subject to any alterations the Council wished to discuss at the Meeting, the NCRs were otherwise approved and ready to be published within the next 24 hours so they were ready for the start of the season.

The President thanked the Company Secretary for his update.

2.3 *Finance Update*

The Finance Director referred to the circulated Finance Report which was taken as read. He noted the following points:

- Due to the point in the year, there was not a huge amount of financial activity.
- **[REDACTED – COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE]**
- It was highlighted that the initial pro team season ticket sales had been positive but it remained to be seen where it would end up.
- It was noted that the Club Recovery Fund and Club Sustainability Fund payments had been paid.

The Finance Director invited questions and the following points were noted:

- **[REDACTED – COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE]**

The President thanked the Finance Director for his update.

The Finance Director left the Meeting at 5.40pm.

3. **Rugby Development Update**

The President welcomed the representatives of the Rugby Development Department to the Meeting.

3.1 *Rugby Development Report*

The Rugby Development Report was taken as read, the key points are set out below:

REGIONS

- **CALEDONIA NORTH (CN)**

The CN U20 series of Game Play Opportunities for Men and Women was launched in July which sought to foster environments that promote a safe, positive culture of the youth to senior game transition, these events offer an opportunity to engage different variations of the game, no matter skill or levels of experience. With host Clubs providing a fun and safe environment for players to access quality game play opportunities aligned with skill and experience, whether wanting to give rugby a try for the first time or making their return to the game following the pandemic.

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July saw the launch of our Royal Bank Young Ambassador Programme which was aimed at identifying the next generation of leaders across the Clubs and Communities.

The CN Clubs fully engaged with the Club Recovery (CRF) and Return to Rugby (RTR) Grant application process with high-quality submissions seeking to re-establish themselves as important parts of their communities contributing positively to local recovery initiatives. 25 Clubs and two CN Referees Societies were awarded grant funding through the two schemes.

As part of the CN social media plan, the Regional Facebook page continued to engage with Clubs & Communities with an ever-expanding reach, now nearing 1300 members.

- **CALEDONIA MIDLANDS (CM)**

The Regional Teams return to work increased throughout July and August from 3-days to 4-days which had allowed the team to assume close to normal operational (digital) club support and engagement.

The CM Regional Managers were re-instated as the primary point of contact for their respective clubs and had primarily been focused on supporting clubs with their return to rugby.

A significant part of that support had revolved around the Kickstart events that had been taking place across the country through late July and into August. 35 Clubs and the Society received a Kickstart award for events or

programmes that would target the re-engagement and recruitment of match officials, coaches, players, and volunteers.

Below are a few examples of high impact events being delivered in the CM:

- Dundee Rugby City 7s: This event provided opportunities for around 300 Minis, Youth Boys and Girls, Women and Men's players to participate. The Kickstart funding was used to create hospitality and entertainment that attracted around 1000 attendees throughout the day.
- Brechin Rugby Club hosted a community open day on the 14th August. The Club attracted new members from the community and raised around £3,000 for charity.

U20s Programme

CM facilitated an U20 Men's and Women's programme. This programme was to support players (male and female) transition into adult rugby by providing a progressed controlled environment for game play opportunities with their peer groups. The programme this year supported 18 and 19-year-old players who had not played rugby in 18-months, and therefore the step into senior rugby was greater than normal. This allowed players to physically prepare ahead of the 2021/22 season.

Three clubs took part in the Men's programme and the Women's programme is detailed below.

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Women & Girls

Substantial planning and collaboration had gone into the Women and Girls programmes to ensure it remained a cornerstone of development within the region. Alongside the Women's U20 event, a Women's Development event at Dunfermline RFC was held.

At this combined event, there were 87 players in attendance from 10 clubs across the region. Most of the players were either new to rugby or had recently taken it up prior to Covid and therefore near the beginning of their development journey. The event focused on building confidence and supporting them into rugby in a progressed and controlled environment. There would be five more festival opportunities for these developing Women's teams between now and December.

The first Girls Series Event was due to be held on Sunday 22nd August, with projected participation around 100, from 11 different clubs across the region.

- **East**

July 2021 saw restrictions easing and activity starting to happen again at both junior and senior level across the region. Time was spent reacting to a number of covid cases across the region and helping clubs through the correct processes and procedures to ensure a safe return to rugby.

Development Officers (DO)

As the DO network had returned full time after long periods of furlough, the main focus in the summer months had been the re start of activity, which had principally come in the form of summer camps.

Recruitment of new DOs had been a priority area of work over the past 2 months.

The East regional team, had been working on the design, development, and implementation of an annual workforce development programme for the East Region workforce. The programme aimed to address the current high turnover of the DO workforce by improving the processes around the recruitment, development, retention and progression of a skilled, motivated and flexible development officer workforce for the region.

Additionally, East aimed to launch the 'Self-Referral Mentorship Programme' in October, which sat within the 'Mentorship and Progression' pillar of the programme. This resource would pair self-referred DOs with an outsourced career mentor who would support the mentee in a number of areas during the next 12 months; provision of career guidance, motivation, emotional support, goal setting, identifying resources and role modelling.

Kickstart

Around £136,000 was awarded to clubs in the East by the Kickstart grant, which would help clubs get rugby back up and running at the club. Scottish Rugby staff continued to work with clubs and societies to ensure all events and programmes were successfully delivered in the months ahead.

U20s

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On the field, we saw the successful delivery of an Under 20s pre-season event for the region, with over 60 players from 5 clubs taking part (Jed Forest/Lismore/Currie/Livingston/Linlithgow). The event was hosted by Lismore rugby club, supported by referees from the Edinburgh Society, and medical support provided by Currie Physio and club volunteers. The event went very well on the night with both clubs and individuals commentating that it was a great environment to play in, and for many get their first steps back into rugby.

Player Welfare

East were continuing to work on a project between Breathing Space, NHS Borders and identified clubs in the Borders. These identified clubs would be provided continued support over the next few weeks/months with each club receiving a pitch side banner / board, player and committee MH&W discussions, 1-2-1 meetings with a MH&W lead and additional ongoing support for the club.

APPS

Following the successful completion of the APP's programme in June, over 250 players successfully completed the award, which provided a kickback and re-investment of up to £17,000 of college funding back into the club game.

The focus would now be on the development of resources, recruitment of communities across the East and the launch of the programme in October.

Glasgow North (GN)

Youth

The Girls Series programme was due to begin on 29th August with a Scottish Rugby led event, with a number of further events planned up to Christmas. There had been good engagement with club leads to ensure the best possible player experience at these events.

Similarly, there had been a number of discussions to ensure that the School and Youth offer for the boys in the West accommodates the safe and sustainable return of activity and remains focussed on the experience of the player, through encouraging an application of the Game On principles for example.

Operations

More broadly, there had been much consideration given to GN strategic ambitions for the coming season through a Glasgow North Strategy Advisory Group while discussions were now also underway specifically in relation to the Match Official Strategy and how GN could work with Glasgow South and the West Referees Society to strengthen the match officiating arm of the game.

Finally, the gradual increase in staff capacity had supported increased levels of engagement with clubs, Development Officers and partners. A focus of this had been bringing to life the events and initiatives funded via the Kick Start grants, ensuring that the right support was in place and that the impact of these events was positive and sustainable.

Glasgow South (GS)

Development Officer Network

The Regional Team continued to plan, and host fortnightly catch up meetings with the Development Officer Network. All Development Officers were invited to attend, with the majority of individuals engaging on a regular basis. During the summer months, the majority of Development Officers had been delivering friendly fixtures, summer camps and events relating to the Return to Rugby Fund.

One particular event was a Girls Development Day planned and delivered by the Greenock Wanderers Development Officer. The event was run on 25th July and saw over 100 girls from U14s to U18s across Glasgow North and Glasgow South come together to develop their skills in the morning then test them out in the afternoon during game play. This event was supported by the Return to Rugby Kick Start Fund, as well as club sponsors and funds.

Given the success of the day, two more clubs had agreed to host similar events throughout August and September.

Local Authority Partnerships and Development Officer Investment

As we move towards the start of the season, Regional Managers were in partnership discussions with Clubs and Local Authorities regarding Development Officer investment.

Coach Education

With the launch of the new Training and Education Pathway, courses had started to be delivered in the region again.

The first Coaching Essentials course took place in July with 10 candidates in a combination of online and face to face workshops.

There were additional courses planned throughout August including Introduction to Match Officiating course again being delivered via online and face to face platforms.

The Regional Managers would continue to work with the Coach Development Officer to train and develop a network of Coach Developers from within the regional network in order to deliver courses throughout the season.

SCRUMS Update

A significant change ahead of season 2021/22 was that Clubs & Schools would now be asked to submit the results of their fixtures.

Scottish Rugby would require the home team to report the result of their fixture in SCRUMS, along with the number of tries scored. Initially the process was set up for both the home and away teams to submit the result. However, after a period of use by clubs taking part in friendlies and also the Super 6 fixtures that had taken place, the decision had been taken to switch to 'home team only' reporting to improve the speed and efficiency of collecting results.

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The new Training & Education section of SCRUMS continued to offer access to both online and face to face training courses. Over 300 places had now been booked on the Introduction to Match Officiating and Coaching Essentials courses, many of which had already taken place in July and early August. Since the new RugbyRight e-learning module was launched at the end of June, over 1,100 people had now completed the course through SCRUMS.

Match Officials

Development

As part of the preparation for the return to rugby for the club & school game, webinars took place to outline the Global Law trial and answer questions from referees and club coach. These were very well attended and generated some good discussions on the night. These are available to view on Hive Learning alongside some frequently asked questions.

Referee Societies were in the process of holding their pre-season conferences to prepare their officials for the upcoming season. Support was being provided by the Match Official team if required for these events.

Finally, an online Zoom workshop took place with members of the National Match Officials Panels to prepare them for the new Premiership & National League season and plans are underway to have a series of workshops throughout the season for continued development of these officials.

Training and Education

Courses

The past month had seen the resumption of the Coaching & Match Officiating entry level courses, delivered through a blended model of online webinars and face 2 face practical sessions for the first time.

- Coaching Essentials – 197 coaches (63 completed in July, 134 started in August)
- Introduction to Match Officiation – 27 Referees (with another 75 starting in August)

RugbyRight

The RugbyRight online course returned for season 2021/22, forming the minimum standard for all coaches and match officials in Scotland. The course, which for the first time had been incorporated into SCRUMS, provided coaches with content on player welfare issues such as safeguarding, concussion protocols and coaching safe contact skills.

- RugbyRight Completions (As of 17th August) – 1115

Webinars

Rugby Development continued to utilise the online delivery model to engage coaches and match officials for updates and CPD. During the past month, the 2021/22 offer

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was launched with Fit 4 Rugby webinars, providing content on physical preparation for the upcoming season, and World Rugby Global Law Trial webinars:

- Fit4Rugby – 45 attendees
- World Rugby Global Law Trials – 231 attendees

3.2 *Effect of Covid-19 Cases in Clubs and NCR Discussion*

The President welcomed The Director of Rugby Development and the Head of Training and Education to the Meeting.

The Director of Rugby Development noted that due to rising infection numbers, there had been an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases that Clubs were experiencing which had had an effect on playing numbers and caused issues with the staging of some fixtures. The Council were asked for feedback on the issues being experienced. The following points were noted:

- It was a challenging time for Clubs. A COVID-19 guidance checklist was contained within the Scottish Rugby website to assist Clubs and training sessions on the content had been carried out with Clubs. Regional Teams were working closely with Clubs where positive Covid-19 cases were found.
- In answer to a question it was noted from the guidance to transport companies from the Scottish Government that it was up to the individual companies to make the decision on their restrictions. Therefore, different Clubs may be experiencing different rules from their transport providers.
- It was noted that Hawick Harlequins had pulled out of the league due to low player numbers at the Club. The Council noted their sadness at this and also noted their withdrawal had an effect on the league that needed to be considered.
- The Premiership Representative advised that only one Premiership Club had noted player numbers as an issue, all other Clubs were experiencing high playing numbers. The bigger issue in the Premiership seemed to be that teams were less willing to travel in the current conditions.
- The North Representative noted that the Caledonia Police Team had withdrawn from the league as they did not want to risk having to self-isolate given the nature of their job. He highlighted that other Clubs in the North were seeing good numbers back at training.

He noted that some Clubs were reluctant to travel north yet the north (and particularly the islands) had lower levels of cases than in the central belt.

- The Vice-President noted that good playing numbers had been seen at training however, at certain levels of the game (i.e. 2nd XV) he believed there was a shortage of front row players. The National 2 Representative also noted 2nd XV's playing numbers as an issue.

The Director of Rugby Development thanked the Council Members for their feedback and agreed that the number of front row players had been a long

standing issue. He highlighted that Rugby Development wanted to focus on the recruitment and training of players in these positions so that in the future there would be more, and experienced, front row players.

A presentation was given to the Council on the current National Competition Rules (NCRs) and GameOn principles, from which the following points were noted:

- The Head of Training and Education noted that the NCRs should not be viewed in isolation, and should be read in conjunction with World Rugby Regulations. He outlined to Council Members where GameOn could and could not be applied to each league.
- Whether the GameOn principles should be extended further was discussed by the Council. It was noted this was particularly pertinent this season when Clubs may find it difficult to field a full time due to Covid-19.

It was discussed that if GameOn principles were to be extended it must be carefully considered so as to not undermine the integrity of the game, and it was noted that it was a fine balance.

- The Council considered whether a regional approach should be applied so the Regional Committees could apply local solutions to local problems. This would potentially allow more games to take place which is what everyone wanted.
- During discussion it was noted that GameOn principles could not be applied in deciding whether there was promotion and relegation.
- The Women's Representative noted that it was potentially socialising after the fixtures that was causing the increase in Covid cases in Clubs and this is something that should be monitored.
- The President thanked the Council Members for their contribution to a valuable discussion. He noted that the Council were aware that there were issues with the application of the GameOn principles and also in the number of front row players available.

It was emphasised that the number of front row players was a longer term matter which was being considered by the Rugby Development Department.

In relation to GameOn and the potential change to the NCRs, it was noted the Council needed to come to a decision on whether further amendment was required.

The Council had a lengthy discussion on what they were trying to achieve with a further amendment to the NCRs. It was noted that the threshold should be amended so that the relaxation of the rules would not apply to Reserve 1, the National leagues and the Premiership only.

The relaxation would then apply to Reserve league 2 and below. Whether the relaxation was then applied across all regions, or in some regions, would be for the Regional Competitions Committee to decide.

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After consideration and discussion, it was **AGREED** that the NCRs would be amended to reflect that change.

The Company Secretary confirmed that the NCRs would be marked to show the amendment and would be sent for review of the Regional Representatives, before being sent to the Board's sub-Committee for approval.

The Director of Rugby Development thanked the Council for their careful consideration.

The representatives of the Rugby Development Department left the Meeting at 7.10pm.

4. AGM

4.1 Business of the AGM

The President noted that the AGM agenda and associated papers had been circulated to the membership and would be re-circulated ahead of the AGM on 26 September.

4.2 SGM

The Vice-President referred to the discussion at the previous Council Meeting regarding the potential SGM to amend the Bye-Laws to allow a hybrid AGM/SGM going forward.

The Vice-President noted that the deadline for an SGM on the same day as the AGM had now passed which left the Council with three options:

- Not pursue a SGM; or
- Continue to pursue an SGM, on a different date to the 2021 resumed AGM; or
- Ask the SCOG to consider this as part of their deliberations.

The President noted that the Clubs had discussed the possibility of hybrid AGMs for a long time. The President asked the Council Secretary if there were any points she wished to raise.

She noted that as the changing of the manner in which Members could attend, participate and vote was a potential change to the rights of the member, the Council should carefully consider the implications of any such change. She highlighted that Council Members should consider whether a hybrid system still allowed Members the same right and ability to participate and vote as they would if attending in person.

She noted that, as part of the Governance Review, the rights of the Members would be considered in detail by the Council's Standing Committee on Governance and suggested the Council consider whether the Standing Committee should be asked to consider the matter as part of their review.

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After discussion, it was **AGREED** that the matter should be referred to the Council's Standing Committee on Governance for consideration.

5. Diversity and Inclusion Update

No Diversity and Inclusion issues were raised.

6. Safeguarding Update

No safeguarding concerns were raised.

7. Council Matters for Quarterly Review

7.1 Council Member Quarterly Reports

The Vice-President referred to the circulated Council Member Quarterly Reports, which were taken as read. Council members were asked to verbally update on matters related to their individual reports.

The Vice-President highlighted that there was a new Match Official strategy and suggested that this was added as a standing item on the agenda of the Fora.

8. GOVERNANCE

8.1 SCOG Update

The National 3 Representative provided the Council with an update on the work of SCOG.

He noted that Clubs had been asked to provide feedback on SCOG's proposal by 3 September as part of the first round of consultation. He apologised for the short notice but noted that the Committee wanted to have initial feedback from the Membership ahead of the joint Council and Board session.

The National3 Representative encouraged the Council Members to contribute to the consultation process. He highlighted that the proposal was a starting point and not the finished position. He noted there was still a significant amount of detail to be added and it was likely there would be further changes ahead of the next period of consultation.

During questions it was noted that R Flockhart and J Bracewell had resigned from SCOG, each for different reasons. The National 3 Representative noted he was sad to see them go and highlighted that SCOG were grateful for their contribution.

The Council would be updated as matters progressed.

8.2 2022 Council Dates

The Vice-President referred to the provisional Council Meeting dates which had been circulated with the papers.

9. AOB

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As AOB, the following points were raised:

- It was noted that the withdrawal of Hawick Harlequins from the league meant that the East leagues all had different number of teams. The difficulty this could cause was discussed. It was noted that the Rugby Development Department were considering how to structure seasons for the competition wanted by the Clubs. It was noted that as the leagues were about to start, changing them now could cause additional issues. The Council Secretary, President and Vice-President would discuss practical solutions and update the Council.
- The URC Representative highlighted that he had been impressed with the quality and conditioning of the Super6 thus far.

With all business concluded, the Vice-President closed the Meeting at 8pm.

Date of next meeting: 10 September

APPROVED 28 SEPTEMBER 2021