



DEVON RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

South Devon Club Voice Meeting

Date: 12th November 2025

Venue: Teignmouth RFC

Present: Mike Freeman (Chair, Plymouth Combination), Conrad Suttcliffe, Julie Sparks (Brixham), Nigel Saunders (Torquay), Jay Bullock (Totnes), Mark Layton (Teignmouth), Darren Duick (Teignmouth), Andy Crossman (Teignmouth), Joel Caddy (Kingsbridge), Jonathan Robinson (Kingsbridge), Simon Fuller, Simon Farmer, Rob Masters, Nicola Vaughan, Graeme Gillard, Chris Forster, Sian Brooks, Glenn Channing, John Drew, Tim Warren.

Apologies: Paignton, Newton Abbot, Dartmouth, New Cross, Salcombe, Westcountry Wasps, Sas Huntwood and Keisha-Ann Down.

Discussion

1. Welcome and Thanks

- The Chair thanked **Teignmouth RFC** for hosting the South Devon Clubs *Club Voice* meeting.

2. RFU Strategic Themes

The Chair outlined the RFU's four priority themes and explained that responsibility for delivery has been devolved to the County RFU:

1. More players in the game
2. Keeping players in the game
3. Developing a clubhouse offer
4. Game management

3. Devon Hardship Fund

- Fund available for age-grade players, supporting:
 - Kit
 - Membership fees
 - Festivals

- Other essential participation costs

4. Player Transition: Colts to Senior Rugby

- Aims to create more transition opportunities. (Note, Post meeting: There are 6105 players in Devon aged 18 to 23 years old)
- Recent successes noted:
 - 7s tournament at Brixham
 - Upcoming 10s tournament at Tavistock
- Clubs are encouraged to propose additional initiatives to support retention at this stage; Devon is willing to support these ideas.

5. Retention & Extended Participation

- Desire to keep players engaged longer.
- Devon is willing to support Walking Rugby tournaments if clubs wish to develop them.

6. Devon Cup Competitions

Discussion points:

- Several fixtures did not take place due to teams being unable to raise a side.

Potential solutions:

- Ensure cup dates are released at the same time as league fixtures; August release was seen as being too late.
- Consider returning to semi-finals based on final league positions, though this may clash with an already crowded late-season schedule:
 - League Play-offs
 - National cup competitions
 - Representative rugby
- Suggestion that the Junior Cup becomes an under-23 transition competition (similar to the Prem Cup).
- Proposal to survey players for their views on cup competitions.

7. Governance

7.1 RugbySafe

- No RFU First Aid courses currently available; individuals will need to self-certify.

- Five club audits completed; actions agreed where required.

7.2 Safeguarding

- Most safeguarding issues raised this year have been referred to Discipline.

7.3 Discipline

- Adult discipline levels are broadly similar to previous years.
- Growing concerns about behaviour at age-grade level, particularly from parents/carers and some coaches.
- RFU TREDs values were reiterated.
- Strict reminder: No one may enter the field of play without explicit permission from the Referee.
- Several individuals have received Interim Suspension Orders (ISOs) for unauthorised pitch entry.

7.4 Playing Up/Playing Down

- Governance will continue to manage these requests.
- Clubs must have approvals before a player participates up or down.
- Assessment must cover club suitability and player suitability.

7.5 Other Governance Issues

- Can clubs check GMS roles and contacts are up-to-date?
- Post Meeting: Club Howdens Risk Assessment to be completed on GMS

8. Fixtures – Girls' Rugby

- League and cup fixtures for U14, U16, and U18 girls are now in place.

9. Representative Rugby

9.1 Under 18s Boys

- Squad selected by TM Mark Long and Coach Ricky Bentham.
- Players selected from 18 different clubs.

9.2 Under 18s Girls

- Assessment completed this weekend.

9.3 Under 20s and Seniors

- Men's and women's teams awaiting confirmation of competition structure for the County Championship.
- Senior men will play a warm-up match vs. the Navy.

9.4 Tamar Cup

- Senior men's Tamar Cup likely to take place around Easter weekend, following last year's success. This season the game will be in Devon.
- Senior women's participation dependent on the County Championship draw.

9.5 Deaf Rugby

- Devon Deaf team scheduled to play Wales Deaf.

9.6 Tamar Shield

- New competition for Counties 8 and 9 players, to take place in Cornwall (date TBC).

10. Development

- Planning underway for this year's Coaching Conference, supported by Joel.
- Funding available for club facilities development.

11. Volunteering

- A volunteer celebration event will be arranged later in the year.
- Two opportunities for women volunteers to watch the Red Roses, either in a match or a training session.

12. Regulation 15 Review

- Nicola encouraged all clubs to complete the Age-Grade Regulation 15 Review.

13. Cups Draw

Home teams for the relevant finals were drawn as below:

- Senior Cup @ Brixham or Sidmouth
- Senior Shield @ Crediton or Tiverton
- Intermediate Cup @ Barnstaple
- Plate @ Newton Abbot
- Junior Cup @ South Molton or Exeter Saracens
- Junior Bowl @ New Cross or Dartmouth

- Second Team Cup @ Devonport Services or Brixham
- Second Team Shield @ Plymstock Oaks or Exmouth.