



# DEVON RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

## West Devon Club Voice Meeting

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Venue: Plymstock Albion Oaks

Present: Julia Taylor (Ocean City Inclusive), Valeryia Sarokina (Ocean City Inclusive), Richard Belli (Plymouth Argum), Mike Freeman (Plymouth Combination), Jamie Hough (Plymouth Dolphins), Kevin Jefferies (Plympton Victoria), Matthew Glastonbury (OPM), Paul Decourcey (OPM), Mike Yeates (Plymouth Combination), Sean Cook (Plymstock Oaks), David Upton (Plymstock Oaks), Ashley Parsons (Plymstock Oaks), Simon Fuller, Simon Farmer, Rob Masters, Graeme Gillard, Chris Forster, Tim Warren.

Apologies: Nicola Vaughan, Mhairi McCall (Tavistock), Glenn Channing, Keisha-Ann Down, Sas Huntwood, Sian Brooks, John Drew

### **Discussion**

#### **Ocean City Inclusive**

Julia explained the remit of Ocean City Inclusive and other clubs demonstrated a commitment to support with coaching etc. Mike to be point of contact between the Plymouth clubs and Ocean City Inclusive.

#### **Financial Support to Clubs**

- The importance of responding promptly to clubs regarding any potential financial support was highlighted.
- Devon RFU noted that support has recently been provided to one Plymouth club, specifically in relation to posts.
- Clear communication around what support is available, and timescales for responses, was seen as important.

#### **Communications**

- The new Devon RFU website and newsletter were recognised as improvements to communication.
- However, there remains demand for additional or different content that individuals would like to see included.
- It was acknowledged that emails can be missed, prompting discussion about reinforcing key messages through other channels.

## WhatsApp

- The existing Chairs' WhatsApp group was discussed, including how widely it is used.
- A question was raised about whether Devon RFU could introduce a similar WhatsApp group for club secretaries.
- The potential role of WhatsApp as a supplementary communication channel was noted.

## Newsletter distribution

- It was suggested that the newsletter could:
  - Extend beyond just Chairs and Secretaries
  - Allow other club volunteers or stakeholders to opt in to receive it.

## Schools and T1 Rugby

- RFU are encouraging more schools to adopt T1 rugby.
- Particular challenges were identified around girls' rugby, which:
  - Is often not high on schools' sporting agendas
  - Competes with many other sports for participation
- This was recognised as a longer-term development challenge.

## Cup Competitions

- Weather disruption has significantly affected cup fixtures.
- Many matches have had to be postponed and now require rearrangement, creating scheduling challenges for clubs and organisers.

## Player Transition Pathways

- Devon RFU expressed a desire to support more Transition Festivals for second-year Colts moving into senior rugby.
- There was also discussion about the need for greater support during the transition from Under 16s into Colts, which can be a difficult step for players.

## Colts League Structures

- Concerns were raised about a potential imbalance in the current Colts league tables.
- It was suggested that the structure and operation of these tables may need to be reviewed.

## Girls' Rugby Clusters

- Issues were highlighted where some clubs are not fulfilling their responsibilities within girls' rugby clusters, particularly in relation to cup competitions.
- This inconsistency was noted as a concern for the effective running of competitions.

### 150th Anniversary (2027)

- Devon RFU will celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2027, as will Plymouth Albion.
- A suggestion was made to mark the occasion with area-based representative matches, for example:
  - East
  - West
  - North
  - South

### Volunteer Engagement

- Glenn is reviewing how Devon RFU can better engage with volunteers and attract new interest.
- Ideas include offering **recognised training or qualifications that could be referenced on a CV, adding** value for volunteers beyond rugby.

### Age-Grade Rugby – Squad Sizes

- Ongoing challenges were discussed around uneven squad sizes:
  - Some clubs have very large squads
  - Others are struggling to field numbers
- While player choice must be respected, the half-game rule can disadvantage clubs with smaller squads.
- In some cases, this results in a team with limited numbers effectively playing two different opposition teams within one match.
- A question was raised about whether there is a viable alternative approach.
- It was noted that in the IGR, players are required to play a minimum number of minutes across a season, rather than per match.

### Senior Rugby – Dual Registration

- In senior rugby, clubs are able to dual-register players at Level 9.
- This flexibility was noted as a way to help clubs maintain viable squad sizes.