



DEVON RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

Management Board Minutes

Date: 26th August 2026

Venue: MS Teams Virtual Meeting

Present: Simon Fuller, Simon Farmer, Rob Masters, Jackie Coles, Graeme Gillard, Keisha-Ann Down, Chris Forster, Rachel Miller (RFU), Abbie Watkins (RFU), Tim Warren.

Apologies: Nicola Vaughan, Glenn Channing, John Drew

Declaration of Interests

None

Minutes of Last Meeting

Agreed

Actions

- Chair to invite Sarah, new southwest Regional Growth Board Chair to future meeting
- Chair to arrange an initial meeting between Richard and the full Management Board, followed by opportunities for him to meet Directors individually and understand
- Chair to review examples of good social media practice, including the approach taken by University of Plymouth Rugby Club.
- Rachel to share the RFU's social media guidance.
- Secretary to meet with Devon RFU Diversity Lead Ant Cole to discuss the RFU Inclusion and Diversity framework and bring an update to the next Management Board meeting.
- Chair to share initial ideas with Directors to support further development.
- Keish and Tracey to work alongside RFU Club Officers to promote the RFU Women and Girls Promotion days to Devon clubs
- Tim to circulate the organisation charts to Directors for updating.

Additional Points

Executive Team Updates

The Board noted the appointment of the new South West Regional Growth Board (SW RGB) Chair. Simon has been working with fellow Constituent Body Chairs to help shape the early priorities for the role.

It was agreed that the new SW RGB Chair should be invited to attend a future Devon RFU Management Board meeting at the earliest opportunity.

The Board formally welcomed Jackie Coles as the new Director of Age-Grade Rugby.

Interviews for the Director of Representative Rugby had taken place, with four strong candidates interviewed. The Board confirmed the appointment of Richard Hunt as the new Director of Representative Rugby.

Discussions are also taking place with Exeter Chiefs regarding the possibility of a Devon Clubs Day at a Sunday Premiership fixture. Further details will follow. The Chair and other Devon RFU representatives will also meet with the Chiefs shortly.

Social Media and Communications

The Board noted that Jacob will be stepping down as Devon RFU Social Media Lead and formally thanked him for his contribution to the CB's communications.

The next step will be to review and update the social media policy before recruiting a new lead. Appropriate funding will be made available to support the function, including tools such as Canva and video production.

The Board agreed that Devon RFU's social media should have two key areas of focus:

- Promoting representative rugby.
- Showcasing community rugby and activity across Devon.

The new Social Media Lead will be encouraged to develop a wider communications team and content calendar to support the continued growth of Devon RFU's digital channels.

Inclusion and Diversity

Devon RFU is participating in the pilot of the new RFU Inclusion and Diversity Framework. Secretary to meet with Devon RFU Diversity Lead Ant Cole to discuss the framework and bring an update to the next Management Board meeting.

Commercial

The Board discussed the development of Devon RFU's commercial offer. Further work is required to establish the opportunities available and develop a clear proposition.

Chair to share initial ideas with Directors to support further development.

150th Anniversary Celebrations

Planning continued for Devon Rugby's 150th anniversary celebrations, with several activities agreed in principle:

- A Celebration Dinner at Exeter Chiefs, with Friday 15 October proposed. Simon Farmer will confirm a potential coordinator for the event.
- Ten's festivals to be staged across Devon, culminating in a county finals day.
- A proposed Super Vets Festival over a Bank Holiday weekend involving other counties.
- Working with clubs to identify and celebrate 150 Heroes of Devon Rugby, sharing their stories through individual case studies.
- Offering £500 to each club to support recruitment and retention activity as part of the anniversary programme.

Further planning will now take place to develop these activities.

RFU Council Feedback

The Board noted that there had been limited RFU Council activity over the summer, with the next Council meeting due to take place in September.

Concern was raised regarding the timing of some RFU communications, particularly important updates issued late on Fridays. It was felt that this can make it more difficult for Constituent Bodies and clubs to seek timely clarification. Recent communications regarding the delayed start to the community rugby season were highlighted as an example.

RFU Relationship Manager Updates

In Nicola's absence, Abbie and Rachel provided an update.

Women's and girls' recruitment days are being promoted nationally, with approximately 150 clubs having already applied for the 200 opportunities available. Keish and Tracey to work alongside RFU Club Officers to promote the opportunity to Devon clubs.

Clubs to be reminded of two important upcoming deadlines:

- Club Risk Assessment Audit – 30th September
- Club Safeguarding Audit – 25th October

The RFU has appointed a new Safeguarding Lead for the South West. A meeting will be arranged involving Devon RFU's Director of Governance, Safeguarding Lead and RugbySafe Lead to establish a strong working relationship.

Competitions

Chris confirmed that Devon competitions for the coming season have now been finalised, with details due to be issued to clubs shortly. A strong Competitions Sub-Committee is in place to support delivery throughout the season.

The Intermediate Shield will operate differently from Devon's other competitions, following the principles of the Raeburn Cup. Honiton will begin as the current holders when they play Tavistock.

The potential impact of the delayed start to the season was discussed, particularly should poor winter weather result in further postponements. County finals are likely to be the area most affected by any significant disruption.

Chris will also work with Finance to agree transition funding arrangements for the coming season.

Age-Grade Rugby

Jackie provided an update following her first meetings with the Age-Grade team.

Two new appointments were welcomed:

- Jenny Trinder – Competitions Lead
- Mollie Minnion – Festivals Coordinator

The Board welcomed both Jenny and Mollie to Devon RFU.

It was noted that Devon RFU's organisation charts now need to be updated to reflect recent appointments.

Jackie asked the Board to consider a £300 contribution to the Plymouth and District Combination to support its continuing work in primary schools promoting T1 Rugby. The initiative aims to introduce both boys and girls to rugby and has already demonstrated positive results for clubs in the Plymouth area.

The Board approved the £300 contribution.

Female Game

Keish reported that work is underway to bring together a broader group of people to support and promote the development of the women's game across Devon.

Governance, Discipline and Safeguarding

Graeme provided an update on discipline, noting that the first Red Card of the season had already been received.

Work will take place to identify an additional member to join the Discipline Panel for the season.

Graeme will also speak with Kirsty, the new RFU Safeguarding Lead for the South West, regarding Devon RFU's arrangements.

Work will continue with Chris Ward, Jo Tracey and the Secretary to ensure that processes relating to tours and camps are coordinated and fully joined-up.

Finance

Simon Farmer confirmed that a draft budget has been circulated and that he will work with Directors over the coming week to develop more detailed individual plans.

An online Finance AGM will take place in November.

The Board will also review its accountancy arrangements for the coming year, with a number of potential options suggested to Simon for consideration.

Any Other Business

Richard Boyter is developing a T1 Rugby project in Exeter aimed at growing participation amongst pupils in Years 5 and 6.

Exeter Saracens are already supporting the initiative, but wider engagement from clubs across the Exeter area would strengthen the project. Abbie to promote the opportunity to local clubs and encourage wider participation.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday the 30th September