



RFL COMMUNITY BOARD CHAIR SUMMARY – TUESDAY 13 JULY 2021

Dear Community Game Colleagues,

As some of you may be aware, my RFL Board Colleague and RFL Chair, Simon Johnson, produces a regular Chair Summary after each RFL Board Meeting to keep stakeholders apprised of the latest developments and ensure transparency. Myself and my Community Board colleagues thought it would be useful if I produced a similar summary to keep everyone up to date with everything that is discussed at Community Board and with what is happening across the Community Game.

Whilst the Community Board has been meeting regularly over the past twelve months, the meetings have inevitably been dominated by the impact of Covid-19 and efforts to ensure the game could return safely. It was heartening and an indication that the wider public health situation is improving to see a fuller agenda for this week's meeting.

The Community Board received a comprehensive Standing Report of developments in the Community Game ahead of the meeting and I would like to share some highlights from this here:

- The Sky Try programme is now in its last year of delivery. The foundations in receipt of Sky Try funding have delivered to thousands of children each week to engage and sustain more people playing our sport. We have recently surpassed 800,000 people engaged in the programme over the 7-year term, exceeding the contractual targets in place.
- As part of the wider Government support for Rugby League the RFL received confirmation that £1.45m grant (as opposed to loan) funding would be made available to support the community game through the Covid crisis. Full detail to follow.
- The girls' game has flourished despite the challenges of the last 16 months. Following on from a girls' competition review led by the RFL during the first lockdown, a number of recommendations and positive changes have been introduced for 2021. We currently have more teams, 120 and more players registered, 1895 which continues to rise each week (the end of year total for 2019 was 1662)

The main business was for the Community Board to receive an update on progress of the Community RL Strategy & Vision 21-30 including how it aligns with the new Sport England Strategy – 'Uniting the Movement' and the new RFL Strategy – 'More than a Sport'. Consultation in respect of both is underway and the Community Board will be meeting again in the next few weeks to review the draft community strategy in more detail. Wider consultation with the community game will follow and continue for the remainder of the year.

What was apparent, based on the update, is the increased focus Sport England and Government are placing on tackling inequalities and supporting underrepresented groups. I was greatly encouraged to see in the strategy just how closely we as a sport align with the objectives of Sport England who will I am sure continue to be key partners of the sport. We also received the latest update on timelines in terms of agreeing funding with Sport England for the next cycle which should be agreed ahead of the RLWC2021.

The need for greater financial sustainability across our sport and the introduction of Our League Active is something that has been on Community Board agenda for some time. I was able to bring the Community Board members up to speed with progress made since the last meeting. I placed on record my sincere thanks to members of the Board for their support over the past few months, which have



been extremely time intensive as we've carried out myriad meetings with representatives from all parts of the Community Game.

I gave special thanks to Trevor Hunt, a self-proclaimed 'doubting Thomas', who in his Board role and on behalf of NCL member clubs, challenged the RFL to provide the hard evidence to support expenditure claims, the level of services we provide and to justify the need for a Membership Scheme. He and his NCL colleague, Mike Denning, were invited to the RFL's Media City offices, where they met with administrators and were given full access to information to form their own opinions on costs, services, necessity, staffing, legal requirements and directives from Sport England.

I am happy to report that Trevor then sent a paper to all NCL clubs which concluded: 'There is a tremendous amount of work that goes on behind the scenes from a dedicated and enthusiastic team that deals with just the Community Game. Throughout the sessions it became more and more apparent that a Membership Scheme is a necessity if the Sport is to survive and build for the future.' Next steps for Our League Active include an open session for clubs on 27th July (anyone wishing to join this should email kelly.barrett@rfl.co.uk) and continued dialogue with all members of the Community Board and Game to ensure we are ready for commencement for the 2022 playing season.

Finally, we were joined by Tracy Power, the RLWC2021 InspirationAll Director who gave a comprehensive update on the brilliant work the RLWC2021 team is delivering through its Social Impact Programme. These programmes are already having a positive impact on communities. Post World Cup many of the different programmes that are running will transition back to the RFL as part of Our League Life, the RFL's social impact brand.

The RLWC2021 CreatedBy facilities funding programme is something the Community Board has taken a keen interest in, and we were delighted to receive the latest update which shows the £7m invested to date has supported 199 projects with total project costs of £15m. 61% of investment has gone into clubs in lower socio-economic areas with a particular focus on supporting under-represented groups including women and girls and disability rugby league. As expected, given our sport is predominantly played across the north the bulk of the funding has been across our core areas, but we were encouraged to see awards had been made in all 9 English regions.

We were also provided an update on the brilliant partnership with Movember who have been long term mental health partners of the sport through Rugby League Cares. Over 750 young players and 150 of our community coaches have received mental health training so far with Mental Fitness Roadshows including workshops for parents due to start this month.

Increasing the numbers of volunteers within our sport is something that features both in the new RFL strategy and Community RL strategy so the Community Volunteering element of the InspirationAll programme was particularly well received. Volunteering for major sporting events such as the RLWC2021 has always been popular. Very few of those volunteers go on to volunteer in the sport after the event. Working with Sport England and the RFL the RLWC InspirationAll Team are looking to change this and are targeting at least 250 new volunteers into community rugby league. We were delighted to hear that some of these new volunteers have already been active in the community game ahead of the tournament.



It was also uplifting to hear how, working with the sports Social Care partner, Community Integrated Care, the RLWC2021 team have helped provide over 280 inclusive volunteering opportunities. Pre-tournament opportunities have already started and there will also be 250 tournament time volunteering opportunities. Work has already started on how we can embed an inclusive volunteer programme across the sport after the RLWC2021.

Sandy Lindsay MBE, Chair, RFL Community Board