



NATIONAL COMMUNITY **RUGBY LEAGUE**

FACILITIES STRATEGY

MAY 2024

CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction
3. Research
4. Strategic Context
5. RFL Vision
6. Objectives of the Strategy
7. Facility Investment Need
8. Multisport Investment
9. Security of Tenure
10. Sustainability
11. Local and National Insight
12. Community Wellbeing and Social Impact
13. Charitable Community Organisations
14. Wheelchair Rugby League
15. Recommendations



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This is the RFL National Facilities Strategy [2024 – 2030]. It identifies the necessary investment for the sport to increase activity across all formats. The Strategy has been developed by Knight, Kavanagh & Page (KKP) based on a national consultation process with Community Rugby League Clubs and Charitable Community Organisations (CCOs). It recognises the role that rugby league plays in the sporting heritage of the nation and the contribution it makes to driving social impact, values, and mobility within some of the most deprived communities in the country.

 TOTAL PROJECT COSTS
100,000,000

The investment requirement to sustain and grow rugby league is estimated to be £100 million over the next six years to 2030. This investment package is focused on transforming clubhouses and changing rooms, improving existing and providing new grass pitches, investing in training facilities, and improving provision across core community clubs. This transformation is crucial to develop women and girls' rugby league, tackle inequalities within our communities, as well as growing the traditional and non-traditional game. It provides a platform to work with strategic partners such as Sport England and the Football Foundation to deliver multi-sport funding opportunities by identifying potential projects.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

However, it is important to acknowledge the challenges facing more than 100 clubs, including those on multi-sport sites, which lack security of tenure, thus limiting the ability of stakeholders to invest in the sites. Community clubs and their communities are facing challenging times, confronted with mounting costs, participants and members struggling in the face of a cost-of-living crisis, COVID recovery, the erosion of local support networks and a climate emergency. Additionally, clubs have deteriorating playing surfaces leading to session cancellations and unplayable pitches, which in turn leads to a decline in participation, unsustainable club operations and in extreme circumstances, clubs being at risk of closure.

Investment is essential for the sustainability of the sport, and to propel it into the future, specifically looking ahead to 2030. This investment is vital to accommodate increased participation and to address the disparities faced by underrepresented groups in the sport. The RFL has a proven track record of effectively utilising ring-fenced funds, exemplified by our success with the RLWC2021 CreatedBy, where we delivered £27 million worth of legacy projects from £10 million of Government funding. This was done by working collaboratively with our partners and stakeholders.

In summary, the RFL National Community Rugby League Facilities Strategy sets an ambitious agenda to secure the future of Rugby League in the UK. The proposed £100 million investment will not only transform facilities, but also bolster the sport's social impact, reinforcing its position as a vital part of the nation's sporting and social fabric.



INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

Rugby league is “More than a Sport”. That is the top line of our strategy for the sport for 2022-2030. It is a cultural identity, a passion, a way of life and a force for good. The Covid-19 pandemic hit hardest in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. At a time when our communities were under huge strain, our clubs came to the fore. There has been unprecedented disruption across the sporting landscape. People’s habits and routines have changed. The pandemic and cost of living crisis has made levelling up in the North, where most of our clubs are based, far harder to achieve.

Despite these challenges, the sport continues to make huge strides in terms of becoming more diverse and inclusive. The growth of the women and girls’ game, driven by the Women’s Super League, and the introduction of inclusive ways to play such as Physical Disability Rugby League and Learning Disability Rugby League are shining examples. The RLWC2021 resulted in an explosion of interest and growth in Wheelchair RL. The majority of our activity is delivered through our community clubs and foundations who continue to deliver more activity for more participants year on year.

Our grassroots underpin everything we do. Like all sports we want to continue to grow. We want more players, more coaches, more volunteers, and a stronger more sustainable sport. Increasing the levels of activity remains our key goal which we will seek to deliver. We will do all of this through the lens of the Rugby League Dividend – supporting our people and our communities – and through tackling the inequalities and barriers that exist within society that prevent people embracing the many benefits that engaging with our sport can deliver.



INTRODUCTION

We are “More than a Sport”. We want more people to be active through rugby league. But we want more. We want our people, the rugby league family, to be aspirational, to achieve, to take advantage of opportunities in life they didn’t think possible. We are not only a sport, but a community that cares, and together, can make a difference to our participants and the wider community.

The CreatedBy facilities programme linked to the RLWC2021 evidences the sport can deliver a strong return on investment, with a £10m government grant generating total investment of more than £27m. That investment into some of the most deprived communities in England, improving changing facilities, lighting, providing access to equipment and safe spaces for people of all ages and backgrounds, has made a real difference. However, being based in some of the poorest communities makes generating significant capital for investment an extremely difficult challenge and one that limits ambitions. Consequently, too many of our participants still must play on pitches that are muddy and undulated in the winter and hard and barren in the summer. Changing facilities are often outdated if they exist at all. Social spaces, which many of our clubs use for the benefit of the wider community offering meals, warm spaces, education, social events, as well as a place to belong, is denied to many.

As the game continues to grow, develop, and diversify, what was considered acceptable in the past is becoming unacceptable and less appealing for new generations, particularly women and girls. High quality and accessible community rugby league facilities are sporadic. To ensure future growth, our vision, underpinned by the research in this strategy and future investment from the Government, is to propel rugby league into the next decade and enable the sport to deal not only with inactivity, but address the very real issues facing modern society. Social isolation, childhood obesity, mental and physical health issues and anti-social behaviour pose a real threat to future generations but are sustainably addressed through sport.



INTRODUCTION

We can drive positive change by developing a package of support to address the key issues that restrict the growth and wider social impact of community rugby league. Such support includes:

- **Security of Tenure** – Clubs are currently unable to plan for the long term due to being in unsecure situations regarding their playing and ancillary facilities. A secure base will ensure the club can be a pillar of its community for years to come.
- **Accessible and Inclusive Facilities** - Community rugby league clubs should be welcoming environments for people from all walks of life, particularly those from under-represented groups. Suitable changing rooms, toilets, social spaces and security measures should be installed to support this. Creating safe spaces where not only our participants but the wider community feel safe, welcome and belong.
- **Adequate and appropriate Playing Pitch Provision** – A basic expectation should be that the playing pitch is fit for purpose and safe to use. Continuing to invest in improving the quality of grass pitches and upskilling the volunteer workforce to do this is crucial.
- **Sustainable Community Club Infrastructure** – Clubs must be supported and educated on how to become and remain a financially sustainable business, whilst also adopting environmentally sustainable practices wherever possible.

The Strategy has been developed KKP and the RFL with the help of community clubs, professional club foundations and strategic partners. It represents the widest and most comprehensive engagement process across the sport. It identifies the RFL's financial requirement to invest in its community infrastructure to underpin growth, particularly amongst under-represented groups, and provides a baseline of quality information on all major rugby league facilities and clubs across the country.



INTRODUCTION

It identifies where investment is required to support growth and sustainability across the sport, and recognises that the robustness and strength of the community club infrastructure is essential in delivering this. It also sets out how the RFL will focus on ensuring community clubs and charitable community organisations aspire to have the best available facility offer possible.



RESEARCH

RESEARCH

The Strategy Strategy was delivered by KKP and overseen by a steering group made up of RFL and Sport England colleagues. To get a clear understanding of the facility issues facing community clubs, charitable community organisations, and stakeholders, a national consultation process was undertaken. This ran from December 2022 through to May 2023 and was invigorated by the significant effort made with significant effort by RFL colleagues to get 210 clubs, representing 1,787 teams, to respond to the survey. This equates to circa 85% of all the teams competing within the community game.

Further consultation was undertaken with professional clubs' community foundations to learn more about their specific facility requirements. These organisations deliver high impact activity within their local communities and provide regular opportunities for those with physical disabilities (PDRL), learning disabilities (LDRL), and wheelchair players.

This has provided unparalleled insight into the community rugby league landscape with better understanding of the challenges and core facility issues facing clubs throughout the country. This has enabled the RFL to identify the magnitude of investment required and to prepare a facility investment plan through to 2030.

Headline potential requirements for community clubs include:

- **42** changing room projects
- **24** clubhouse projects
- **17** 3G pitches (or alternative training facilities)
- **70** clubs identifying a need for small scale infrastructure projects
- **61** sites requiring pitch improvements equating to 183 pitches
- **27** clubs identifying a need for new pitch provision



STRATEGIC CONTEXT

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

There are a number of associated strategies which support and interlink with this Strategy. These are shown below. Each provides important context and guidance to ensure the RFL is best placed to achieve the optimum outcomes for the community game.

- Uniting the Movement | Sport England
- UK and the Sustainable Development Goals - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Sports for Climate Action | UNFCCC
- Structure, Strategy and Reports (rugby-league.com)
- Every Move - Sustainability Strategy & Action Plan | Sport England



RFL VISION

RFL VISION

“To be a diverse accessible and growing sport delivering great rugby league experiences and positive social impact into the communities we serve”

Rugby League facilities are often nestled in some of the most underprivileged communities, but serve as the linchpin in our ability to drive positive change. Our aim is to ensure reliable, safe, and inclusive facilities, granting uninterrupted access to rugby league throughout the playing season. Such facilities are not just spaces for sporting engagement, but where a profound social impact is born. We envision clubs that stand as beacons of sustainability, security, and inclusivity, embodying the enduring values of rugby league. These clubs look to the future, laying the groundwork for a legacy and a lasting commitment to our sport.

Our overarching aspiration is to foster growth, welcome more players, coaches, and volunteers, thereby cultivating a robust and sustainable community game. These primary objectives guide our endeavours, all while embracing the principles of the Rugby League Dividend. Central to our mission is the unwavering commitment to support our people and communities, dismantling inequalities and barriers that hinder access to the range of benefits our sport can deliver.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY

FACILITIES STRATEGY: OBJECTIVES

The RFL Facility Strategy sets out to deliver on the following objectives:

1. To provide an understanding of the scale of investment required to sustain the current club infrastructure and to enable it to increase participation across key parts of the game.
2. To identify key investment priorities which provide the greatest return on investment in relation to sustainability and participation growth.
3. To increase participation across the game including amongst underrepresented groups.
4. To identify where the RFL can maximise 'multi-sport' funding opportunities with the Football Foundation.
5. To provide the RFL with a core data set which enables it to positively engage with Sport England, NGBs, Active Partnerships and local authorities to maximise facility investment opportunities.
6. To support charitable community organisations to deliver continued high impact activities for PDRL, LDRL and wheelchair players through access to improved facilities.
7. Develop a sufficient facility offer which provides opportunities for wheelchair rugby league to thrive and provide a player performance pathway through to elite level.
8. Ensure community rugby league facility investment builds on the existing social outcomes that clubs deliver for their communities.

The success of this Strategy will be underpinned by RFL staff and external stakeholders working collaboratively to deliver positive change to the landscape of community rugby league facilities.

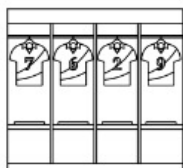


FACILITIES INVESTMENT NEED

FACILITIES INVESTMENT NEED

To sustain the club network across the sport, the RFL must build on the core infrastructure of facilities owned and accessed by clubs across the game. However, if the RFL is to increase participation in core target areas of women and girls' rugby league and alternate formats, then there is a need to improve the facility infrastructure to deliver this.

Changing rooms: Changing areas are a fundamental requirement for the progression of the game, particularly in RFL growth areas. Many clubs report that current changing facilities are not adequate. Key concerns include general design, number of toilets (particularly female specific) within or close to changing rooms, shower provision and overall sizing of facilities. On this basis, the RFL must work with clubs and relevant stakeholders to change this position and enable existing demand and growth areas (particularly womens and girls' rugby) to be sustained and to thrive in the future.



19 **NEW** Changing rooms
23 Refurbished changing rooms

Social space: Social space (clubhouses) are an integral part of Rugby League, where clubs provide food and social space for visiting teams and club sustainability through bar and catering revenue. The RFL understands the need for this provision and will work with clubs to access investment. These facilities are also where clubs deliver wider social value for their communities through their use for activities such as community meetings, give blood, warm spaces, etc..



9 **NEW** Club houses
15 Refurbished club houses



FACILITIES INVESTMENT NEED

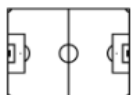
Grass pitches: Grass pitches are essential for training, match play and recreational programmes. Unfortunately, the quality of provision across community clubs is not all good. The RFL will continue to utilise PitchPower and work with Sport England to plot the path to improve the quality of pitches across the country including those affected by more extreme weather conditions.



27 **NEW** Clubs needing new pitches

61 Sites require pitch improvements

3rd generation artificial grass pitches (3G): 3G pitches provide a durable, safe, year-round playing surface which can withstand more intensive use compared to natural grass pitches. They are also able to be used for a wider range of sports i.e., football and lacrosse.



17 **NEW** Community clubs needing new 3G

Sports lighting: Sports lighting is important for established community clubs as it provides opportunities for midweek training and alternative match kick off times. In some instances, a lack of sports lighting is detrimental to club development and increasing participation opportunities. The RFL will invest in sports lighting where need is evidenced and where it increases participation opportunities in growth areas.



29 Clubs need additional or improved sports lighting



FACILITIES INVESTMENT NEED

Small scale infrastructure: For many community clubs, their existing built infrastructure is broadly meeting current demand. However, for many, clubhouses, changing rooms and sports lighting are outdated and suffering from wear and tear. On this basis, they do not need to be refurbished or replaced, but do require light touch improvement. Our consultation feedback identified 70 potential projects for small scale capital improvements. These range from a combination of new energy efficient boilers, solar panels, LED lighting, decoration, new windows, general toilet and changing room improvements (light touches).



70 Small scale infrastructure projects

Facility considerations: The RFL understands that the delivery of high capital projects such as 3G pitches may not be suitable for all interested community clubs, unless they have a particularly strong player base and high levels of revenue to ensure the long-term sustainability of this facility. Where clubs have identified a need for additional training facilities (including 3G pitches), more appropriate and sustainable solutions may include indoor training barns or the introduction of hybrid pitches to provide increased capacity for both training and match play on individual club sites. The RFL will judge need on a club-by-club basis.

The RFL is acutely aware of the European Commission adopting a restriction on the sale of intentionally added microplastics to products across Europe from 2031. This will have an impact on 3G pitches in Europe. In the UK (excluding Northern Ireland) this restriction has not been imposed, however, the RFL and partners will be monitoring the situation closely to ensure it is responsive if any similar UK specific legislation is imposed.

MULTI-SPORT INVESTMENT

MULTI-SPORT INVESTMENT

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) announced in 2021 a Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme which will invest over £300 million between 2021 and 2025, to level up facilities across the whole of the UK. This programme provides funding to make essential facility improvements, so that sports clubs and communities have access to high-quality pitches and facilities for their sports and to demonstrate the Government's commitment to levelling up across the whole of the United Kingdom.

The aim is to improve the landscape of sport across the country, ensuring people have more access to places to play the sports they love, aligning with Sport England's Uniting the Movement Strategy.

Rugby League's heartland reflects many of those areas, where there is a need for 'levelling up' and where there are multiple venues where football and rugby league share sites and sometimes pitches. On this basis, rugby league is a key partner for Sport England and the Football Foundation to focus investment which delivers key wider social outcomes. This is a key capital funding opportunity for the RFL, but it will not enable it to address all its requirements identified within this Strategy. The RFL is committed to working in partnership with the Football Foundation and other NGBs to deliver multi-sport opportunities which enhance the sport and physical activity opportunities for communities.

Analysis of our consultation with clubs has identified: **53 potential multi-sport projects.**



SECURITY OF TENURE

SECURITY OF TENURE

Security of tenure means having the legal right to use a particular piece of land or building either for a fixed period or permanently. A Rugby League club only has security of tenure if it has a lease or a freehold for the property or grounds they use. Typically, funding organisations require a minimum of 25+ years of secure tenure prior to investing moderate to high levels of capital investment into a site. This is on the basis that funders want assurance that their investment will be available for the longer term. Secure tenure agreements include:

- **A lease:** is an agreement between your organisation and the owner of the property or grounds (freeholder) that your organisation uses. A lease will allow your organisation to use a designated piece of land and/or facilities for a fixed period, usually for a fee.
- **A freehold:** is when your organisation or its trustees (depending on your legal structure) owns the property or grounds you use outright and are listed as the freeholder with the Land Registry or on the deeds if they are unregistered.

This means that other forms of tenure, such as hire arrangements, sub-leases and usage agreements are not classified as secured tenure. This is an issue for community Rugby League as many clubs do not have a secured tenure position. Based on consultation responses only 57% of community clubs have security of tenure of their pitches and their clubhouses/changing rooms.

This represents one of the RFL's core challenges as over 40% of clubs are not eligible for capital investment from funding bodies, regardless of the need for investment and the outcomes this may deliver. This is a challenge that needs to be overcome as the RFL progresses with this Strategy.

SECURITY OF TENURE

LONG TERM TENURE

Analysis shows that of the identified potential projects within this Strategy, just **62%** are potentially deliverable where clubs have security of tenure of their sites.

38% of known potential projects are unlikely to be fully deliverable due to unsecure tenure. With this in mind, the RFL will work to create a funding package to support legal fees, with the aim of bolstering the future of community clubs by improving tenure positions on the sites they occupy.

Ideally, all community clubs would have a minimum 25 years of security on their sites, or complete freehold to enable them to facilitate investment into what has already been established as justifiable need. This initiative will seek to strengthen the foundation of these clubs, ensuring their long-term presence and continued contribution to their communities. By collaborating closely with local authorities, parish and town councils and other relevant stakeholders, we will work to establish (where possible) asset transfers of land or long-term leases for clubs.

In relation to those clubs that already have security of tenure of their sites, and those moving to this status, the RFL recognises the need to support clubs to be self-sustaining. On this basis, it will also consider funding to support grounds maintenance equipment banks, storage facilities, sports lighting, fencing and small scale investment which supports income generation of club sites.

This type of funding represents a vital step toward ensuring the continued growth and stability of rugby league at grassroots level.



SUSTAINABILITY

SUSTAINABILITY

Financial sustainability: In today's challenging economic environment marked by escalating expenses and uncertainty, our aim is to encourage clubs to establish a solid foundation for lasting success. Investment should be strategically directed towards initiatives that empower clubs to not only increase their revenue, but also to proactively prepare for the future. We advocate for the inclusion of educational programmes, such as courses and mentoring, as integral components of any project. These educational resources will equip clubs with the knowledge and skills needed to create sinking funds and execute timely upgrades as needed.

Environmental sustainability: The integral connection between environmental sustainability and every decision-making process must be clear. This means minimising excessive travel for sports accessibility by ensuring that adequate facilities are within walking or active travel distance. Essential factors include well-lit and secure access routes, clear signage, and facilities designed for accessibility, accommodating bikes, wheelchairs, and more. Addressing issues like surface hardness, without heavy reliance on mains water, can be achieved through water recycling for irrigation purposes. Additionally, we strongly promote the adoption of sustainable practices, such as the installation of solar panels, ground/air source heat pumps, and other environmentally friendly technologies.

More information on sustainability can be found here [Sport England: Sustainability](#).



LOCAL & NATIONAL INSIGHT

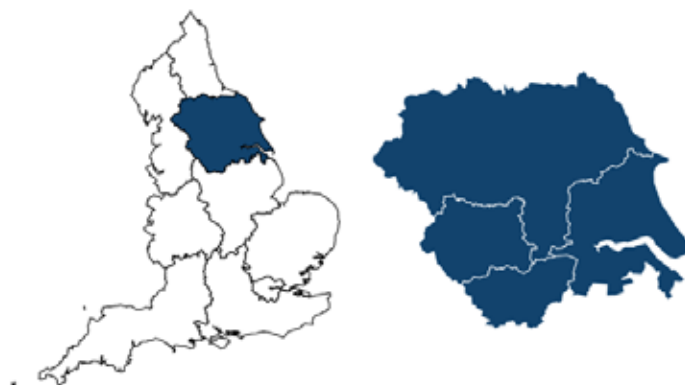
LOCAL INSIGHT - YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER

This is an example of the data underpinning the National Community RL Facilities Strategy

Yorkshire and the Humber is one of the RFLs heartland areas. With many prominent community clubs situated in the region, it was natural that the national consultation piece would uncover a high number of potential facility projects for delivery. In total, across all local authorities in the region, 110 potential projects were highlighted by clubs.

Authorities with the largest number of projects are:

- **Leeds** [22 projects from 12 clubs]
- **Kirklees** [23 projects from 12 clubs]
- **Wakefield** [21 projects from 9 clubs]



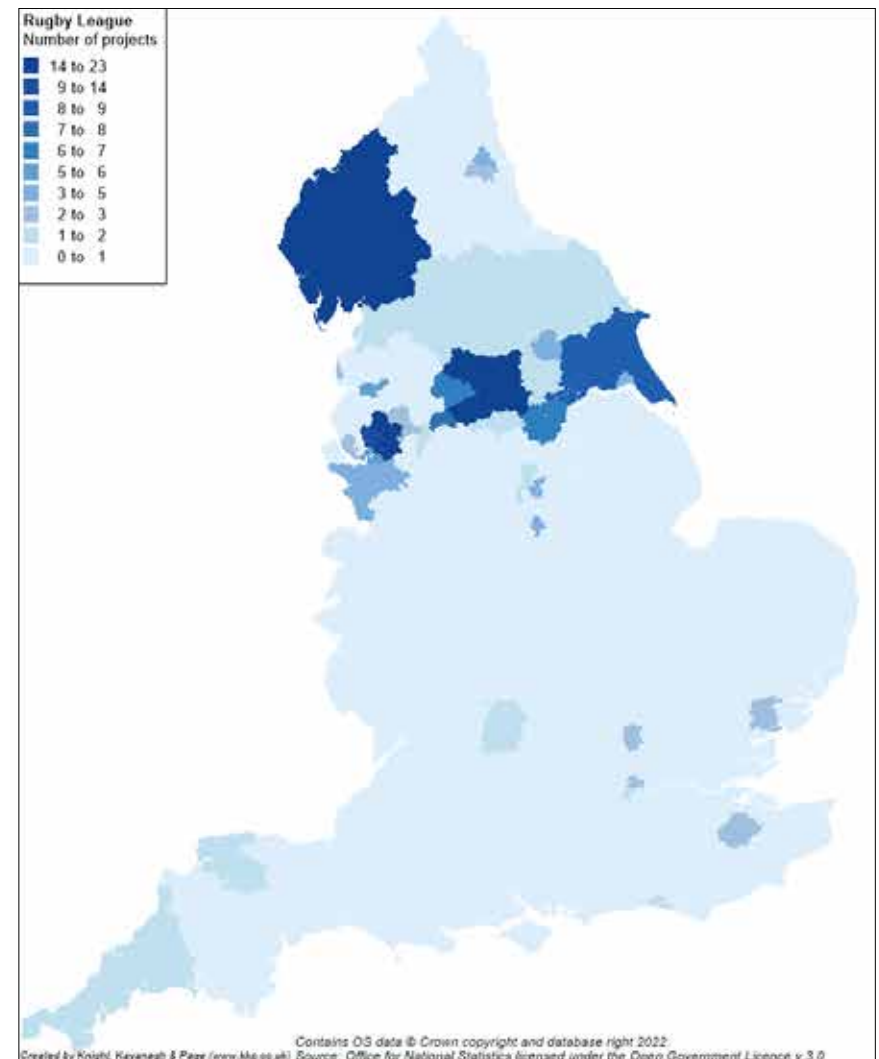
Key findings from this area include:

- **50%** of all identified small scale infrastructure projects are from this region.
- **57%** of all clubs identifying a need for new pitches (or access to) are from this region.
- **52%** of all identified new changing room projects are from this region.
- **47%** of clubs identifying a need for better quality grass pitches are from this region.

NATIONAL INSIGHT

Community clubs have identified potential facility projects throughout the entirety of England. The adjacent map highlights where the highest proportion of projects are identified.

It is evident that there is a distinct focus of investment in the north, within the Rugby League heartland. However, there are also pockets of investment required in the Midlands and South which are crucial for the RFL. These projects will help to promote the game within these communities and sustain participation growth in areas which have not traditionally been a focus for Rugby League investment.



COMMUNITY WELL-BEING AND SOCIAL IMPACT

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING AND SOCIAL IMPACT

The RFL is working to develop a range of community wellbeing hubs across each region of England and has a target to have 30 established by 2030 as part of the RFL's Social Impact Strategy. Community Wellbeing Hubs aim to provide opportunities to deliver social impact by using rugby league facilities to encourage external use by local community groups.

Warm and welcoming environments are important for community Rugby League clubs, but their ability to go beyond providing the sport is important to understand. A high-quality food and drink offer, flexible spaces for activities, and good heating and lighting can set the foundation for spaces to become multi-functional and provide community facilities to external groups which require accessible spaces.

Despite the condition and investment needs of many clubhouses and social spaces, consultation identified that over 100 clubs already offer a level of community access which is not specifically Rugby League related. Typical community activities include weight management groups, exercise activities, mental health groups, vaccination clinics and blood donations, amongst others.



CHARITABLE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

CHARITABLE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

All clubs within the top-flight of the professional game (Super League) and most within the higher divisions below this level (tiers 2-3), operate Charitable Community Organisations (CCOs). The specific role of a CCOs is different for each club and the communities they serve. However, the common theme for all is that they use the power of Rugby League to motivate, educate and inspire communities to be healthier and more resilient.

Charitable Community Organisations for many within Rugby League communities, are vital lifelines which provide a range of services and opportunities for local people. Whilst these organisations are important local institutions, face to face consultation indicates that the quality, accessibility, and availability of facilities limits the outcomes that they can deliver.

Many CCOs are reliant on access to community club facilities to deliver activity. This adds increased pressure on grass pitches, changing rooms and general infrastructure, over and above the general training and game use by the clubs themselves.

Consultation with CCO's highlighted that access to floodlit 3G pitches at peak times is a common challenge across the network. In many circumstances, CCOs are competing with their community club partners and local football clubs on many 3G pitch sites. This, in turn, restricts their ability to develop and grow LD (Learning Disability) and PD (Physical Disability) Rugby League activities as well as programmes for women and girl's and walking versions of the game.



CHARITABLE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Consultation identified that there are three core areas to be tackled to enable CCOs to maximise the social value outcomes they deliver:

1. Improve facilities at key community clubs which host charitable club organization activity, to ensure quality does not negatively impact on the accessibility and availability of these venues to host disability rugby, recreational play and formats which contribute to health and wellbeing.
2. Secure sufficient access to local 3G pitches for charitable club organisations to deliver a wide range of activity including PDRL, LDRL, women and girls, and academy age groups.
3. Improve the supply of storage facilities and transportation to ensure wheelchair rugby league is accessible to as many potential participants as possible.



WHEELCHAIR RUGBY LEAGUE

WHEELCHAIR RUGBY LEAGUE



The 2021 Rugby League World Cup was an unprecedented success for England. The England Wheelchair team won the World Cup in dramatic fashion against a strong French national team. With national television coverage, the media spotlight was focused on promoting this inclusive version of the sport.

Following this success, there has been an upsurge in demand for the sport, which is almost exclusively developed and delivered through professional Rugby League club foundations.

Consultation with CCOs identified that the growth of wheelchair Rugby League has meant more extensive travel for match play, an increased need for wheelchair storage, and a need for logistics solutions to transport chairs to and from training facilities and match centres. This, whilst overwhelmingly positive, has led to issues with transportation and storage of wheelchairs. Many CCOs struggle with these issues with a reliance on the good will of staff and/or facility providers to resolve these.

The RFL, as such, commits to providing an improved funding offer to foundations which provide and promotes this activity to alleviate the issues which have emerged in recent times.



WHEELCHAIR RUGBY LEAGUE



NATIONAL WHEELCHAIR CENTRE

Following on from the success of the England Wheelchair National Men's team winning the Rugby League World Cup (2021), the RFL has identified an aspiration to develop a national wheelchair centre for the sport.

This facility would represent a centre of excellence for the sport, to develop players and offer opportunities for an enhanced player pathway from beginner through to elite performers which can represent England on the

world stage. It would also be the main events focus for the sport with sufficient spectator provision to accommodate international fixtures and tournaments.

The centre will, ideally, be located within the rugby league heartland (i.e., M62 corridor) and provide a central base where all Super League (Tier 1) club foundations can feed their best players into. To supplement the national centre, foundations also require access to appropriately sized sports halls in their local areas to develop participation opportunities in Wheelchair Rugby League.

Rugby league also recognises that a bespoke wheelchair Rugby League facility cannot just accommodate a single sport. It also needs to work in partnership with other sports such as Netball and Basketball to ensure the facility is financially viable and delivers a wider range of sport and physical activity outcomes.



RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the community club research and consultation with key stakeholders it is evident that there are a range of facility issues which are restricting the growth and development of Rugby League, as well as the wider social benefits that the sport can deliver.

The recommendations for the Facilities Strategy are framed within a range of themes which reflect the wider strategic aspirations across the sport, namely:

- Focus Community Clubs
- Deliver positive social and environmental impact
- Collaborative working with sports partners and key agencies
- Technological solutions
- Charitable Community Organisations and Wheelchair Rugby League



COMMUNITY
WELLBEING | **HUB**



RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 1: FOCUS COMMUNITY CLUBS

1. Ensure the RFL has sufficient capacity and resource to deliver the recommendations identified within this Strategy to support its community clubs.
2. Ensure all community clubs have the knowledge and resource to provide good quality grass pitches.
3. Support clubs to have good quality changing and social facilities which can support the scale of need at each club. These must be inclusive for all participants and benefit target user groups such as women and girls' participants.
4. Ensure clubs can accommodate a sustainable operational programme for clubhouses to ensure the longevity of provision.
5. Work with clubs and key partners to increase the number of clubs with secured tenure of their club facilities.
6. Develop a dedicated funding programme which is specifically aimed at supporting clubs to gain security of tenure at their respective site.
7. Highlight success stories and best practices from community clubs to inspire others and showcase the positive impact of these efforts.



RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 2: SOCIAL IMPACT

1. Support clubs through training and advice on how to promote facilities for non-rugby league purposes.
2. Work with Active Partnerships across England to enable higher usage and activation of rugby league assets for non-rugby league activity.
3. Prioritise clubs for wellbeing hubs which may offer the widest social benefit (relative to local need) – particularly those in high deprivation areas.
4. Use the activation of club facilities as a prerequisite to capital funding for club house improvements / new development.

THEME 3: COLLABORATIVE WORKING WITH SPORTS PARTNERS AND KEY AGENCIES

1. Ensure continued working with Sport England and National Governing Bodies of other sports to capitalise on shared investment opportunities.
2. Work with the Football Foundation to maximise Multi-Sport funding opportunities – utilising the framework provided in this Strategy as the baseline of shared investment.
3. Work closely with Active Partnerships in areas with high club densities to establish opportunities for pitch access via the Open School Facilities programme.



RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 4: TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS

1. Ensure the RFL gathers greater levels of information from clubs via affiliation. To include (e.g.) security of tenure information and an integrated self-assessment audit of community facilities.
2. Continue expanding the use and application of PitchPower so all clubs can self-assess provision and support clubs to make positive contributions to improving the quality of grass pitches.
3. Promote technological solutions which progress clubs into being more sustainable, energy efficient and ensure their long-term viability as community assets.
4. Create a platform or resource hub where clubs can access information on funding opportunities, facility management, and sustainable operational practices.



RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 5: PROFESSIONAL CLUB FOUNDATIONS AND WHEELCHAIR RUGBY LEAGUE

1. Develop an investment package to support the operational delivery of professional club foundation led wheelchair activity focusing on storage and logistical solutions.
2. Prioritise capital investment into community club sites which also accommodate professional club foundations as tenants for community Rugby League activity.
3. Begin work on the feasibility of developing a national wheelchair centre which includes exploring partnership opportunities with other sports to maximise multisport value and return on investment.
4. Consult with professional club foundations, where possible, to understand the need for 3G access and work to ascertain sufficient access hours during peak times of need.

