

RFU Council Co-Opt Members

Roxroy (Roxy) Fearon



Roxy is a black British man with 20 years' experience of playing at Burton and Derby rugby clubs. This was followed by a further 20 years as a coach, starting with the U10's to the senior men's rugby team both as a head coach and director of rugby.

Roxy worked as a mechanical engineer before gaining a Diploma in social work and is now a senior social worker, working with vulnerable youngsters in children's homes, with young offenders in the Youth Justice system and is a vital part of the children's protection processes in his area.

His early experience of rugby helped shape his views in life in a positive way. The sport offered him a place of friendship, camaraderie, support, built his self-esteem and offered somewhere to belong.

Roxy is a role model to other black and ethnic minority people, influencing them to see opportunities in rugby beyond the player and coach roles. He is determined to help make the change as the RFU present rugby as a sport for all, regardless of race, religion, colour, sexuality, gender, disability, social or economic background.

He has hands on experience of working to develop rugby in the ethnically diverse community, focussing on coaching in local schools, helping to re-establish women's rugby within his club along with developing a mixed abilities section. He has established a good relationship with local business to help raise funds to maintain these vital rugby development projects.

Roxy is delighted to be given the opportunity to become a co-opted Council member. To engage with other members on the Council and to discuss the development of rugby with easy reference to a different point of view and experience. He is enthusiastic to effect positive change in diversity and inclusion and help to develop workable policies/strategies that have longevity with a simple, clear and transparent aim.

Yemi Gbajobi



As a black woman growing up in London, Yemi's first experience of a rugby ball occurred at University, where she attended the rugby team try-outs during Fresher's Week at Brunel University.

Over the next five years, whilst playing for Brunel University WRFU and Richmond WRFC, she developed a love for the game, which gave her friends for life and taught her the importance of teamwork, dedication, discipline, friendship, shared goals, supporting others, and recognising the strength of a team comes from its diversity.

She is an experienced professional with over 15 years leading membership organisations. Working currently in the higher education sector, Yemi was appointed as Chief Executive jointly of the two students' unions of London School of Economics and University of the Arts London being responsible and accountable for strategic direction and to deliver financial performance, legal compliance and reputation with a combined revenue for the two organisations currently at £9 million. This also includes conducting organisational governance reviews, chairing governance meetings and subcommittees and reporting to Trustee Boards.

Her role with the Student Unions includes leading on developing student awareness of rugby as part of the wider offer of sport and activity to its membership. Those students who do not typically engage in team and organised sports are signposted to sport. Demonstrating her knowledge of the ways in which other NGBs develop sports participation in young people and women, has been key to success in delivering within the university.

Yemi's position in the universities, working closely with the students, allows her to speak authentically of her experience of diversity and to share or amplify the voices of the young adults. Delivering rugby within the university setting is key to the retention and recruitment of players especially in the women's game, and she is best placed to understand this key area of the game.

Yemi believes that Council ensures that rugby in the community is at the forefront of its work, actively reaching out to unrepresented groups and challenging its affiliated clubs to ensure that they do the same. In addition, she feels that more work, could and should be done, to investigate why young people, women, in particular, leave the sport and how they can be supported to stay

active within the game. She is interested in helping to develop strategies for encouraging young people to stay in the game even when their life circumstances change.

With a career spanning over a decade in the student union sector, she is an ambitious and innovative leader with over five years in a senior leadership role. Yemi can offer many skill sets including organisational governance, equality and diversity, staff development and strategic thinking. As a young black female, she brings confidence, pragmatism and a lived experience putting a name and face to the issues we discuss in Council. In humanising the conversation and bringing those not yet with us along on our journey, she has connections that would help her be an effective and positive member of Council.

Garnet Mackinder



Garnet Mackinder is a mixed-race female, currently employed as a senior manager at Sport England and plays for Exeter Chiefs Women in the Allianz Premier 15s. She has played rugby for over 10 years; been part of the England U20s squad, gained 7s caps and played for a number of Premiership clubs.

Her time at Sport England has given her a good understanding of the broader sporting landscape and increased her passion for giving people equal chances in sport. She is currently on secondment in the Special Projects Team working on the Sport Survival Package which involves assessing applications from professional sports organisations and making recommendations to the Board.

Garnet has worked closely with the governance team and was part of the working group to develop the new Code for Sports Governance. She was involved in the consultation process with small clubs to understand what was ambitious, but also realistic for organisations to achieve within the structure and running of the club.

Outside of work Garnet is part of an all-female board and a trustee of a small sports charity called Equitysport. The vision of the charity is to promote equality, diversity and equal opportunity in and through global sport, particularly in the global south. She is also an ambassador for the rugby mental health charity Give a Ruck.

Culture is really important to her and is something that she feels drives standards in rugby. At Sport England she is part of a group called the Culture Crew. Their aim is to influence and encourage equality and diversity within the organisation.

Garnet's ambition to become a Co-opted Council Member reflects her passion for sport, particularly rugby, and to raise the profile of women's rugby during this time of growth. As a

female who is a semi-professional athlete in rugby that also juggles a full-time job brings many challenges. She wants to reduce these challenges for others following in her footsteps and use her experiences to enhance the pathway for those in the future.

Garnet believes in the RFU's vision and culture and wants to be a vital part of making rugby as diverse and inclusive as it can be. She is determined to help make change by bringing her lived experiences of being a mixed-race female on and off the field.

Matthew Webb



Matt is a proud, gay, rugby playing man, joining and then moving into a position of leadership within the Kings Cross Steelers RFC. Taking up rugby again after leaving it as a child, he describes this as the best thing he has ever done which is echoed by his family and friends.

Rugby has had such an impact on so many, it has the ability to make vast improvements in a person's life and has in many cases been the factor that has saved them from a dark future. From rugby comes confidence, physical strength, emotional awareness, friendships, relationships and family. At 35 he did not expect signing up to a rugby club to bring any of those things, however, it absolutely did and for many others he knows.

Since becoming chair of the Kings Cross Steelers RFC and subsequently a member of the RFU D&I implementation group, D&I Training development group and D&I lead for Essex he has had the opportunity to work with and learn from many people. The positions he has held also allows him to speak authentically of his experience and to share or amplify the voices of those with different lived experiences than himself.

In his time at the club and in other roles Matt has listened and learned. The question of trans participation is one of great complexity and through listening and speaking with members of that and the women's rugby community he now has a greater understanding of the difficulties faced by all. He was honoured to lead the group of 23 clubs in England, that are all members of IGR (International Gay Rugby), to come together to share the voices of both those communities to the RFU and hope to support them more to ensure rugby is safe but also inclusive to them.

Matt is passionate about the game, wanting it to grow and be successful. The LGBTQ+ community has made huge impacts on the pitch in the women's game and it is one of the fastest growing

parts of the men's game. He is well placed and connected in England and internationally to be able to be a representative on Council, to help give better understanding and add the voices of our community to the decisions being made.

The positions he has held allows him to speak authentically of his experience and to share or amplify the voices of those with different lived experiences than himself. This story telling, putting a name and face to the issues we discuss in Council, is vital to humanise the conversation and bring those not yet with us along on our journey. In recent years he has developed a greater understanding of how the RFU is structured and works and made connections that would help him be an effective and positive member of Council.