

ENGLAND RUGBY STRATEGY

A SUCCESSFUL AND THRIVING GAME ACROSS ENGLAND



England
Rugby

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STRATEGY
2021 ONWARDS

OUR PURPOSE

TO ENRICH LIVES, INTRODUCE MORE PEOPLE TO RUGBY UNION AND DEVELOP THE SPORT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.



CHAIR OF THE BOARD



ANDY COSSLETT
CHAIR

This strategy came together through an extended, multi-stage consultation process with a final Board review to ensure the priorities remain fit for purpose in a post Covid world. We are confident that they do. Good strategies provide clarity and direction to align the effort and resources of an organisation. We very much hope this document will do this for us, acting as a shared roadmap for everyone involved in the game.

The last few years have been turbulent ones for the RFU and we have had our fair share of challenges. But we emerge in good shape and in good heart, on a sound financial footing and with strengthened governance and leadership in place. With these foundations firmly in place we are confident

in our ability to successfully take this strategy forward. But while the lead might come from Twickenham, to truly achieve our core purpose and grow the game, everyone in the RFU needs to get behind this.

The tireless efforts of volunteers across the game are constantly inspiring and we know how tough the last year has been on clubs and individuals alike. But this is the moment for the game to rebound and to come together in common endeavour. With a game united and aligned behind a winning strategy, we can look forward to making the years ahead hugely successful both for the RFU and for the great game it remains our privilege to serve.

“WITH THESE FOUNDATIONS FIRMLY IN PLACE WE ARE CONFIDENT IN OUR ABILITY TO SUCCESSFULLY TAKE THIS STRATEGY FORWARD.”





CEO'S OVERVIEW



BILL SWEENEY
CEO

WE BEGIN OUR NEW STRATEGY IN OUR 150TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR AND AT ONE OF THE TOUGHEST PERIODS IN RUGBY UNION'S HISTORY AND ARE IMMENSELY PROUD OF THE WAY OUR SPORT HAS RESPONDED TO THIS CHALLENGING TIME. THE PANDEMIC HAS GREATLY IMPACTED OUR SPORT, AS IT HAS THE ENTIRE OF SOCIETY, AND OUR STRATEGY WILL SUPPORT THE SPORT THROUGH A PERIOD OF REOPENING, RECOVERY AND GROWTH.

Through our strategy, we aim to enrich lives, introduce more people to rugby union and develop the sport for future generations, creating a successful and thriving game across the country. We aim to achieve this by strengthening and uniting rugby union in England and producing consistently winning England teams.

Prudent cost control before the pandemic hit put the RFU in a good position to weather the initial impact of the crisis, but longer term we knew this would not be enough to run a sustainable operation and safeguard our future and our ability to invest in the game. We needed to make difficult decisions on continued investment, as well as the appropriate size and shape of our organisation for the future. Following a capability review and a consultation process we have completely remodelled our organisation in order to work differently in future. The consultation involved RFU Council, representing our Constituent Bodies and member clubs, and employees at all levels of the business. Through this process, eight key strategic priorities were identified and all investment decisions need to align to these in future.

These eight priorities are:

1. Enabling positive, enjoyable player experiences
2. Creating the best possible high-performance system
3. Enhancing player welfare
4. Supporting clubs to sustain and grow themselves
5. Driving rugby union to reflect the diversity of society
6. Building a deep understanding of players, volunteers and fans to shape the future of the game
7. Connect with and grow the rugby community
8. Ensure a sustainable and efficient business model delivered by an inspired workforce.

We acknowledge that we will need to do fewer things, but better, in the future as we recover financially.

The strategy also outlines the RFU's core activities which form the backbone of our business operations and services to the game. They fall into three areas: core rugby activity, core commercial activity and running the business. These will operate alongside our strategic priorities.

The community game is the lifeblood of our sport and it needs simple, focused support that delivers real benefit. This will include support to become commercially innovative and self-sustaining, the introduction of campaigns and programmes to attract new audiences to the sport, facilitating change that improves the enjoyment and safety of the game and guidance on increasing diversity in club leadership and playing bases.

Creating a high-performance system that is committed to excellence is a priority that will aid our goal of producing consistently winning England teams through talent identification and development. We will achieve this by developing effective, integrated pathways for players, coaches and match officials and influencing the shape of the game domestically and internationally. While we expect our financial recovery to continue until at least 2025, with a refocused approach, streamlined priorities and the collective, positive will of the rugby community to succeed, our sport will bounce back stronger.

“THE COMMUNITY GAME IS THE LIFEblood OF OUR SPORT AND IT NEEDS SIMPLE, FOCUSED SUPPORT THAT DELIVERS REAL BENEFIT.”



England
Rugby

VISION

WHAT WE WILL ACHIEVE
A SUCCESSFUL AND THRIVING GAME
ACROSS ENGLAND

MISSION

HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE IT
BY STRENGTHENING AND UNITING RUGBY UNION IN ENGLAND
AND PRODUCING CONSISTENTLY WINNING ENGLAND TEAMS

Guiding Principles



PLAYER FIRST



OPEN TO ALL



**FINANCIALLY
STRONG**

OUR VISION, MISSION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We will put the player first and invest in greater understanding of who currently takes part in our sport and how they like to play the game, in order to provide competitive structures and formats of rugby union that suit today's lifestyles. We will strive to attract a diverse range of people to rugby union, ensuring our sport is welcoming to all and that clubs become increasingly reflective of the society in which we live. Our goal is to drive financial sustainability for the sport, beginning with a post-pandemic financial recovery.

OUR CORE ACTIVITIES FORM THE BACKBONE OF OUR BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND SERVICES TO THE GAME.

OUR CORE ACTIVITIES

CORE RUGBY ACTIVITY

Govern the rules and regulations of rugby on and off the field

Set the competition framework

Set the coaching and refereeing qualification framework

Run, coach and fund the men's and women's England XV teams

Ensure safeguarding, welfare, anti-doping and discipline compliance

CORE COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

Deliver sponsorship and broadcast deals and manage commercial partnerships

Put on rugby events and sell tickets, memberships and hospitality

Operate the stadium in a safe and cost effective way

RUNNING THE BUSINESS

Comply with the legal and statutory requirements for Finance, Legal, Technology, HR, Stadium and Health and Safety

Maintain all physical and technology assets


Maintain core people and finance requirements including compliance with financial sustainability metrics



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

We have identified four 'Game Objectives' and four 'Driving Objectives' following a thorough business review and extensive consultation process, to form priority focuses for the RFU's future strategy. We believe that these objectives will make the greatest substantive improvements to the game, and investment will be aligned to these areas.

GAME OBJECTIVES

ENJOYMENT		Enable positive player experiences on and off the field
WINNING ENGLAND		Create the best possible high-performance system for England Rugby
WELFARE		Enhance player welfare to protect and support the wellbeing of players
FLOURISHING RUGBY COMMUNITIES		Support clubs to sustain and grow themselves and to reflect society

DRIVING OBJECTIVES

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION		Drive rugby union in England to reflect the diversity of society
UNDERSTAND		Build a deep understanding of players, volunteers and fans to shape the future of the game
CONNECT		Connect with and grow the rugby community and create exceptional experiences
COMMERCIAL AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE		Ensure a sustainable and efficient business model delivered by an inspired workforce





ENJOYMENT

ENABLE POSITIVE PLAYER EXPERIENCES ON AND OFF THE FIELD

- Improve accessibility for women and girls across the game
- Make the game inclusive and attractive for 14 to 18 year olds
- Redefine playing opportunities, structures and competitions for current and future players, recognising the strategic importance of the adult male game
- Develop match officials and coaches in the community game to enhance player enjoyment

Enjoyment, both on and off the pitch, is critical to retaining and attracting people to the sport. We want every interaction with our game to be positive and encourage people at all levels of the game to find fulfilment in it.





WINNING ENGLAND



CREATE THE BEST POSSIBLE HIGH-PERFORMANCE SYSTEM FOR ENGLAND RUGBY

- Develop effective and integrated pathways for players, coaches and match officials
- Influence and shape the game at domestic and international levels to ensure its long-term health and the success of our England teams

Success at international level drives interest in the sport, increases take up of rugby union, provides huge enjoyment for fans and encourages commercial success. With 85% of our revenue driven by England games, enabling the success of our teams is critical to the financing of the game as a whole. Our strategy supports the creation of the best possible system to identify and develop talent and a world-class high-performance system to facilitate winning England teams.



WELFARE

ENHANCE PLAYER WELFARE TO PROTECT AND SUPPORT THE WELLBEING OF PLAYERS

- Reduce the risk of head impacts in rugby union
- Reduce the risk of injury through appropriate interventions and law changes based on insight from injury surveillance data
- Provide care and support for catastrophically injured players

The RFU will continue to take player safety very seriously and implement head impacts and all injury prevention and treatment strategies based on the latest research and evidence. We will continue to play an instrumental role in establishing head impacts and injury surveillance, head impacts assessment and supporting law changes to ensure proactive management of player welfare. Working closely with World Rugby, the RPA, Premiership Clubs and PRL we will ensure player welfare remains at the heart of all our decision making.





FLOURISHING RUGBY COMMUNITIES

SUPPORT CLUBS TO SUSTAIN AND GROW THEMSELVES AND TO REFLECT SOCIETY

- Provide support to club and CB volunteers so they can attract new, diverse volunteers and help clubs to be fit for the future and self-sustaining
- Provide support to help clubs maximise the benefit from their facilities and assets
- Help clubs manage their risk and liabilities

Our member clubs and Constituent Bodies remain the very heart of our sport. Their success determines our sport's success. It's where players first pick up a ball and develop a lifelong love of the game. Helping them to flourish both, as places for people to enjoy the sport and as businesses, is vital to a thriving game.





DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

DRIVE RUGBY UNION IN ENGLAND TO REFLECT THE DIVERSITY OF SOCIETY

- Improve the diversity of all facets of our game and continue to create an inclusive environment for all

We will step up our efforts to improve diversity and inclusion across our game, grasping the opportunity to better reflect the society we live in. We have worked hard to understand our starting point and are now underway with a plan that we are confident will produce big improvements in diversity and inclusion in our sport. Rugby union has always prided itself as being a 'game for all'; we must now demonstrate beyond any doubt that we mean it. Following in-depth research, the RFU has made a commitment to improving D&I across four key areas of the game: Fans, Followers and Partners; Game Play - Players, Coaches, Match Officials; Employees and Board and Game Leadership - Volunteer leaders within Clubs, Constituent Bodies and Council.



UNDERSTAND



BUILD A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF PLAYERS, VOLUNTEERS & FANS TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE GAME

- Build a two-way relationship with our players to identify when and where they play rugby, and how they feel about the game
- Generate greater insights into our volunteers, customers and stakeholders to better serve their needs

The RFU believes that generating greater insights about our players, volunteers, customers and stakeholders will enable us to better serve their needs and positively shape the game for the future.

CONNECT



CONNECT WITH AND GROW THE RUGBY COMMUNITY AND CREATE EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCES

- Make sure our brand and products evolve to be more accessible to the whole game
- Develop relevant, engaging and ever-present content for fans
- Enhance customer service and match day experiences
- Unite and engage the rugby community through proactive and effective communication
- Promote the core values across the game

It is our goal to develop deeper and more direct digital relationships with fans, volunteers and players in order to be better connected and to share views and ideas. Introducing rugby to new audiences will help to grow the game and make it more accessible to all. The RFU is committed to using its channels to listen, educate and provide a platform for a wide range of diverse voices across the game. Communicating rugby union's shared set of core values – teamwork, respect, enjoyment, discipline and sportsmanship – means those involved in the game strive towards the same shared ideals for our sport.





ORGANISATIONAL EXCELLENCE



ENSURE A SUSTAINABLE AND EFFICIENT BUSINESS MODEL DELIVERED BY AN INSPIRED WORKFORCE

- Nurture a culture which engages and develops our people, whilst embracing individuality and workplace diversity
- Accelerate and grow the women's game and create long-term value
- Develop and implement a long-term strategy for Twickenham Stadium
- Evolve the organisation to develop effective and efficient ways of working

To best serve the needs of our sport and to develop as a progressive national governing body we will operate a sustainable and efficient business model, led by an inspired workforce.

GAME OBJECTIVES SUMMARY

PRIORITY

ENJOYMENT



OBJECTIVE

Enable positive player experiences on and off the field

SUB-OBJECTIVES

- Improve accessibility for women and girls across the game
- Make the game inclusive and attractive for 14 to 18 year olds
- Redefine playing opportunities, structures and competitions for current and future players, recognising the strategic importance of the adult male game
- Develop match officials and coaches in the community game to enhance player enjoyment

PRIORITY

WINNING ENGLAND



OBJECTIVE

Create the best possible high-performance system for England Rugby

SUB-OBJECTIVES

- Develop effective and integrated pathways for players, coaches and match officials
- Influence and shape the game at domestic and international levels to ensure its long-term health and the success of our England teams

PRIORITY

WELFARE



OBJECTIVE

Enhance player welfare to protect and support the wellbeing of players

SUB-OBJECTIVES

- Reduce the risk of head impacts in rugby union
- Reduce the risk of injury through appropriate interventions and law changes based on insight from injury surveillance data
- Provide care and support for catastrophically injured players

PRIORITY

FLOURISHING RUGBY COMMUNITIES



OBJECTIVE

Support clubs to sustain and grow themselves and to reflect society

SUB-OBJECTIVES

- Provide support to club and CB volunteers, helping them attract new, diverse volunteers and developing clubs to be fit for the future and self-sustaining
- Support clubs to manage their risks and liabilities
- Provide guidance to help clubs maximise the benefit from their facilities and assets

DRIVING OBJECTIVES SUMMARY

PRIORITY

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



OBJECTIVE

Drive rugby union in England to reflect the diversity of society

SUB-OBJECTIVE

- Improve the diversity of all facets of our game and continue to create an inclusive environment for all

PRIORITY

UNDERSTAND



OBJECTIVE

Build a deep understanding of players, volunteers and fans to shape the future of the game

SUB-OBJECTIVES

- Build a two-way relationship with our players to identify when and where they play rugby, and how they feel about the game
- Generate greater insights into our volunteers, customers and stakeholders to better serve their needs

PRIORITY

CONNECT



OBJECTIVE

Connect with and grow the rugby community and create exceptional experiences

SUB-OBJECTIVES

- Make sure our brand and products evolve to be more accessible to the whole game
- Develop relevant, engaging and ever-present content for fans
- Enhance customer service and match day experiences
- Unite and engage the rugby community through proactive and effective two way communication
- Promote the core values across the game

PRIORITY

COMMERCIAL AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE



OBJECTIVE

Ensure a sustainable and efficient business model delivered by an inspired workforce

SUB-OBJECTIVES

- Nurture a culture which engages and develops our people, whilst embracing individuality and workplace diversity
- Accelerate and grow the women's game and create long-term value
- Develop and implement a long-term strategy for Twickenham Stadium
- Evolve the organisation to develop effective and efficient ways of working



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