

## **Update from Bill Sweeney, 5 May 2020**

I am writing to update you on the actions the RFU have taken in the face of the current Covid-19 crisis and what we are working on for the future.

### ***Suspension***

We were one of the first sports to suspend play (16 March) and moved quickly to end the season (20 March) providing clarity over Easter tours and to allow clubs to act quickly to make savings by mothballing facilities.

### ***Support for the Game***

Shortly after the season was ended, we announced pay cuts across the RFU and launched our £7 million support fund (25 March).

Our immediate focus was to help clubs to access small business grants of £10,000 -£25,000 from government and grants of up to £10,000 from Sport England. We have released £1 million of funding directly to Geographic Constituent Bodies (CBs), who have added £400,000 to this, creating a £1.4 million immediate support grants fund for clubs.

Alongside this we launched a fund of up to £5 million, offering loans of £2,000 - £10,000 to clubs, repayable interest free over three years with an initial payment holiday of up to six months.

The RFU has accessed the government funding scheme and 60% of our staff are on furlough. Despite reduced staffing we are working hard to provide you with regular updates either through CGU or via coaching and advice webinars – many of which have been oversubscribed.

### ***Support for the wider rugby community***

We are delighted to be providing facilities at Twickenham stadium for a drive-through coronavirus testing facility for NHS staff and key workers.

Our social media team has tailored its content to support government messaging while also keeping our varied audiences informed and engaged. As a result the England Rugby social channels have experienced substantial year-on-year growth with total engagements up 66% to almost 17.5 million and video views up 67% to 16.7 million. On the community section of our website we are also celebrating many of your great efforts in helping in this time of crisis, so please do keep sharing your good news with us.

### ***Scenario Planning and Looking Forward***

The RFU has undertaken detailed financial scenario planning to understand the potential reduction in revenue we are facing as a result of Covid-19.

I provided an update on this to a DCMS Select Committee early today, this can be viewed [here](#), the rugby evidence starts at 10mins 45 seconds.\* Please note the Terms and Conditions below regarding the use of video clips provided by parliament.

In the best case scenario (Autumn Internationals take place in front of crowds) we are forecasting a revenue reduction of approximately £35 million. In a medium case scenario (Autumn Internationals behind closed doors) it would be £85.7 million. In the worst case (no Autumn Internationals) it would be £107.3 million.

The situation is challenging for us all but we are working hard with the wider rugby community to make sure we are focussed on making the right decisions in the best interests of the game.

Our Chief Medical Officer is working with Government and other sporting bodies on potential return to play scenarios for both the elite and community games. When social distancing measures are relaxed by government, we will keep you informed on return to play protocols but will only do this when it is medically safe to do so.

Our focus now is on developing plans for how we can continue to support the community game. We are working on plans for continued engagement with players and volunteers and a campaign to support you when return to play is possible.

We will keep providing you with updates. In the meantime, I hope you and your families remain safe and well.

Kind regards,

Bill Sweeney

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