

RFU Council meeting 13.02.23.

- RFU AGM 2023. This will be a hybrid meeting on Friday June 17th following the RFU Council meeting.
- Championship Strategic Review. Connor O'Shea. Cup competition to be introduced next season. To involve up to 25 club's dependents upon numbers in the Premiership and Championship. Will have a menu of law variations to be further decided/confirmed.
- Council Nominations Committee. Deborah Griffin to be nominated to the AGM as RFU Junior Vice-President for season 2023-2024.
- Q2 Business Review/Business Planning. Sue Day. Finances work on a 4 year cycle with losses in years when fewer Men's Internationals take place being balanced by profits in years with 4 Autumn Internationals and 3 home 6 Nations games (such as this year). Increased overheads and reduced sponsorship/TV revenues mean no profit this year. Union has plenty of cash so no immediate concerns, but need to improve income in future cycles (e.g., Women's Internationals filling stadium + Digital Transformation). Debenture revenues are going towards stadium development/re-development (£100 million+).
- Community Game Engagement. Bill Sweeney. Tackle Height Reduction. Apologies for the poor communications from the RFU to the game. Consultation to take place as detailed below taken from briefing paper to Council 13.02.23.

Aim of consultation

What we are not going to consult on is whether to lower the tackle height. Rather we are exploring what the optimal height of a legal tackle should be to achieve a meaningful reduction in head injury and concussion risk, how it is delivered in a way the community game understands and accepts – and consulting on specific aspects of the laws which will have to be developed before implementation.

During consultation we want to focus input on the definitions that will need to emerge from the lowering (e.g., how the definitions of areas of the body are described), where the optimum areas for the head are, how the resulting laws are interpreted and applied and how it is implemented. We will also want to understand the (perceived and/or real) implications of the change on participation in our game.

In addition, we want to build understanding of why the law change is happening, and ultimately build support for it. We want to use the process to begin to address the criticism from the community game by delivering something that is authentically engaging with them. Aim to consult well over 1000 individuals.

Design principles of the consultation

Representative – needs to involve a wide range of views from different audience groups and allow everyone to have their say.

Educational - around the rationale and need for change, on what has/hasn't been agreed and what is proposed in the law change intent.

Meaningful - allowing us to show where input has been taken on board and where direction has been adapted as a result of the consultation. Visible - encouraging take up and engagement and visibly showing the RFU to be listening to the game

Consultation Reach In being realistic about what can be achieved we are proposing to stage physical (both face to face and virtual) conversations with over 1000 people whilst

concurrently enabling anyone else that wants to do so to contribute.

Consultation Mechanism To achieve the reach we are proposing three primary inputs:

OPEN SURVEY – allowing everyone to have their say. This will utilise the existing platform used for the National Rugby Survey and consist of a short video explaining the why and what followed by a series of short questions around rationale for change, reactions to the law intent and potential changes and implications, solutions and implementation observations arising from this.

ONLINE FOCUS GROUPS – taking a deep dive with active, engaged people in specific cohorts. This will take small groups representing specific groups from within the game – players, coaches, match officials, Club and CB leaders, teachers, parents, disciplinary officers, and other relevant volunteers. These will utilise the existing player panel technology, commence with a focus group discussion that would lead into a panel where follow up discussion, clarification and debate can happen.

ENGAGEMENT FORUMS – using a roadshow format, both face to face and virtual, 24 forums will be staged across the country (12 face to face and 12 virtual with average of 40 attendees at each). Attendees will be drawn from nominations made by CBs across a range of different defined personas (players, coaches, match officials, parents, club volunteers et al) and different demographics to ensure good diversity. These will be listened to by a panel including representation from CEO, Exec Team, Board, Council, technical experts from staff. In addition, there are likely to be a small number of consultative forums held with appropriate representative/specialist groups that will be fed in to the process.

- Professional Game Agreement update. Preliminary discussions from December 12th have moved on. Heads of Terms brought to Council April 21st. Agreement to be sought from Council on June 17th.
- Global Season. Six Nations and SANZAR meeting end of February. Idea is to combine end of season tours with Autumn Internationals. e.g., England could play Australia, Fiji (in Australia) and then New Zealand on tour. Autumn would see a further three internationals culminating in play offs from the two leagues. Alongside would be an emerging nations tournament. By 2030 promotion and relegation in place. There is a great willingness to get this together from both Northern and Southern Hemisphere Countries.
- Tom Ilube. RFU Board Chair. Looking ahead to make the Union more efficient and effective. Bringing together himself, Bill Sweeney and RFU President Nigel Gillingham

Keith Gee & Simon Thornton.

February 14th 2023.