

ELITE AND PROFESSIONAL RUGBY



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International rugby delivers, directly or indirectly, virtually all the RFU's revenues. It is therefore essential that England has and retains a successful national team with the right structures properly resourced and supported. A successful England team, creating sporting stars and role models, is the strongest marketing tool for the whole game both professional and community. This section sets out the RFU's objectives together with strategies and plans to achieve them. Many of these will require discussion and decision by the new Professional Game Board under its terms of reference set out in the new agreement with Premier Rugby.

OBJECTIVES

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY

ENGLAND SENIOR TEAM

England aim to win the RWC in 2011 and 2015 with a minimum performance standard of a semi-final place in both tournaments

- 75** The success of the England team is essential for the development of the game in England and for driving forward its commercial revenues at both club and international levels. With a new eight year agreement with the Premiership clubs in place and having won the RWC 2003 and been finalists in RWC 2007 it is considered to be a realistic, although challenging, objective to win the World Cup in 2011 and 2015, with a minimum performance standard of no worse than a semi final place in both tournaments.

England to win the Six Nations Championship four times including the Grand Slam twice in the Plan period

- 76** As the RWC happens only every four years it is important to have objectives related to the annual international competition we play in. As the largest rugby playing country we believe that we should win the Six Nations regularly, other things being equal. However, there will be years when the strength of other countries or a heavy injury burden affects results. We believe therefore that the objective should be set as winning the Six Nations Championship in four out of the eight Plan years including winning the Grand Slam twice in the Plan period.

England to win two out of three matches against SANZAR nations

- 77** For England to achieve its objective of regaining the World Cup in 2011, we must re-establish a track record of beating the SANZAR countries on a regular basis and improve on our away performance. We therefore believe that we should set as a further milestone objective in the period leading up to RWC 2011, England winning two out of three matches against SANZAR

countries. This would entail winning the autumn SANZAR tests and at least 50% of the away tests played against SANZAR nations in June each year.

Achieve a minimum England win ratio in any year of 70% rising to 80% over the Plan period

- 78** The charts in Appendix 1 show the win ratio trends of England and each of the major countries against the bench mark of the All Blacks win ratio. The England team has underperformed by our own historical standards since 2004, and it is believed that a minimum target win ratio each year, commencing in 2009/10, of 70% is appropriate. Over the Plan period this should rise to 80% as our increased investment in Elite Rugby yields results.

England to play no more than 11 test matches each year

- 79** The IRB Woking conference on the Integrated Global Season in November 2007 reached a consensus that the maximum number of tests any northern hemisphere country should play in a year should be set at eleven with a limit of twelve for southern hemisphere countries. With a number of major Unions currently experiencing financial difficulties, a trend has developed for additional international matches to be arranged and there is likelihood that the northern hemisphere figure may be raised to 12 as well. The new agreement between the RFU and Premier Rugby sets a limit for England of eleven tests in any year other than RWC years and this will be complied with notwithstanding any change to the Woking consensus. This means that the number of tests England will play in each Plan year is as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| 2008/09, 2010/11, 2012/13, 2014/15 | 11 tests |
| 2009/10, 2011/12, 2013/14, 2015/16 | 10 tests |

Establish an integrated global season following the IRB Conference at Woking in November 2007

- 80** The IRB Woking Conference in November 2007 achieved a consensus on key elements to reduce the number of conflicts between international matches and club/provincial games. In particular the ending of the northern hemisphere club season no later than 31 May each year, the provision of a minimum of 10 weeks unbroken rest and preparation period for professional players and the fixing of the maximum number of test matches per country per year.
- 81** The Woking consensus is entirely in line with the new agreement reached with the Premiership clubs. In this agreement we have now fixed the season structure in England for the next five years and this is shown diagrammatically on the table on the next page. This will deliver major benefits to England in terms of the preparation of the national team, to the players in respect of improved welfare and care and to the professional clubs in terms of certainty of structure against which they can produce their own long term plans.
- 82** The Woking principles have now been incorporated in a revised IRB Regulation 9 on player release which delivers a fair balance between the needs of clubs and/or provinces and the requirements of player release for national teams. This revised regulation provides greater certainty and clarity to enable clubs/provinces, players and national team coaches to plan forward with greater certainty.

To maintain the commercial viability of the International Tours Schedule

- 83** There has been growing concern in the SANZAR countries that the June inbound tours are losing their commercial appeal due to weakened northern hemisphere touring teams resulting in these

STRUCTURED SEASON IN ENGLAND

| Season Weeks | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | Season Weeks |
|--------------|------------------|----------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Week 1 | GP1 | REST 14 | GP1 | REST 14 | GP1 | Week 1 |
| Week 2 | GP2 | GP1 | GP2 | GP2 | GP2 | Week 2 |
| Week 3 | GP3 | GP2 | GP3 | GP1 | GP3 | Week 3 |
| Week 4 | GP4 | GP3 | GP4 | GP2 | GP4 | Week 4 |
| Week 5 | EDF | GP4 | GP5 | GP3 | GP5 | Week 5 |
| Week 6 | EDF | GP5 | GP6 | GP4 | GP6 | Week 6 |
| Week 7 | ERC1 | GP6 | GP7 | GP5 | GP7 | Week 7 |
| Week 8 | ERC2 | ERC1 | ERC1 | GP6 | ERC1 | Week 8 |
| Week 9 | EDF | ERC2 | ERC2 | GP7 | ERC2 | Week 9 |
| Week 10 | RESERVED | RESERVED | RESERVED | GP8 | RESERVED | Week 10 |
| Week 11 | Eng v Aus | RESERVED | Eng v Aus | ERC1 | RESERVED | Week 11 |
| Week 12 | Eng v SA | GP7 | Eng v NZ | ERC2 | AI | Week 12 |
| Week 13 | Eng v NZ | GP8 | Eng v SA | GP9 | AI | Week 13 |
| Week 14 | Eng v Fiji | GP9 | Eng v Fiji | GP10 | AI | Week 14 |
| Week 15 | GP4 | ERC3 | ERC3 | ERC3 | ERC3 | Week 15 |
| Week 16 | GP8 | ERC4 | ERC4 | ERC4 | ERC4 | Week 16 |
| Week 17 | GP9 | GP10/11 | GP11 | GP11 | GP11 | Week 17 |
| Week 18 | GP10 | GP12 | GP12 | GP12 | GP12 | Week 18 |
| Week 19 | GP11 | GP13 | GP13 | GP13 | GP13 | Week 19 |
| Week 20 | ERC5 | ERC5 | ERC5 | ERC5 | ERC5 | Week 20 |
| Week 21 | RESERVED | ERC6 | ERC6 | ERC6 | ERC6 | Week 21 |
| Week 22 | Saxons | REST | REST | REST | REST | Week 22 |
| Week 23 | 6 Nations/Saxons | RESERVED | Saxons | Saxons | Saxons | Week 23 |
| Week 24 | 6 Nations | GP14 | 6 Nations/Saxons | 6 Nations/Saxons | 6 Nations/Saxons | Week 24 |
| Week 25 | 6 Nations | GP15 | 6 Nations | GP14 | 6 Nations | Week 25 |
| Week 26 | 6 Nations | GP16 | 6 Nations | GP15 | 6 Nations | Week 26 |
| Week 27 | 6 Nations | GP17 | 6 Nations | GP16 | 6 Nations | Week 27 |
| Week 28 | 6 Nations | GP18 | 6 Nations | GP17 | 6 Nations | Week 28 |
| Week 29 | 6 Nations | RESERVED | 6 Nations | RESERVED | 6 Nations | Week 29 |
| Week 30 | GP18/EDF-SF | RESERVED | 6 Nations | RESERVED | 6 Nations | Week 30 |
| Week 31 | GP19 | GP18 | GP18 | GP18 | GP18 | Week 31 |
| Week 32 | ERC QF | GP19 | GP19 | GP19 | GP19 | Week 32 |
| Week 33 | GP20/EDF-F | ERC QF | ERC QF | ERC QF | ERC QF | Week 33 |
| Week 34 | GP21 | GP20 | GP20 | GP20 | GP20 | Week 34 |
| Week 35 | ERC SF | GP21 | GP21 | GP21 | GP21 | Week 35 |
| Week 36 | GP22 | ERC SF | ERC SF | ERC SF | ERC SF | Week 36 |
| Week 37 | GP22 | GP22 | GP22 | GP22 | GP22 | Week 37 |
| Week 38 | GP22 | GP22 | GP22 | GP22 | GP22 | Week 38 |
| Week 39 | ERC F | GP22 | GP22 | GP22 | GP22 | Week 39 |
| Week 40 | GP23 | ERC F | ERC F | ERC F | ERC F | Week 40 |
| Week 41 | GP24 | GP23 | GP23 | GP23 | GP23 | Week 41 |
| Week 42 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | Week 42 |
| Week 43 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | Week 43 |
| Week 44 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | Week 44 |
| Week 45 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | Week 45 |
| Week 46 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | Week 46 |
| Week 47 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | Week 47 |
| Week 48 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | Week 48 |
| Week 49 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | Week 49 |
| Week 50 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | Week 50 |
| Week 51 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | Week 51 |
| Week 52 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | GP24 | Week 52 |

KEY

GP/Int Overlap

EPS Rest Block (1 week of 3)

tour matches being seen by spectators as having little or no meaning. Part of this problem has been addressed by the Woking conference outcomes in which all Unions agreed to a best team policy for all test matches and tours. The issue of tour matches having little or no meaning was agreed to be addressed by the creation of a World Series concept out of the results of all the test matches played in the year. The RFU will take a leadership position in securing agreement on such a process and the ideas on this are covered in the Tournament and Competitions section of this Plan.

- 84** We continue to believe that it is necessary to put all tours on a sound commercial basis, separating out the Tier 1 countries from the developing or Tier 2 nations. Apart from maximising revenues, this could also create opportunities for Tier 1 countries, in some years, to adopt a traditional touring format where two or three tests would be played in one country (thereby generating a series that would maximise TV, sponsorship and other commercial revenues) and/or the playing of mid week matches against club or provincial sides. The Tier 2 countries playing needs could be met through the Strategic Development Agreement concept set out elsewhere in this Plan supported by a Tier 2 touring schedule.

Develop EPAS to be the single computer based information system for the management of all EPS and Academy players by 2010

- 85** The RFU, PRL and each of the Premiership clubs have agreed to use a single computer based information system to record all player welfare and sports science/medicine data on each EPS and Academy player. This will enable club and RFU medical teams to monitor these players' physical condition and health and to facilitate the delivery of the EPS programme and other player welfare issues across the professional game.

Elite players to be role models for the wider game

- 86** The Senior EPS players have a collective responsibility to the wider game to ensure they conduct themselves in an appropriate manner. The new Elite Player Agreement contains a code of conduct to ensure all players uphold the key core values of rugby union and set high standards as role models of the sport.

ENGLAND WOMEN'S SENIOR TEAM

England aim to win WRWC 2010 and 2014 with a minimum performance standard of a finals place in both tournaments

- 87** The success of the England women's team is essential for the long term development of the women's game in both raising the profile and standards within the game. With the strength of our playing base and investment in performance programmes we should therefore aim at winning the World Cup in 2010 and 2014 with a minimum performance standard of reaching the final in both tournaments.

England to win the women's Six Nations Championship each year during the Plan period including winning the Grand Slam four times

- 88** England are currently the dominant force in the Six Nations Championship and it is important for the continued growth of the women's game in England that the team maintains that position. We therefore aim to win the women's Six Nations in each of the Plan years including winning the Grand Slam in four of those years.

ENGLAND SAXONS

England Saxons to win both matches in the Six Nations window

- 89 It has been agreed as part of the new agreement with Premier Rugby that the Saxons will play only two matches in the Six Nations window and these will be scheduled in the first two weeks of that window. With the strength and depth of our EPS player pool we are aiming to win both these matches each year.

England Saxons to win the Churchill Cup in two years out of three and be a finalist in the third year

- 90 The Churchill Cup has developed from being a tri-angular tournament between England, USA and Canada into a six nations tournament involving the original three countries plus the 'A' teams of Ireland and Scotland together with a guest team – the NZ Maori and Argentina have both participated. The aim is to win the Churchill Cup in two out of three years as the guest team can provide tough opposition. In the other year the Saxons should aim to be finalists.

England Saxons to participate in a tour to a SANZAR country with the Senior England team once every four years

- 91 There is merit in exposing the Saxons EPS squad to playing away matches in SANZAR countries. Subject to the availability of appropriate fixtures the Saxons will tour with the Senior Squad once every four years probably in the year before each RWC (i.e. in 2010, 2014 etc). In the years when the Saxons EPS squad tours with the Senior team we would need to provide a replacement team for England in the Churchill Cup. This could be either a strengthened Counties XV with Championship and U20 players, an U23 England team, a Barbarians team or another top 10 Union 'A' team.

ENGLAND WOMENS 'A' TEAM

To secure four competitive games for England Women's 'A' team during the Six Nations and win these matches

- 92 In order to ensure that there is a stream of players ready to progress into the England women's Senior squad and be ready for test match rugby it is vital that the next group of players have the opportunity to make the step up from age grade and club rugby through challenging games in an annual A team programme. We aim to secure at least four such games each season in the Six Nations window and to win each of these matches.

ENGLAND U20 TEAM

Win the U20 Six Nations Championship four times in the Plan period including the Grand Slam twice

- 93 The new agreement with Premier Rugby enables the U20 programme to be aligned with the new season structure and to provide adequate preparation time for the U20 squad. With the more focussed structure now in place and with the growing success of the Academy system in producing a pipeline of young talent we aim to win the U20 Six Nations in four years of the Plan period including the Grand Slam twice.

Win the IRB Junior World Championships by 2011 and three times overall in the Plan period

- 94** The Academy process is now working well and with the introduction of the new elements resulting from the new agreement with Premier Rugby further improvements are expected in the production of elite rugby athletes. We can now legitimately aim to perform at a higher level in the annual IRB Junior World Championships now that there is only one age grade World Cup competition. Our target is to win the IRB Junior World Championships three times in the Plan period.

Achieve a 20% success rate of U20 EPS players progressing to play the England senior team

- 95** As our Academy structure develops and matures we would expect a growing proportion of U20 players reaching the England senior squad within six years of their participation in the U20 Six Nations Championship. We are setting as a target this proportion rising from 15% in the first half of the Plan period to 20% in the second half.

ENGLAND WOMEN'S U20 TEAM

Ensure there is an appropriate Women's U20 training and competition programme in place with a minimum of two games per season

- 96** The success of the Women's U20 programme will be measured by the individual development of each player. Whilst developing a winning mentality is important there are other areas that these players need to develop. Success will be measured by the achievement of set performance targets and by the number of players selected into the England elite squad during the Plan period against the target of 50% being set. Players also need to play challenging games to be able to test their skills and we therefore aim to secure a minimum of two competitive U20 games per season.
- 97** Achieving an U20 competition programme is difficult in the current climate with only four nations running an U20s programme. Through the provision of support, advice and playing opportunities to other nations it is hoped that there will be eight nations running U20 teams by the end of the Plan period which will provide further development opportunities for our own U20 players in different and challenging environments.

ENGLAND U18 TEAM

England U18 to win their Six Nations and summer tour matches

- 98** The player development programme enables a longer term view of our development at this age level to be taken. We plan to identify key youngsters who have real senior potential and bring them into the Regional and National Academy programmes for individual development work. The annual programme at U18 level culminates with the Six Nations matches and the summer tour. With the improved focus and planning now in place it is a reasonable aim to seek to win all U18 Six Nations and summer tour matches.

ENGLAND SEVENS TEAM

Support the IRB's attempts to get sevens nominated as an Olympic sport

- 99** The IRB has been involved in a long running campaign to secure Olympic status for sevens. This is important not only to raise the profile of rugby union but also to secure additional funding for

rugby particularly in developing countries. The RFU will continue to support these efforts of the IRB in any way it practically can.

England Sevens to win the Sevens RWC in 2009 and 2013 with a minimum performance standard of a semi-final place and win gold in the Commonwealth Games in 2010 and 2014 with a minimum performance standard of a bronze medal

- 100** England will support the Sevens RWC in 2009 and 2013 and the Commonwealth Games in 2010 and 2014. Notwithstanding the difficulties, our intention will be to secure the support of the PGB for fielding strong, competitive and experienced squads in all these tournaments with a target of winning the Sevens RWC in 2009 and 2013 and the gold medal in The Commonwealth Games in both 2010 and 2014 with a minimum performance standard of a semi-final place in each of the tournaments.

ENGLAND WOMEN'S 7s TEAM

England Women's Sevens Team to win the WRWC Sevens in 2009 and 2013

- 101** England have embraced the opportunity to compete in the WRWC Sevens in 2009 by resourcing a comprehensive sevens programme and identifying quality players and staff to take part in that programme. We plan to put together a strong sevens squad by allowing a number of current international players to join the sevens squad for the WRWC Sevens in addition to their club and test match commitments. As a result we aim to win the WRWC Sevens in both 2009 and 2013 with a minimum performance target of a finals place in both tournaments.

To support the IRB development of the women's sevens programme and to secure sevens rugby nominated as an Olympic sport

- 102** For sevens rugby to be accepted as an Olympic sport it must cover both men and women. We will fully support this IRB initiative of integrating women's sevens into all applicable international sevens tournaments. Sevens provides an opportunity both to develop young players and the skills of more experienced players. It is also a great opportunity to raise the profile of the women's game but this will require the diversion of significant resources from other programmes to achieve this. A review will be undertaken following the decision of the IOC on inclusion of sevens rugby as an Olympic sport to agree the way forward for women's sevens.

BRITISH AND IRISH LIONS

To support the modernisation of the Lions into the post Woking Global Season structure

- 103** The IRB's conference on the Integrated Global Season at Woking reached a consensus on two critical issues. The fixing of playing windows for club and international rugby and a clear commitment to player welfare including a minimum uninterrupted ten weeks rest and preparation period for professional players between seasons. These new commitments are to come into effect from the 2008/09 season in the northern hemisphere and have been enshrined in a revised IRB Regulation 9.

- 104** Implementation of the above commitments will require changes to the traditional Lions tour format from 2013 onwards. The debate on these changes needs to commence now within the Lions, the Home Unions and the SANZAR countries. The PGB will make recommendations to the RFU Management Board on England's policy with respect to the Lions, under its terms of reference, in due course. The principle issues that will need to be considered are as follows:
- i) The start date for Lions tours with player release from clubs from the 31 May;
 - ii) The length of Lions tours with the requirement to give professional players ten weeks rest and preparation between the end of the tour and the start of the new season;
 - iii) The number of matches that can be played on tour with the commitment in England to our players that there will be five days between competitive matches for our EPS players;
 - iv) The resultant commercial and financial issues that may arise for the Lions and the host Unions as a result of changes to the touring structure.

THE BARBARIANS

To secure agreement on a viable and sensible programme of Barbarians matches to be incorporated into the post Woking Global Season structure

- 105** The Barbarians are an RFU affiliated club with a long and prestigious history of playing attractive fixtures against touring teams and Six Nations countries. A substantial portion of the revenues raised from Barbarians matches goes to charitable causes and grass roots investment. The Barbarians wish to maintain a fixture against one of the SANZAR touring sides in the autumn window and their fixtures against Six Nations countries in May prior to the summer tours.
- 106** There are now a number of interested parties in Barbarians matches in addition to the Barbarians themselves. The RFU (as the Barbarians' Union), Premier Rugby (for player release), two agencies (Stephen Berrick and Mike Burton) and the SANZAR Unions (for commercial reasons). The RFU supports the Barbarians and is seeking an agreement between all the above stakeholders to provide for an agreed fixed number of Barbarians matches in the UK in or around the autumn window and at the end of May and that these matches should be incorporated into the Integrated Global Season structure post the Woking conference.

PROFESSIONAL CLUB RUGBY IN ENGLAND

GUINNESS PREMIERSHIP

To provide the environment for professional club rugby to be financially successful

- 107** The RFU's role is to ensure that there is stability and certainty throughout the game thereby creating the climate for the whole game to grow and prosper. England's success at international level is important to attract commercial partners, broadcasters and spectators to professional rugby at both club and international levels. The new agreement with Premier Rugby, which will see the RFU invest over £100m in the twelve Premiership clubs over the Plan period based on the production of EPS and EQP players, provides the platform to achieve this objective.

To grow the market for professional club rugby from £100m currently to £200m by the end of the Plan period

108 The commercial market for professional club rugby has grown quickly since the game went open. Currently valued at around £100m it is still new in terms of development and growth potential. We are setting a target over the Plan period to grow the market to £200m and through this to ensure that all twelve Premiership clubs are trading profitably.

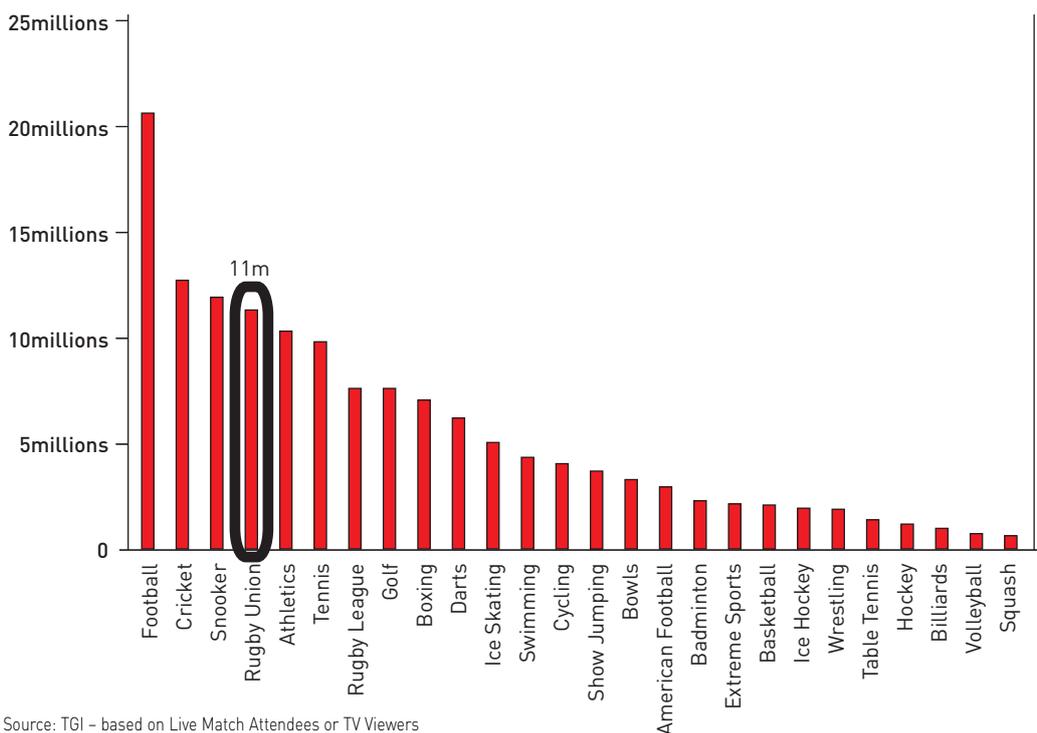
To assist PRL in developing an effective stadium development programme

109 The growth in attendances at Premiership matches has led to many stadia now operating at or near capacity levels. The Premiership also has a number of stadia rented from soccer clubs with the associated restrictions on usage. The criteria for membership of the Premiership require increases in capacity at all clubs to a minimum of 15,000 by 2011/12. The investment required to raise capacity levels is potentially large. The capital required to build or acquire new rugby specific stadia is even larger and creative ways of raising finance are necessary. The RFU will continue to work with PRL, the RFL and other interested parties as part of our Public Affairs programme to establish a Rugby Development Foundation for this purpose.

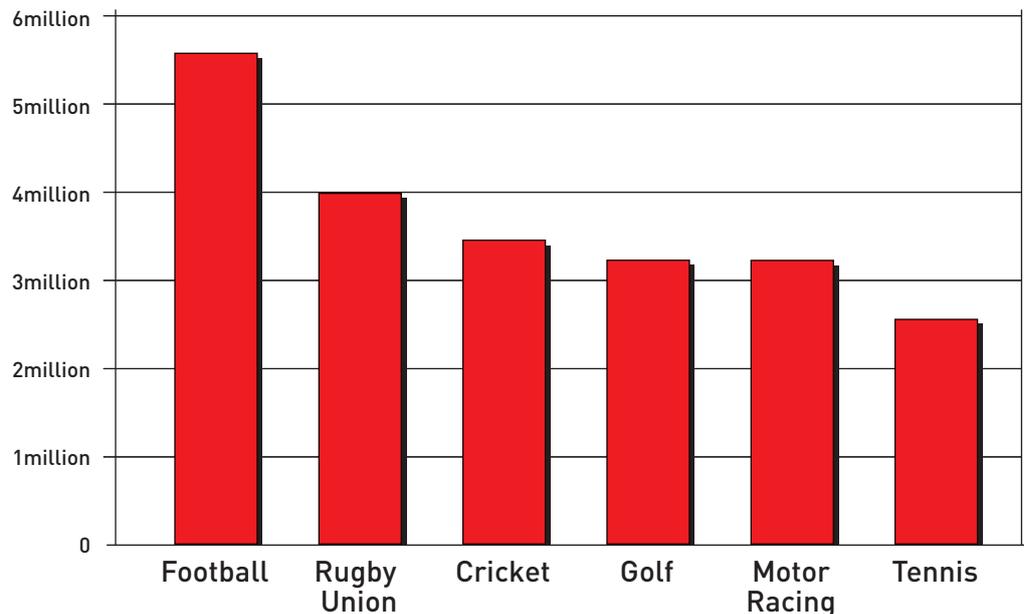
To establish professional club rugby as England's second most popular team sport after soccer

110 With the success of the England team in winning the World Cup in 2003 and reaching the World Cup Final in 2007, rugby union has retained its high profile position. The charts below and right shows the relative popularity standings of the major spectator sports in England. This has supported the continued growth in attendances at Premiership matches together with a growth in television audiences for rugby union. It is a reasonable objective to target professional rugby union as becoming and remaining England's second most popular team sport.

LIVE MATCH ATTENDEES OR TV VIEWERS BY SPORT



NUMBER OF INTERESTED AB ADULTS BY SPORT



Source: GB TGI 2008 Q3 (April 2007 – March 2008). Total Population – 12,912,000. All Adult Population – 48,792,000

HEINEKEN CUP AND CHALLENGE CUP

To develop the Heineken Cup into a fully elite club competition

- 111** The new ERC Shareholders Agreement provides for a review of the format and finances of the Heineken Cup and the Challenge Cup as part of the production of an ERC Strategic Plan. As shareholders in ERC, the RFU will work closely with PRL and other partners to develop the Heineken Cup into a fully elite club competition including all the Premiership clubs.
- 112** The future role of the Challenge Cup will need to be considered in the context of the above review. Options for this competition include opening it up to a wider group of professional sides in England and other countries.

ANGLO-WELSH CUP AND REPLACEMENT

To fully support the EDF Energy Anglo-Welsh Cup to the end of the sponsorship term and to create a successor competition that will involve English and Welsh teams in a new cup format

- 113** The EDF Energy Cup has delivered good attendances and viewing figures on the BBC. There have, however, been concerns expressed about the scheduling of matches and the consequent issues related to team selections. The new agreement with Premier Rugby envisages this competition being renewed on a different basis and played in windows that minimise the clashes with the Premiership. The RFU has tabled for discussion at the PGB a revised competition which will include, in addition to the Premiership clubs, some Championship clubs and the Welsh Regions.

THE CHAMPIONSHIP

To develop FDR into a fully professional league to be called The Championship over the Plan period

- 114** The RFU believes that over the course of the next eight years, FDR should develop into becoming a professional league supporting the Guinness Premiership. In previous Plans, FDR has either been considered to be part of the Community game or a semi-professional league hovering somewhere in between the Community game and the Premiership. This uncertainty about its position and role needs to be brought to an end. To meet the objective of FDR becoming a professional league in support of the Premiership requires more focus and concentration of talent than is possible in a 16 club environment. This Plan is produced on the basis that the appropriate changes to our structures are made and a second professional tier of 12 clubs, to be called *the Championship*, is established below the Premiership.
- 115** The selection of 12 clubs for this level will enable a concentration of playing talent and a more effective utilisation of the new player loan and dual registration schemes, thereby delivering further improvements in match quality and competitiveness. This in turn will encourage broadcasters and sponsors to invest in the Championship. PRL have committed themselves, in the new agreement with the RFU, to use reasonable endeavours to extend the sponsorship of the Premiership to cover the Championship as well, with the consequent financial benefit going to clubs in the Championship.

ELITE WOMEN'S DOMESTIC RUGBY IN ENGLAND

Create a focussed Women's Premiership of seven clubs to provide a high quality training and competition experience for players

- 116** Women's Club rugby for the last few years has sat outside the Performance Pathway and communication between the RFUW Performance Department and the clubs has been poor. Following a domestic competitions review in 2007 with the Premiership and national Challenge clubs it has been agreed to focus resources on seven Premiership clubs so that each club can raise training and performance standards.

THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ACADEMIES

To develop the RFU Academy system to be the best in the rugby world

- 117** The first two phases of the development of the Academy system have been completed and significant improvements have been made to its operation and delivery. The third phase will now start with the signing of the new agreement with Premier Rugby and the introduction of the new form Academy licence agreement with effect from 1 July 2008. We believe we are now in a position to progress to achieving the objective of having the best Academy system in the rugby world.

To provide a continual stream of world class performers to all England sides

- 118** The primary aim of the Academy system is to prepare and develop players to compete to a world class standard in international test match rugby. We need to continue the process of the club-based academies becoming more selective in the number of athletes they take on with a real focus on players who have the opportunity and ability to play at the highest level.

- 119** The initial Academy model provided for the majority of the programme to be funded on a per athlete basis. This led to large numbers of athletes being brought into the system with a significant number that could not be defined as elite from a playing perspective. We have now revised our approach to funding so that the emphasis is on quality not quantity and the system is starting to deliver a stream of world class performers at all representative levels.

To reduce the dependence on overseas players within the Premiership by 20% over the Plan period

- 120** By producing a continual stream of English Qualified Academy athletes through the Academy system we should see a reduction in the number of journeyman overseas players being recruited by the Premiership clubs. There will always be a place and a requirement to contract high profile and talented overseas players which adds to the attractions of the Premiership and provides invaluable experience and knowledge to our young players. Under the new agreement with Premier Rugby clubs are compensated by the RFU for contracting a growing proportion of EQPs and we should therefore target a 20% reduction in the number of overseas players in the Premiership over the Plan period.

WOMEN'S ELITE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Integrate the Elite England Women's players into the Regional Academies to improve strength and conditioning and develop rugby skills

- 121** It is vital that elite female players are provided with quality opportunities for development and skills acquisition outside of the club environment. A pilot scheme has been run for this year for a number of players who were integrated into RFU Academy EPDG sessions. This pilot has proved very beneficial for the players in the scheme and has also been received positively by the Academies involved. We will now roll out this programme over the country during the course of this Plan.
- 122** We will identify the most appropriate delivery mechanisms for sports science and medicine provision for all players within the Performance programme. Currently sports science and medicine is primarily provided to our elite squad players by the EIS. These services include: strength and conditioning, nutrition, performance analysis, medicine, screening and sports psychology. It is vital that consistency of provision in this area is delivered to ensure that players are clear about where they go for these services so that they are delivered within a framework to match the needs of each player.

ELITE COACH DEVELOPMENT

The RFU to become regarded as a role model for Elite Coach Development and coaching excellence in the world of professional sport over the Plan period

- 123** Elite Coach Development is advancing globally and the aim is for the RFU to be at the forefront of that development. Over the period of this Plan we intend to develop our programmes further to make our best coaches even better and to provide a truly world class environment for them to learn and develop new skills that is considered as being the world benchmark in Elite Coach Development.

- 124** The *UK Action Plan for Coaching (2006)* provides a framework for developing the system that will take coaching in the UK forward towards the goal of being the best in the world by 2016. The RFU is one of the NGBs involved in both the development and delivery of coaching in the UK. As a result we have been asked to work within the framework as a trailblazer sport and to align our efforts and resources to the objectives of the Plan.
- 125** The implementation of Level 4 of the *UK Coaching Certificate* has been re-set in 2008 and the RFU is represented on the UKCC Level 4 Planning Group. The RFU continues to make a significant contribution to the development and delivery of the UKCC with Sports Coach UK, which is the agency given responsibility for developing Level 4 programmes. The UKCC endorsement of a one sport, three union (RFU, WRU, SRU) Level 4 coaching course is actively being pursued.

Increase the number of English qualified Head Coaches and Directors of Rugby in Premiership Clubs to 70% by 2012

- 126** Our Elite Coach Development programme is aimed at producing an increasing supply of skilled English qualified coaches trained to world class standards which should, over time, reduce the need for foreign expertise. As the Elite Coach Development process matures, we should set ourselves an objective to produce sufficient high quality English qualified elite coaches capable of fulfilling the Head Coach and/or Director of Rugby position in most Premiership clubs.
- 127** Although the RFU is not in charge of coaching appointments to Premiership clubs every effort must be made to influence club owners and CEO's to invest more in English elite coaching potential rather than relying on importing foreign coaching experience. Seven of the twelve Premiership clubs (58%) currently employ a foreign coach either as Director of Rugby or Head Coach. It is a reasonable target to aim at 70% of all Head Coach and/or Director of Rugby positions to be filled by English qualified coaches by 2012. There will always be a place for some foreign coaches of exceptional talent and experience in the English game and this is catered for in the setting of our target.
- 128** As the Championship becomes more professional it is hoped that it will provide a stepping stone for young coaching talent to prepare to become Premiership standard coaches. The development programme will now factor this requirement in.

Develop and introduce a regulated and licensed coaching structure within the Premiership and the Championship by 2014

- 129** Quality assurance within elite programmes is essential to ensure ongoing consistency and the maintenance of best practice. To this end it is planned to develop a regulated licensing scheme with the agreement and support of PRL, for those coaches operating in the Premiership and the Championship. It is envisaged that by season 2014 all coaches operating in the Premiership and the Championship will be qualified to Level 3 or above. Overseas coaches should be required to have the equivalent minimum coaching qualification from their home Union prior to joining a Premiership or Championship club.
- 130** This would result in all coaches in the top two professional leagues being licensed thereby ensuring the delivery of quality up to date coaching practice in professional rugby in England. Our target is to introduce the RFU licensed coaching system by 2014 for all coaches. CPD will be delivered to elite coaches by Elite Coach Development and to community coaches by Community

Coach Development. Licensing is proof of coaching currency and of the integrity of the coach - a coaching award is for life. A licence provides for quality assurance and, in theory, can be taken away. We propose that under our licensing scheme, all licenses should be renewed every three years to ensure up to date coaching currency.

WOMEN'S ELITE COACH DEVELOPMENT

Integrate the England women's coaching team into the RFU Elite Coach Development programme

- 131** The RFUW England squad coaches are well qualified and highly motivated. There are seven coaches with Level 3, 4 and 5 qualifications (1 at level 5, four at level 4 and 2 at level 3). They have been supported by the RFUW to complete their qualifications and are encouraged to develop their coaching skills. A number of these coaches have had the advantage of taking part in the RFU Elite Coach Development programme previously and have benefitted from that experience.
- 132** Through an open recruitment process we will continue to identify a number of quality coaches to work within the women's game and benefit from the Coach Development processes. Going forward we intend to fully integrate the development of women coaches into the RFU Elite Coach Development programmes so that a wider range of coaches can be developed.

ELITE REFEREE DEVELOPMENT

Secure agreement with fellow foundation Unions and the IRB to implement a Global Elite Referee Development programme to deliver a pipeline of international quality referees in each of the major countries

- 133** There are growing concerns about the future pipeline of elite referees on a global basis. There are also concerns that there is a lack of Elite Referee Development activity in many of the leading nations to address this longer term threat. Paradoxically, those countries that do not invest in Elite Referee Development actually benefit most as they will always have referees from those countries that do develop them for their international and cross border matches.
- 134** The RFU has tabled proposals to the Six Nations and IRB to seek agreement from the top 10 Unions that each of them invests an agreed percentage of its international TV and sponsorship revenue in a long term Elite Referee Development programme. This would preferably be from a top slicing of the central revenues of the major international tournaments such as the Six Nations, Heineken Cup, Tri-Nations and Super 14.

The RFU to increase the number of full time referees to eight by the end of the Plan period

- 135** The Elite Referee Development department currently comprises seven Full Time Referees (FTR) and eight Part Time Referees (PTR) making fifteen referees in total. Twelve of the fifteen referees operate at Premiership level and all fifteen have current European experience. Three of the fifteen are international referees on the IRB list.
- 136** Whilst this is a good performance compared to most other countries it is not considered to be sufficient for the development of the Premiership, European competitions and the Championship as it moves to become more professional. Over the Plan period we therefore intend to develop additional elite referees so that we have eight FTRs by the end of the Plan period together with appropriate increases in PTRs.

To have no less than three referees on IRB international match panel throughout the Plan period

- 137** Because of the policy being followed by the IRB, it is extremely unlikely that any Union will have more than four referees on the international list at any one time. For England to maintain its pre-eminent position within the IRB referee panel we need to have no less than three English qualified referees on the panel and have an Elite Referee Development programme in place to ensure a steady stream of replacements for those currently on the panel. A recruitment of further talented full time referees will be critical to achieving and sustaining this objective.

To have at least three referees officiating at RWC 2011 and RWC 2015

- 138** There are other factors that come into play in determining how many referees and touch judges we can have officiating at RWCs other than pure ability. On the assumption that there are no further restrictions on the number of officials allowed to progress to this level it is reasonable to set as a target three English referees officiating at both World Cups during the Plan period.

Maintain a minimum of four referees capable of undertaking European Cup and Challenge Cup play offs and finals

- 139** In addition to the above objectives in respect of international appointments we are also aiming to maintain a minimum of four referees capable of handling European Cup finals. We need to take a more active stance at ERC appointment meetings where English referees should be afforded as many appointment opportunities as possible based on their level of performance. The sharing of appointments between the six Unions needs to be augmented with quality tests for officials. We need to encourage ERC to appoint a person solely accountable for officiating in their competitions.

To develop increased numbers of Performance Reviewers, Referee Coaches, Fourth Officials, TMOs and Time Keepers over the Plan period

- 140** As the professional game has progressed at both club and international level it has become increasingly necessary to improve the quantity and quality of supporting officials. Our targets in this respect over the Plan period are to deliver three referee development managers, four TMOs and ten time keepers.

STRATEGIES AND PLANS

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY

Maintain a competitive structure to the International Tours Schedule throughout the Plan period

- 141** The IRB Tours schedule is periodically revised and extended to take into account the changing situation in the global game. It is important that the RFU maintains a competitive set of matches both from a commercial and playing perspective in the November and June windows. The current IRB schedule only covers the period through to 2011. This needs extending to at least 2016 to ensure a minimum planning horizon of eight years is given to all Unions so that this covers the usual period of TV agreements. In addition the IRB Tours schedule needs to be rolled forward an additional year every year so that there are always eight clear years of fixture commitments scheduled.
- 142** There has been growing concern in the southern hemisphere that the June tour matches have been losing value. The Working conference agreed to investigate the creation of a World Series concept to give real meaning to all tour matches and this is dealt with in the Tournament and Competitions section of this Plan. Should the World Series concept secure support from the major Unions, the IRB Tours schedule would need to be replaced by the World Series schedule.

Selection and management of the three EPS Squads under the Heads of Agreement

- 143** Careful selection and management of our top players is vital to the achievement of the PGB's joint objectives of having a successful England team and a viable and attractive Premiership competition. Three EPS squads (Senior, Saxon and U20) each containing 32 players will be selected annually in accordance with the terms of the new RFU/PRL agreement.
- 144** An individual annual programme will be drawn up for each EPS player by his respective England coach, in consultation with the player's club Director of Rugby, prior to the commencement of each season. The programme will include the player's preferred playing programme and his sports science programme covering fitness, psychological support, strength and conditioning, nutrition and medical management. A player tracking and information database is being developed to make the overall management of this information more effective.

Implementation of the Medical Protocol

- 145** The agreed Medical Protocol applies to all Senior EPS players. It will ensure that both England medical staff and the player's respective club medical staff make joint and informed decisions on a player's fitness and his readiness to play and train throughout each season. The final decision on when a Senior EPS player is medically ready to play rests with the Elite Rugby Director or Club Director of Rugby depending which period of the season the player becomes injured.

Lobby for a five year Six Nations Championship Fixture Schedule

- 146** It is important that all elements of our season structure are planned as far ahead as possible to give certainty to the professional game. A key element in this is the Six Nations tournament. We should work with our fellow Unions to establish a five year forward fixture schedule for Six

Nations matches which will include provision for two Saxons matches each year. As part of this longer term planning of the Six Nations we need to ensure that a fair share of late kick off times and Sunday fixtures are allocated to each Union and there is a sensible balance in this year to year.

England Saxons to be an integral part of the player development pathway

147 Having successfully redefined the purpose of the England Saxons Team as the finishing school in the elite players' development pathway this is now an integral part of the development of future world class athletes. Most Saxons EPS players will be developing through their competitive club programmes. These need to be supplemented by regular involvement from England coaches and technical staff underpinned with a competitive structure of international rugby to challenge them beyond the regular domestic programme.

England Saxons to participate in the Churchill Cup and its future post 2009

148 The Churchill Cup has developed from the initial concept of a tripartite tournament between the USA, Canada and England. It is now recognised globally as a major development competition and has attracted the interests of many Unions such as the SRU, IRFU, NZRU and UAR. As the main event of the England Saxons EPS programme this competition needs to be maintained and enhanced beyond 2009. We shall be looking to increase the number of participating Tier 1 Unions and working with the IRB to secure funding and resources to secure its longer term future.

Review and update our policy on sevens in 2009

149 Since the Commonwealth Games in 2006 we have been following a development policy for sevens squad selection. This policy sits rather uneasily with the commercial nature of the IRB Sevens Series participation agreement and the tournament hosting agreement. It is also unlikely to deliver the Sevens Rugby World Cup, a gold medal winning squad for the Commonwealth Games and, should sevens be admitted, for the Olympics.

150 We therefore propose to conduct a fundamental review of our sevens policy in 2009 so that we deliver on the objectives for sevens in this Plan – in particular our support for the IRB's Olympics initiative, our gold medal ambitions for the Commonwealth Games and the need for a commercially viable approach for the IRB World Series Sevens. This review will need to consider the following issues:

- i) How best to support the IRB's Olympics initiative;
- ii) A plan to win gold at the Commonwealth Games;
- iii) A plan to win the Sevens Rugby World Cup;
- iv) The player development needs of the Elite Rugby Department;
- v) The commercial aspects of sevens and the need to have a tournament winning squad;
- vi) The viability of hosting a sevens tournament at Twickenham in June in addition to the Middlesex Sevens in August;
- vii) The overall cost of the sevens programme and alternative use of such funds.

Develop a four year competition programme for women's rugby to include European competitions

151 In order to test players it is vital that there is a full and comprehensive playing programme that will allow opportunities for players to experience different styles of play, different refereeing and

under a variety of conditions. It is vital that the players have the opportunity to test themselves against the best players in a competitive environment on a regular basis in addition to playing in the Six Nations Championship.

To develop a four year international competition programme for women's rugby to include FIRA-AER competitions, IRB and international tours

- 152** In order to ensure effective planning during the World Cup cycles it is vital to have a long term schedule of test matches and international competitions not only for the England Women's Senior team but also for the A team, the U20 team and sevens squad. This programme should include the qualification rounds for the WRWCs and the WRWC 7s.

Complete a National Centre feasibility study

- 153** All of the RFU's representative teams over recent years have changed training and match venues on a regular basis. The senior England Team has used the Petersham Hotel (Richmond), Pennyhill Park Hotel (Camberley), Loughborough University, Bisham Abbey and Bath University since 1999. The National Academy programme was delivered at Bath University between 2002 and 2005, and more recently Bisham Abbey and Loughborough University.
- 154** Through a detailed consultation process with all potential stakeholders (schools, students and the community game) the RFU will evaluate the need for a National Centre for rugby. This will include the specific purposes, location, operation and costs of such a centre. This process will commence in 2009/10 to allow sufficient time for the new agreement between the RFU and PRL and the new Elite Rugby programmes created under its terms to bed in.

PROFESSIONAL CLUB RUGBY

To successfully implement and manage the new agreement between the RFU and PRL

- 155** The new agreement between the RFU and Premier Rugby signed in October 2007 is a ground breaking document enshrining the following key principles:
- i) A five year structured season minimising club and country overlaps;
 - ii) An effective EPS player management programme;
 - iii) An improved Academies structure;
 - iv) A commitment to player welfare;
 - v) The re-structuring of FDR as a 12 club league;
 - vi) An RFU funding system that focuses on clubs producing EPS and EQP players;
 - vii) A medical protocol for managing the medical issues of the EPS players;
 - viii) A provision for the joint funding of the PRA by the RFU and PRL.

New and improved administration systems will be required to be put in place to ensure full implementation of all aspects of the new agreement and to monitor performance going forward.

Maintain a rolling five year season structure for professional rugby in England

- 156** The new agreement includes, as a schedule, the structured season in England for the next five years. This is critical for proper forward planning and for the minimisation of clashes between club and international commitments. It will be important to ensure that this structured season is rolled forward one year every year so that we always have a full five years planned.

157 To make this rolling season structure as robust as possible, we do need to encourage both the Six Nations and ERC to produce five year forward plans for their own competitions. Historically there has been some reluctance to do this because of alleged concerns over the attitude of broadcasters. We believe that, as the relative value of rugby increases, there are advantages to broadcasters too in having scheduling certainty for matches.

Heineken Cup and Challenge Cup

158 In conjunction with Premier Rugby and our partners in ERC we should seek to develop further the commercial attractiveness of the European tournaments through improvements to competition structures, elimination of seeding anomalies and the reduction in the number of uncompetitive matches in both competitions.

Replacement of the EDF Energy Cup with a new Anglo-Welsh Cup competition

159 A new competition format for the domestic cup will be required after the end of the current contracts covering the EDF Energy Cup in 2009. Discussions are currently underway with the WRU, PRL and the Championship on various options to deliver a vibrant competition which would benefit the strategic aims of all stakeholders. The current lead option is for a competition which would include the 12 Premiership clubs, the top 4 Championship clubs and the four Welsh Regions and discussions have started within the PGB on this revised competition format. The PGB are required to make a recommendation to the RFU and PRL on the revised competition under their terms of reference.

Club stadium capacities and facilities

160 We need to establish whether it is possible to establish a fund, with external and Government finance, to provide significant sums of capital to enable meaningful investment in stadia development to be undertaken including the development of rugby specific stadia. As part of this exercise we would need to draw up, in conjunction with Premier Rugby, a five year plan for the development of the criteria for membership of the Premiership

161 We should also consider whether this fund should cover both the Premiership and the Championship clubs and what the respective shares of the fund's resources should be made available to the Championship clubs.

THE CHAMPIONSHIP

Secure live television coverage for the Championship and league sponsorship in conjunction with PRL

162 The RFU believes that the transition of FDR, over time, to a professional league of 12 clubs with improved competition formats and a playoff structure at the end of season would add significantly to spectator and TV interest. We believe that the Championship, with an exciting end of season format, will deliver an increased commitment from broadcasters to regular live coverage of Championship matches thereby underpinning the attractiveness of joint sponsorship of the Premiership and the Championship.

Develop additional competitions to deliver a minimum of 30 games per club each season

- 163** We believe that 30 games per season are required to deliver the necessary financial resources for Championship clubs. In a twelve club league structure this will require additional competitions to deliver the eight additional matches required over and above the 22 in a conventional league structure. It has been agreed that these additional competitions will be a new play off round covering promotion and relegation elements, an Anglo-Welsh Cup and an Anglo-Welsh Trophy.

Implement EQP and EQC schemes as part of RFU investment funding of the Championship

- 164** The RFU's policy for the funding of clubs at the professional level is designed to deliver strategic results for the game generally by encouraging the development of EQPs and EQCs. As part of the new arrangements covering the creation of the Championship it is proposed that an EQP Scheme and an EQC scheme are drawn up which will form part of the RFU's funding for the new professional league going forward.

Draw up and implement a facilities improvement scheme

- 165** The attendances at FDR matches over the last three years (excluding the relegated PRL club) have, at best, been flat. This is in spite of the improved quality of many FDR games particularly at the top end. We need to get attendances growing again and this, we believe, needs more focus delivering further improvements in quality, more TV interest and coverage with matches played in bigger and better facilities.
- 166** All this needs further investment by all stakeholders which we believe can only be achieved in a smaller, more focussed league. To facilitate the process of facilities improvement, a Facilities Improvement Scheme will be introduced as part of the new RFU funding agreement for the Championship where this element of funding can only be used for investment by clubs in improved facilities.

To introduce minimum criteria for membership of the Championship

- 167** To underpin the drive to improve facilities and increase spectator capacities and comfort, it is proposed that criteria for membership of the Championship are introduced so that targets are established over the Plan period for the improvement in facilities levels in all clubs in or aspiring to play at that level. Failure to achieve the minimum standards within the stipulated time scales could result in a club being relegated from the Championship.
- 168** Equally, any club seeking promotion from the National Leagues would be required, over a stipulated number of years, to achieve the minimum standards applying at that time. Failure to achieve such standards by the end of the allowed time period could result in that club being relegated from the Championship.

THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ACADEMIES

To encourage the promotion of Academy athletes within Premiership squads

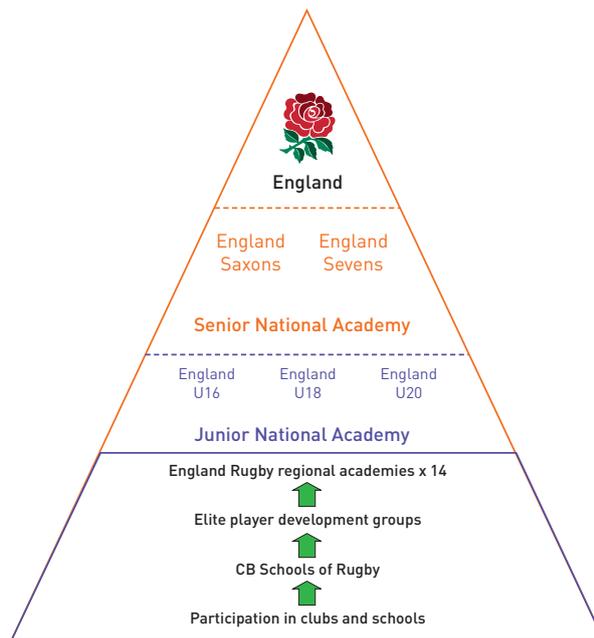
- 169** A key part of the Academy process is the provision, at the right level, of regular game time for Academy athletes. Ideally this will be provided within Premiership match day squads. In those cases where this is not being achieved, the new dual registration and loan scheme

arrangements will be used to loan out the player to a Championship club to secure regular game time for these athletes.

To deliver a robust talent identification process with Schools of Rugby ('SORs') and Elite Player Development Groups ('EPDGs')

- 170 In 2007/08 we amalgamated the CB Development Squads with the EPDGs to create the SORs which have a core skills curriculum within their delivery programmes. This has significantly reduced duplication within the talent ID process especially at the younger end of the system. We have also reshaped the National Academy Programme to become more team focused. Our National Academy Coaches now have an extended team role coupled with an individual skill / mentoring role.
- 171 The current player pathway is now as set out diagrammatically on the chart on the next page. The development pathway is now defined and logical. It runs from Schools of Rugby to the EPDGs then on to Regional Academies and finally to the National Academy. Going forward we have to ensure that the feed structures at the junior end are not compromised. There are too many draws on our elite young players and this is something which will be addressed within the age grade review which is currently being undertaken.

FIGURE 1 – ENGLAND PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY



To bring all age grade England sides from U16 to U20 under Elite Rugby from a player development perspective

- 172 The U16 England teams remain the responsibility of the ERFUSU through its Executive Committee. Whilst there are good reasons for this to remain the case there are also concerns that this does not deliver an integrated approach to elite development. The Age Grade Review will be tasked with reviewing this matter carefully so that the first stage in the England representative ladder should at least be influenced by the Elite Rugby Department and benefit from the resources and expertise within it to the advantage of the player and the ERFUSU.

Manage the new Academy Licence agreements to facilitate the identification and development of potential elite English athletes

- 173** As a result of the new Academy Licence agreements which have commenced in 2008/09, revised and improved arrangements will be put in place so that over the next eight years the pipeline of EQP talent continues to grow. On the basis that not all players will come through the player pathway from start to finish, the Regional Academies will be tasked with monitoring players who are either outside of the elite pathway or are late developers and the National Academy coaches will track these players through their club contacts. They will also consolidate the work that is being done at U18 level through the Regional Academies and identify a cohort of players to move through the National Academy process.
- 174** There is always the possibility of potential conflict within the Academy process between the longer term needs of the RFU and the Academy athletes and the shorter term needs of a Premiership Director of Rugby who will, in general, be looking from season to season. The new Academy License agreements will seek to minimise this area of potential conflict through the annual review process of each Academy.

Implement individual playing and development programmes for identified National Academy players

- 175** An annual playing programme will be drawn up by the club Academy Manager for approval by the Head of Elite Player Development (HEPD) for each nominated Academy athlete and identified elite U18 England player to ensure they are getting the right amount of rugby at the appropriate level. A standard diary will be agreed to keep this record. The annual programme will take into account and include the following provisions:
- i) At the end of each season the Academy Manager (or successor position) will nominate players to a screening/assessment camp which will take place at the end of July each year;
 - ii) An initial U18 conference squad will be identified and this group will play games in September, October, November, February and March of each year together with taking part in two training camps in the October half term period and over the Christmas period;
 - iii) This group of players will be reviewed periodically throughout the season but will form the nucleus of the U18 Six Nations Group which competes in the Six Nations festival each Easter and the annual summer tour to the southern hemisphere.

Consider expansion of the concept of 'dual registration' of players to underpin the players' competitive programme

- 176** The Academy system has successfully developed players physically, technically and tactically although more work needs to be done at all levels to improve on what has been achieved so far. Development of our players' game understanding has been hampered in the past by a lack of appropriate playing time for the 18-21 year olds in a number of Academies. The introduction of dual registration in the 2007/08 season has had a positive impact on the playing programmes of our young players and, over the Plan period, we should look at the pros and cons of expanding the 'dual registration' scheme to all relevant EQP's not just England Academy players.

To provide for the fitness testing of all athletes through the FAST protocols in Schools of Rugby, Elite Player Development Groups and Academies

- 177** Each Academy manager must ensure that all Academy athletes and identified elite U18 England players are tested through the Fitness and Anthropometric Scoring Template FAST protocols with the results recorded on EPAS or any mandated successor computer system. This will involve testing using the guidelines laid down within the FAST protocols which all Academy managers have agreed to.

Monitor all individual EPS playing programmes through EPAS or any successor system

- 178** A central register of players in the elite player development pathway will be developed within EPAS. This will include players involved in the Schools of Rugby, the EPDGs, Regional Academies and the National Academy. Each individual player's playing programmes will be monitored to ensure that all players in the system are getting the correct amount of competitive game exposure at the appropriate time. Each Academy Manager will provide quarterly player reports and assessments through EPAS for these players.

Allocate National Academy coaches to fulfil a team role together with a position specific skill role

- 179** We will continue to allocate National Academy coaches to fulfil a team specific role whilst retaining the mix of specialist skills which allows us to deliver on every position within the team. To achieve these we need to develop a more detailed coaching ladder.

WOMEN'S ELITE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Ensure effective access for coaches and support staff to elite women players

- 180** We will work with employers and players to ensure that our elite female players are supported with adequate training and rest time in the 12 month lead up period to the World Cup. Prior to 2006 World Cup, our players received additional funding to enable them to work a maximum of 4 days per week. This proved very successful and for the run up to the 2010 World Cup we intend to provide support for a longer period of time prior to the tournament to deliver more time off each week for the elite players.

Player Development is monitored effectively using EPAS and Sportplan

- 181** Our access to the elite female players is limited as the majority of them are in full time education or employment. It is vital that an effective monitoring tool is used to track both long term and short term player development. We intend to use *Sportplan*, an online diary, to identify issues and problems as they arise.
- 182** EPAS will also be used for all injury, fitness and related data and the number of coaches with access to the system will be improved and additional training for all coaches using the system will be provided. The RFUW database will be upgraded and transferred to RugbyFirst.

To deliver a fully functional player integrated pathway for women's rugby that maximises talent identification and development opportunities

- 183** We will seek to incorporate all girls' and women's talent identification opportunities where possible through Schools of Rugby, the EPDGs and the National Academy programme. We will provide opportunities for the development of the next generation of elite women players by

ensuring there is an appropriate player pathway and associated programmes. The RFU player pathway has been in place for several years although the developments at U15 and U18 are relatively recent. The pathway has proved to be robust and many players have come through the pathway from county and regional rugby. Recent additions to the pathway at U15 and U18 level have seen more opportunities for players at these age groups. The focus is on ensuring that players will develop as they move along the pathway because of opportunities rather than in spite of them.

ELITE COACH DEVELOPMENT

Provide long term succession planning to fill key coaching posts for England, Saxons, Sevens, U20, and U18 squads

- 184** We need to ensure that our best coaches are coaching our elite teams. The England coaching team must be the best coaching team available and the best prepared coaching team to deliver success. A 'depth chart' of elite coaches covering both team and specialist coaching roles will be maintained to identify that small number of coaches who have the ability to be considered for any England coaching role when one becomes available.
- 185** An identification, assessment and inclusion process will be created that must be both fair and objective. Coaching experts will be identified and elite players who have the knowledge, ability and desire to coach will be fast tracked into coaching.
- 186** Full time National Academy coaches are needed to provide our national representative teams at Senior, Saxons, U20, U18 and Sevens levels with the quality of coaching that helps prepare them for international competition. In addition, National Academy coaches are required to fill a specialist/positional skills coaching role to deliver elite coaching to identified squads and individual players.
- 187** National Academy coaches will meet on a regular basis to create a consistent approach, more effective communication and the sharing of ideas and development. A management team review, appraisal and development process will be put in place to support the Elite Department's philosophy of continual improvement.

Effectively disseminate England best coaching practice throughout all England teams

- 188** Fundamental to Elite Coach Development is the need for coaches to attend, observe and take part in coach development activities at national squad sessions. It is imperative that there are increased opportunities for coaches to observe national team training in order to facilitate coach development. Opportunities will be created for coaches to view England, Saxons, Sevens, U20 and U18 training sessions.
- 189** The elite national coaches will be encouraged to contribute to coach development, coaching courses and conferences and to write articles for the Technical Journal, Touchline and the RFU web site. A framework of playing and coaching will be developed for Attack, Defence and Conditioning so that the dissemination of best coaching practises in these areas can occur. A core curriculum of technical skills will be developed and disseminated throughout the development structure.

- 190** An Elite Coaches Conference will be scheduled every other year to stimulate coaching within the English professional game. This would need to attract high profile speakers/contributors from other unions, other team sports and Olympic sports. Topics would need to cover physical, technical, tactical and psychological developments in the game and in sport in general.

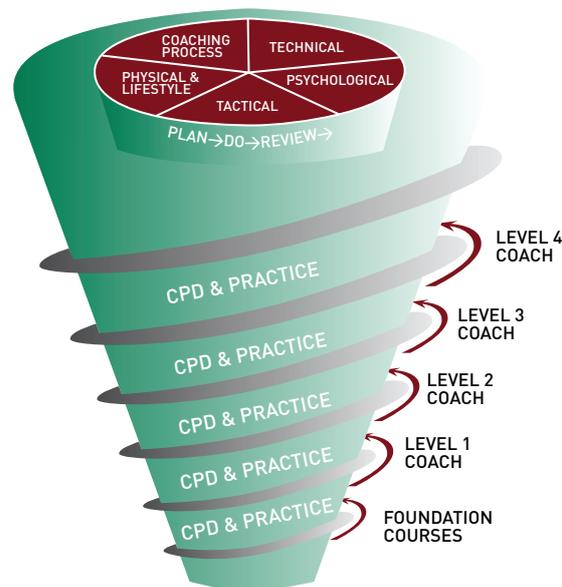
Ensure a continuous supply of developed elite coaches for Premiership and the Championship clubs

- 191** The aim is to add value to club coaching and provide a service that offers opportunities to club coaches for accelerated learning. Changes in behaviour and attitude can only be achieved through trust and respect. Respect needs to be earned through the delivery of quality programmes and the usefulness of the coach support offered. An annual programme for Elite Coach Development will be created offering opportunities for Premiership and the Championship coaches to develop.
- 192** The development of the Championship into a fully professional league will require a pipeline of developed coaches to fulfil the coaching roles. As a result, there will be an increased number of professional coaches that will want to be involved in the Elite Coach Development programme. An English Qualified Coach (EQC) scheme will be part of the new agreement with the Championship clubs to support the development of English coaches.
- 193** Development as a professional coach should take into account personal needs and the needs of those with whom contact is made on a daily basis. The emphasis will be on the development of coaching knowledge, along with the skills needed to perform the role effectively, such as time management, delegation, leadership and people skills. Self-analysis, reflective practice and review will be encouraged to allow coaches to identify their own needs for continuous professional development. Development will be holistic.

Fast track ex-elite players as potential elite coaches

- 194** Experienced players interested in developing a career in coaching when they retire are now offered the opportunity of taking the Professional Players Level 2 coach award which is a tailored course more relevant to their coaching needs. A transition course from elite playing to elite coaching will be developed to cater for the needs of a potential fast track group of ex-players. The group will consist of a small group of around ten individuals with high potential and the desire to become elite performance coaches. They will come under the guidance of the Head of Elite Coach Development and will receive development specific to their individual needs and be supported by specific mentors.
- 195** A process of Long Term Coach Development (LTCD) will be created. Coaching skill is acquired over many years of experience (see Figure 2), in a variety of situations and coaches will be given exposure to and experience of a range of different coaching situations. A small group of high quality experienced coaches will act as mentors to the fast track group of coaches. Appropriate training will be offered to these mentors. Coaching qualifications are important but only if they enhance coaching performance.

FIGURE 2 – RFU COACHING PATHWAY



Evaluate coach effectiveness and identify specific development needs for elite coaches

- 196** In order to have a structured plan for succession we need to evaluate coach effectiveness. This will require an assessment of observed coaching, in depth needs analysis, self-analysis, reflective practice and 360 degree feedback. Assessment against agreed national standards of competence will be developed and a template of core coaching skills will be established for Premiership coaching. The emphasis will be on what the coach should be able to do rather than what he should know.
- 197** There must be a steady flow of information to club owners and CEOs about what knowledge skills and competencies they need to look for in a Director of Rugby or a Head Coach. An Elite Coach Development Manager has been employed to help the Head of Elite Coach Development to facilitate the evaluation and development of coaches within the elite game.

Devise and deliver a world class Elite Coach Development programme

- 198** Innovative elite coaching programmes will be created so that coaches develop a view of the big picture and challenge existing coaching practice. Innovative coaches realise that there are few restrictions on them - they will have an open mind. They will be encouraged to do things differently and they will encourage players to do things differently, as long as things are clearly understood and a risk assessment made. Innovation comes from meticulous planning and requires analysis, articulation and action. The skills that distinguish the top coaches are in selecting, dissecting and selling new ideas. Innovation requires strategic vision.
- 199** The individual needs of elite coaches will be identified through personal interviews with elite coaches. Personal, individualised development action plans will be created that ensure the current and future elite coaches feel well looked after, are equipped with the skills to coach effectively and develop a leading edge in their coaching. Follow up meetings with the coaches will assess and monitor progress. The involvement of consultants, centres of excellence or renowned business colleges in conducting individual needs analysis, through the use of psychometric testing, management coaching in business and other sports and domains, will be further explored and developed.

- 200** Continuous Professional Development (CPD) will be offered to elite coaches. The CPD process is cyclical and starts by identifying a development need. Focussed education and development will then be undertaken to enhance knowledge which will then be applied. Reflection on the experience of applying the knowledge gained will identify new development needs and the cycle will repeat itself. Self-analysis, reflective practice and review will be encouraged to allow coaches to identify their own needs for continuous professional development
- 201** As the Elite Coach Development Programme continues to grow and develop, the Elite Coach Development Manager will help support and direct the programme. A coaching audit template of core coaching skills will be produced. Individual coaches can choose the most appropriate aspects to cater for their personal development needs. These will be categorised into sport specific (technical, tactical), sports science (physical, psychological) and sports coaching (pedagogy, management).

ELITE REFEREE DEVELOPMENT

Play a major role in assisting the IRB and major Unions to develop a strategic plan for global referee development

- 202** We will ensure that the Elite Referees Unit (ERU) shares its best practise with all iRB member Unions and whenever practical undertakes a referee development exchange programme that assists referees with very high potential to maximise their capability.
- 203** We will seek to encourage the IRB Referee Manager to arrange regular meetings between all major Unions. We will propose that an annual meeting takes place to which all Referee Managers in major Unions are invited and where global progress can be monitored and best practice ideas exchanged. We will also propose that a meeting of all northern hemisphere Referee Managers takes place a minimum of four times each year. These meetings should be organised either through the Six Nations or ERC.

Arrange six meetings annually with PRL to discuss Elite Referee Development Strategy

- 204** Under the terms of the new agreement with PRL we have agreed that, in exchange for PRL's commitment to part fund the Elite Referee Programme, PRL will be given regular input and involvement into the development strategy and the season to season issues arising with Elite Refereeing. This will be achieved through at least six meetings a year between the Elite Referee Department and PRL representatives.

Establish an ERU Development Squad to provide a development pathway for elite referees

- 205** One of the supreme challenges facing the ERU is the identification of individuals who are considered to have the potential to officiate in the Premiership. To underpin the elite referees succession plan, it is therefore imperative that the ERU exerts more influence at an earlier stage of their development. We propose to establish an ERU Development squad comprised of high potential referees with an ambition to become FTRs or PTRs and who have been identified with the necessary potential to officiate in the Premiership.
- 206** Former players from the England Rugby academies are a prime target should the right individuals emerge. In this environment such potential referees may be offered the opportunity to

circumvent the Society system, which can be off-putting to former players. Nevertheless, prior to entry, each individual will have to demonstrate and confirm his inherent ability.

Introduce individualised fitness programmes with regular monitoring on a six week cycle

- 207** We will ensure a varied and stimulating fitness programme is produced for individual referees utilizing the expertise available within the Elite Rugby Department. An ERU part time fitness and conditioning coach will be employed on a consultative basis for a period of twelve months only with responsibility for ensuring individual programmes requirements are addressed. The fitness and conditioning coach will also be responsible for all testing and monitoring throughout the year. Each referee will be given feedback on the tests performed in the form of a written report. Reports on the condition of our elite referees will be submitted to the IRB on a regular basis. Recommendations will be made to optimise the individual training programme based upon the test results.

Provide additional resources to develop touch judges for professional rugby

- 208** We will encourage experienced elite referees coming to the end of their active refereeing careers to consider becoming touch judges. We will also provide referees operating in the Championship with the option of touch judging at a higher level. These will probably be few in number due to the high demands placed on our officials operating within the Premiership and above.
- 209** We will encourage experienced retiring touch judges to take on the role of specialist touch judge coaches. Additional resources are required in this area and an additional touch judge coach has been appointed for the 2008/09 season. The intention is to assist our National Panel colleagues in the Championship by appointing one of the ERU coaches to operate twice monthly at that level in an effort to raise the National Panel's standards of touch judging and at the same time identify possible Premiership touch judges of the future.
- 210** We will provide an agreed job description and training programmes for our touch judge coaches. We will ensure that the coaches provide accurate and challenging feedback to all ERU touch judges throughout the season. They will participate in review meetings which will be held four times a year to evaluate the individual and overall performances of the touch judges.

Introduce an away day culture where Full Time and Part Time Elite Referees meet every six weeks

- 211** We will produce stimulating programmes for these away days that motivate the group individually and collectively. We will encourage the non full time referees to attend as regularly as their employment allows. It is anticipated that non full time referees will officiate at almost 50% of all Premiership fixtures next season. It is therefore important that they attend and share the away day culture that has in the past only benefited the full time referees.

Seek a greater share of appointments for RFU referees to the latter stages of ERC competition through ERC appointment meetings

- 212** An improved working relationship needs to be developed between the Referee Managers on the northern hemisphere Unions to ensure RFU referees secure a greater share of appointments to the latter stages of ERC competitions based on merit and performance. The ERC competitions provide an important phase of referee development and are a stepping stone for the top RFU referees between Premiership and international appointments.

