

# 7 TOURNAMENTS AND COMPETITIONS



# TOURNAMENTS AND COMPETITIONS

## INTRODUCTION

- 337** Following approval of the second Strategic Plan in 2005 the Tournament and Competitions Department was established with a remit to support all sectors of the game in the implementation of approved policies and strategies regarding the development of appropriate and sustainable competitions and to ensure that these competitions are managed and regulated effectively, for the benefit of all participants and stakeholders.
- 338** Competitions development and management will continue to be a critical factor in both the playing and commercial sustainability of all clubs, schools and colleges and for many will be the rationale for their involvement in the sport. Ensuring that the RFU takes a lead in all tournaments and competitions that our players, at all levels, participate in is a fundamental part of this Strategic Plan. A number of the strategies and plans relating to the professional game will require discussion and decision by the PGB under the terms of the new agreement with Premier Rugby. Similarly, a number of the strategies and plans for the Community game will require discussion and decision by the Community Rugby Standing Committee.

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## OBJECTIVES

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### INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS, TOURS AND EVENTS

*Reduce and eliminate conflicts between the international and club game*

- 339** Over the Plan period we must continue to ensure that the RFU's international programme meets our playing and commercial objectives, whilst ensuring that it complies with the new RFU/PRL agreement in such aspects as player welfare, rest and preparation periods, playing windows and the number of international fixtures. We must seek to ensure that we continue to reduce the conflicts between the International and club game to ensure the integrity of the game at both levels. This will include the finalisation of the outcomes of the IRB Global Season forum at Woking in November 2007.

*To secure, working with the IRB and the other major Unions, agreement on a viable World Series concept and a viable Tier 1 tours schedule post 2011*

- 340** One of the outcomes of the Woking IRB Forum was to investigate the possibility of introducing a World Series to protect and build the integrity of international tours and matches. The RFU, through the Tournaments and Competitions Director, will prepare and present proposals for a competition structure from both a playing and commercial perspective. In addition we must achieve a commercially attractive tours schedule post 2011 when the current schedule expires.

***Achieve financial viability for the Churchill Cup providing an income stream to its shareholders by 2012***

- 341** The Churchill Cup has been successfully developed as the leading 'A' team tournament in world rugby with a clear and growing profile. It also is a pivotal part of the Strategic Development Agreement between the RFU, USA Rugby and Rugby Canada. With its profile now established and with a new and valuable five year TV agreement secured with Sky, the objective is to make the tournament financially viable without RFU financial support by 2012 and to commence paying dividends to its shareholders.

***In conjunction with PRL and other ERC shareholders ensure a successful implementation of the strategic review of the European Cup competitions***

- 342** Following the conclusion of the new ERC accord, a review of both the Heineken Cup and European Challenge Cup has been undertaken by the ERC Board. The RFU and PRL have taken a lead role in the development of these competitions to improve the commercial returns to our clubs. As a result it has been agreed by the ERC Board that England and France should be guaranteed six clubs in the Heineken Cup with additional places being available to the winners of the each of the Heineken Cup and the Challenge Cup in the previous season, subject to an overall maximum of seven clubs from England or France. In practice, this means seven teams from the Guinness Premiership will almost always be competing in the Heineken Cup.

***Deliver World Class events at Twickenham and other venues for England teams, European competitions, national finals and representative fixtures***

- 343** We must continue to develop our expertise and experience in this area to ensure that the experience of playing and watching international rugby in England is world class at all times and at all venues. The matches included in the scope of this objective are all matches held at Twickenham and all matches for England Saxons, U20s and U18s staged around the country.

## **DOMESTIC COMPETITIONS**

***Implement revised competition structures to enable delivery of the Championship as a professional 12 club league below and supporting the Premiership***

- 344** In the past FDR has been either 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 FDR's position and role, together with the uncertainty over its future funding from PRL after the end of the LFA was resolved in the negotiations with PRL over the new RFU/PRL agreement. In this agreement, the RFU and PRL have agreed that FDR has an important role to play under the new structures being put in place. As part of this process FDR would become a league of 12 clubs supporting the Guinness Premiership and to be called the Championship. The levels of future Championship funding by the RFU and PRL would be determined following discussions with FDR on the implementation of the above policy position.
- 345** The objective is to devise the appropriate competition structures to enable this policy to be implemented and resolve the consequential changes for the supporting leagues. It has been agreed that all the changes necessary to implement the revised league structures should be put in place for the start of the 2009/10 season.

***Secure agreement with the WRU, PRL and the Championship on a new cup competition to replace the EDF Energy Cup in 2009/10***

- 346** The agreements covering the EDF Energy Cup competition expire at the end of the 2008/09 season. It has been agreed in principle that a new Anglo-Welsh Cup competition to replace the EDF Energy Cup should be established and played during the international windows to maintain the integrity of the Guinness Premiership. Agreement needs to be reached with the WRU, PRL and the Championship on the structure of the new competition which will probably include all Premiership clubs, the four Welsh Regions and four Championship clubs.
- 347** The playing and commercial viability of a second Anglo-Welsh competition involving teams from the Welsh Premiership and the Championship clubs who do not qualify for the Anglo-Welsh Cup will also be investigated.

***Implement the agreed recommendations of the Rugby Landscape project for the 2009/10 season***

- 348** The Rugby Landscape project has reviewed the competitive rugby framework at National Leagues level and below and the future of the National and County cup competitions following the end of the current sponsorship arrangements at the end of 2008/09. The project, following an extensive game wide consultation process, has established the most appropriate competition structures to maximise the playing potential of all clubs playing at these levels and ensure their sustainability beyond the end of the Plan period. The target for implementation of the new structures is the 2009/10 season.

***Create a competitive age grade structure for schools and clubs over the Plan period***

- 349** Identifying the competitions that are best suited to players in the 16-24 age grades is a key component of Community rugby strategy. This includes the delivery of appropriate age-grade competitions, schools competitions, FE and HE competitions as well as the integration of RFUW competitions into the RFU structure. We will therefore target developing a competitive age grade structure for schools and clubs that identifies and develops talented players whilst recognising the critical importance of retaining players beyond 18 years of age during the course of the Plan period.

***Deliver, in conjunction with the RFUW, effective competitions structures for the women's game***

- 350** We will assist the RFUW in creating a quality domestic competitions structure that underpins talent and player development objectives that assists the England women's team to win the Women's Six Nations and Women's Rugby World Cups on a regular basis.

## **LEISURE RUGBY**

***Increase the number of teams playing 'leisure' rugby events by a minimum 5% per annum averaged over the Plan period***

- 351** Leisure rugby has enjoyed significant growth over the last Plan period in most major rugby playing countries. There are a number of new 'brands' appearing in the rugby family, such as 'beach', 'tag', and 'touch' as well as the traditional 7's and 10's formats. We need to embrace all these formats from a playing, regulatory and commercial perspective. We will continue to

support this growth but encourage all leisure rugby activity to be channelled through our member clubs to strengthen participation and membership. We will develop proposals on how best to manage the success of leisure rugby over the next Plan period. Continued growth of 5% p.a. in leisure rugby events is being targeted for the Plan period.

***Ensure that the governance of all forms of leisure rugby is brought under the auspices of the RFU***

- 352** It is important that we maintain the position of the RFU as the sole governing body for rugby union and its leisure derivatives. Leisure rugby will require a light-touch approach to regulation to ensure it remains easy and simple to play and organise. We also need to ensure that the impact of leisure rugby activity works with and assists the traditional contact forms of the game so as not to compete for the leisure time of players in the future.

## REGULATIONS

***Ensure that all RFU Competition Regulations are implemented and observed***

- 353** Much work goes into the review, updating and improving of our regulations each year. Not enough thought or effort goes into communicating the changes and ensuring that they are implemented and complied with. We will introduce improved methods of communication of regulation changes to the game and devise systems to monitor compliance with the regulations. The integrity of our regulations structure relies on compliance so this will be a key task of the department over the Plan period.

***Ensure that the Criteria for the Premiership are updated each year. Develop appropriate Criteria for the Championship***

- 354** It is key to the commercial development of professional rugby that we set high standards for the facilities at professional clubs. The Premiership has had a set of Criteria for a number of years. These need updating annually to ensure that standards improve whilst providing an equitable base for the club promoted from the Championship.
- 355** A simplified and flexible set of Criteria for membership of the Championship will be produced. These will be developed by the end of 2008/09 together with the mechanics for their periodic review and updating.

***Draw up a salary cap scheme for the Championship***

- 356** It is essential that the Championship of twelve clubs is established on a sound economic footing. A key element of this will be the development of a salary cap scheme to ensure that payroll costs do not get out of kilter with the growth in revenues. It is the target to put the scheme in place by 2009/10 together with the audit and control procedures.

## REPRESENTATIVE TEAMS AND COMPETITIONS

***To ensure that a rolling programme of competitive matches is secured for the England Counties XV***

- 357** The England Counties XV is an important element of support for the County Championship in its current form. It also provides a non-professional representative team for the RFU to contribute

to the IRB's global development strategies. We will ensure that we maintain, ideally on a three year rolling basis, a competitive playing programme for the Counties XV that aligns with and has support from the IRB.

***Ensure that a competitive programme of matches is maintained for the age grade schools teams and the students team***

- 358** It is a key element of the player development pathway that we have competitive matches at both U16 and U18 levels. We aim to maintain a three year rolling programme of matches to enable effective planning and development at these age grades.

## STRATEGIES AND PLANS

### INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS, TOURS AND EVENTS

*Work with other Unions to finalise the World Series concept and the iRB international schedule up to 2019*

**359** A full analysis of the commercial viability of the proposed series will need to be undertaken and an agreed timescale and implementation programme established. We believe that the governance and ownership of the competition should be retained by the participating Unions. Once the timeline and principles of a World Series are agreed (or not) it is essential that a minimum eight year schedule of International matches and competitions is agreed and published. This is vital from both a commercial and playing perspective, enabling Unions to negotiate long term TV agreements and to plan over a period covering two RWCs.

**360** Argentina's results in RWC 2007 and their position in the iRB rankings require the international community to ensure they have a regular competitive programme. We will work with the iRB to produce clear proposals for their enhanced programme as well as seeking to deliver a framework for Tier 2 Unions that improves the quality and quantity of international fixtures they need to facilitate their development.

*Work with the iRB to align the Lions tour schedule with the principles agreed in the iRB Working conference and the terms of the RFU/PRL Heads of Agreement*

**361** The Lions is one of the most powerful rugby brands. It is also an important part of the international rugby schedule generating significant revenues for the SANZAR countries. However, its tour schedules need to evolve to work within the international framework of existing competitions and Working conference outcomes. The RFU will work with the Lions Committee to secure agreement with SANZAR to deliver on this objective. It is accepted that there are important commercial and historical issues to be considered but these must be balanced against the overall objectives of the playing programme.

*Work with PRL and other stakeholders to progressively develop the European competitions over the next five years*

**362** The full strategic review of European competitions required to be carried out in 2008/09 under the terms of the new ERC accord and the new RFU/PRL agreement has now been completed. The RFU and PRL have participated fully in this review and support the recommendations made to the ERC Board. Consideration has also been given to the structure of the competitions over the next five years to meet our goal of ensuring that the maximum numbers of Senior EPS squad players participate in the highest level of competition. The next priority is to agree a five year northern hemisphere structured season that co-ordinates the dates allocated to domestic and European competitions with the international calendar.

**363** One of the difficulties of the present ERC competitions is that participation in the Challenge Cup has considerably less playing and commercial value than qualifying in the Heineken Cup. As part of the ERC strategic review a full analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of all proposals has been undertaken, with the objective of significantly improving the viability, attractiveness and

competitiveness of the Challenge Cup competition. As a result, it has been proposed that changes to the knock-out stages of the Challenge Cup are made. The competition would still involve 20 teams in five pools of four but only the five pool winners would qualify for the quarter-finals. They would be joined by three teams from the Heineken Cup that were ranked ninth, tenth and eleventh after the Heineken Cup pool stages behind the eight quarter final qualifiers. We will continue to monitor the impact of these changes and advocate further developments if necessary.

- 364** With the future qualification and format issues resolved, we will work with ERC on other areas of the strategic review, including consideration of the following:-
- i) The playing of quarter-finals only at venues meeting minimum standards criteria (including capacities) or a move to neutral venues;
  - ii) The move of all semi-finals to neutral venues not automatically in the country of the 'home' semi-finalists;
  - iii) A planned and structured rotation of the venues used for the final between member countries.

***Develop proposals with USA Rugby and Rugby Canada on the next phase of development of the Churchill Cup***

- 365** The Churchill Cup was introduced in 2003 as part of a strategic alliance with USA Rugby and Rugby Canada. The competition is now well established in the International rugby calendar, has become a valuable TV property and has made a difference to the development of rugby in North America. The IRB has developed its Tier 2 competition strategy on the Churchill Cup model and invested in regional competitions to accelerate development in Tier 2 Unions.
- 366** Over the first six years of the competition, delivery and funding of the event has been driven by the RFU with some IRB support. It is important that the IRB continues to provide financial support to the Churchill Cup as a key part of the Tier 2 development strategy. The next phase of development of the competition is aimed at achieving financial self sufficiency and strengthening the local management input into the tournament. We also need to ensure that the USA and Canada play an active part in the competition's commercial and operational programme.
- 367** We need to reach agreement on the participating Unions on a rolling three year basis. The New Zealand Maori, Ireland A, Scotland A and Argentina A have all participated to date. We need to discuss the future participation of Wales, France and Italy. It is likely that one year in four the England Saxons will tour with the England Senior team so a replacement England team would be required. Discussions will be held with the Barbarians and consideration will be given to other England representative team possibilities.
- 368** We will also conduct a full review of the tournament format and structure to take into account the possibility of more than six countries participating. We also need to align the range of possible venues for the tournament with the strategic development priorities of the USA and Canada. We should also seek to secure IRB support for allocating ranking points for the Churchill Cup and other regional tournaments for those countries who field their senior teams in the tournaments but play against Tier 1 A teams.

***Continue to lobby the IRB to adopt a process of awarding the hosting of RWC Tournaments on an allocation basis rather than via competitive bids***

- 369** The RFU has put forward proposals that would eliminate the need for a costly bidding process, and would ensure the hosting of RWCs is planned for five RWCs ahead – two definite and three indicative. The proposal takes into account the need to ensure that commercial returns over the period are robust but also provides for tournaments to be hosted in new developing markets in support of the IRB's strategic plan and by joint Union bids in traditional rugby countries that individually are too small to host an RWC on their own.

***Work with FISU, the IRB and SRFU to examine the feasibility of a Student World Cup on a 4 year cycle commencing in 2012***

- 370** The Students World Cup has been a very successful competition but a change to the Union's performance pathways has created challenges for the positioning of this competition. Before considering participation and/or hosting we need to evaluate the demand and appropriateness of the competition and then make effective decisions on that information.

***Review the contracts and commercial terms for the hosting of England representative games at nominated grounds***

- 371** Over the past few years we have created a significant market for England representative games, increasing revenue and crowds. We need to look at the next stage of this strategy to incorporate increased commercial commitments to RFU sponsors, as well as increasing revenues from the fixtures. A full review of the objectives for staging these fixtures such as elite development, moving the games around the country, securing a financial return will be undertaken in consultation with the Elite Rugby and Commercial Departments.

## **DOMESTIC COMPETITIONS**

***Develop the support package and structures to support the Championship***

- 372** The new competition structures for a twelve team Championship will enable clubs to build their playing and organisational infrastructure to prepare for and be competitive in the Premiership should they gain promotion. Closing the playing gap can only be achieved by focussing the competition on quality and quantity of fixtures and this will be a key element of the new competition structures. Long term planning is also critical if the clubs in the Championship are to attract the investment required to meet the challenges of professional rugby. The first step in that process will be to agree the 'structured season' for the Championship on a five year rolling cycle.
- 373** If the league is to deliver a genuine opportunity for clubs to aspire to the next level of competition, we need to develop minimum standards criteria for membership of the Championship. Proposals for these minimum standards criteria will be developed in consultation with the Championship clubs and take into account the Criteria for membership of the Premiership and the RFU's National Facilities Strategy.
- 374** The RFU and PRL have agreed to provide continued funding for the clubs that will form the new Championship. PRL will provide a contribution of £1m p.a. and seek to extend the Guinness sponsorship of the Premiership to include the Championship too. The RFU will provide increased funding for the Championship linked to EQP and EQC schemes as well as funding to assist in the development of improved facilities.

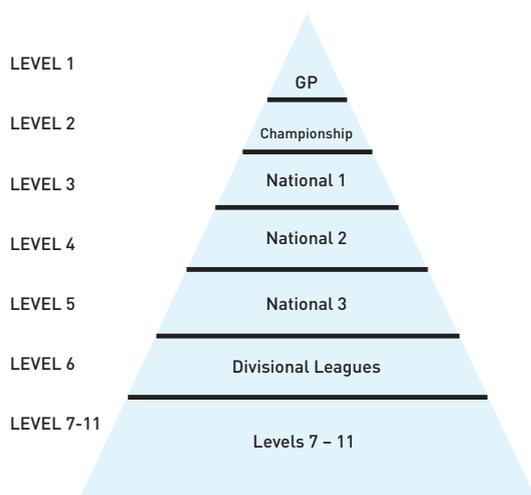
**375** A key element to the successful development of the Championship will be the introduction of a salary cap mechanism to ensure that costs do not outstrip the growth in revenues. The salary cap for the Championship will be administered by the RFU and independently audited on an annual basis.

**Implement the outcomes of the rugby Landscape project**

**376** Over 7,500 individuals responded to the 'Rugby Landscape' on-line questionnaire generating a substantial data base of information on how best to further develop and improve our competition structures. Following the two day Capgemini Forum proposals emerged for evolutionary development that were taken back to the game via a series of eleven roadshows. The final proposals envisage that were presented to and approved by Council envisage the following league and cup structure:

- i) The National Leagues to include Levels 3 to 5 and will be titled National One, National Two and National Three;
- ii) The National Cup competitions, National Trophy and Intermediate Cup, will be discontinued at the end of season 2008/09;
- iii) National One (level 3) to be single league of 16 clubs playing 30 league matches;
- iv) The existing league pyramid to be retained at Levels 3 to 6;
- v) Leagues at Levels 4 (National Two) to consist of 16 clubs playing 30 league matches in a season;
- vi) Leagues at Levels 5 (National Three) and Level 6 (Regional One) to be 14 team leagues playing 26 league matches;
- vii) Introduction of National Championship Finals at Levels 4 to 6 to determine National Champion club at each level;
- viii) Introduction of Reserve leagues at Levels 3, 4 and 5 with end of season National finals;
- ix) DOCs to investigate the various competition models and options for League Rugby at Level 7 (Regional Two) and below and make recommendations to the Rugby Landscape Task Group and Competitions Sub-Committee;
- x) Subject to (ix) investigate the potential for County cups at Level 7 and below to be the qualifiers for the National Senior Vase and the National Junior Vase knock-out rounds;
- xi) The length of the season for club competitions should be 35 weeks, normally commencing on the first Saturday in September, and a 5 year 'rolling' structured season should be introduced to assist future planning.

**FIGURE 10 – RFU CHAMPIONSHIP AND NATIONAL LEAGUES: STRUCTURE**



- 377** Working groups have been established to implement all the approved proposals of the Rugby Landscape project including specific areas relating to Regulations, Reserve team leagues and Finance. In addition a task group has been established to review the County Championship competitions. Consideration will be given to the County Championship becoming either a voluntary competition, a level 5 and below competition or another format altogether. The task group will take into account the problems associated with the available playing window at the end of the season and the need for all our competitions to aid the sustainability of our clubs.
- 378** Once the revised competition structures have been determined and approved it will be important to produce a five year structured competition season as has been achieved for the Premiership. This will be a challenging task but the benefits to the game in terms of forward planning will be substantial.

***Monitor and review all age grade competition structures from U11 - 18***

- 379** We will put in place a process of identifying the objectives of every competition in the U11 – 18 age range together with regular monitoring, evaluation and review to determine whether the competition objectives are being met. The RFU must take a lead in ensuring that all competitions provide a positive experience for players. If necessary we should take greater control of competitions that fail to meet their objectives on a regular basis and/or create new competitive opportunities where there are gaps in existing provision.
- 380** We will work alongside existing partners and sponsors to create school competitions that meet the needs of players and their schools at every age/ability level. Our competition structures should handle schools that only play once or twice a season right the way up to the top independent schools. At this level we must balance creating a competitive environment for players to display their skills with encouraging participation. The Daily Mail Schools Cups straddle both objectives but some top schools and smaller state schools do not enter for differing reasons. Reviewing the competitions objectives and structure will help to provide clarity and purpose to this important area of our competitions programme.
- 381** We should also work to engage all 3,000+ ERFSU members to become involved in competition structures. Part of this process must acknowledge the difficulties faced by one-term rugby schools and schools where rugby is not established and has to be played outside lessons. Our competitions must appeal to all sectors of the rugby playing schools community.

***Develop specific competitions for state schools based on the School Sport Partnership Network***

- 382** This is an area where rugby must compete with other sports to ensure we increase our presence in the state school curriculum. We will develop specific competitions for state schools based on the School Sport Partnership Network in line with the Government Schools Competition Strategy. Successful models have been developed in the Midlands that could be developed in other regions of the country.

***Review and develop club competitions at U15 to U19 levels that encourage retention into the adult game***

- 383** Competitions are a proven retention tool and further developments in age grade competitions will be investigated and, if appropriate, implemented. The National U17 competitions have been hugely successful with over 400 clubs now competing annually. The U15 and U19 age grades

may well benefit from an enhanced competitive structure and this will be evaluated over the Plan period.

#### ***Develop the competitions structures for students to encourage retention and participation***

- 384** The student sector is a key area of the Rugby Journey to achieve player retention and we need to ensure that the competitions structure provides opportunities for the aspirational, social and occasional player. The existing competitions have a large number of blank weeks throughout the season and we need to work with BUSA and other students organisations in developing students competitions to provide rugby throughout the season.
- 385** We will also seek to develop more playing opportunities for students throughout the year, using non-traditional formats and timings. Reunion festivals will be targeted as will opportunities for players at their home clubs in September, December and Easter. We will also target inter mural and inter collegiate competitions.
- 386** We will work alongside HE and FE establishments, the Armed Forces and clubs to create new cluster-based age grade competitions. Links with clubs will be critical to this area of retention to ensure that students who have graduated and stay in the same area have firm links established with the local club. We will also work to provide competition links between clubs and HE/FE to ensure continuity of participation beyond student institutions.

#### ***Work with the RFUW to develop the competition structures for women***

- 387** We will assist the RFUW to deliver a well regulated and safe domestic competition programme for all levels and age grades of the game, ensuring a positive experience of the game of rugby for all that participate. We will include the women's rugby competitions in all our regulation reviews, calendars, handbooks and communications. By including all RFUW competitions in regulation reviews we will be able to provide consistency and shared expertise in competitions development and management. This will be facilitated by the integration of the RFUW competition staff and Volunteers into the RFU competition delivery process over the course of the Plan period.
- 388** We will work with the RFUW to develop women's competition structures to ensure an integrated approach to coaching and club development that give appropriate opportunities for improvement in the quality of the women's game. We will develop appropriate local competitions structures that reflect the differing levels of abilities across the women's game.

## **LEISURE RUGBY**

#### ***Provide an RFU framework within which all forms of leisure rugby can be effectively regulated***

- 389** Leisure rugby, in all its formats, is growing rapidly with a number of external organisers and sponsors. To ensure our objective of bringing all forms of the game under RFU governance, we need to provide a regulatory environment that encompasses all formats of the game. This will need to be light touch and meet the requirements of minimal regulation to reflect the leisure and casual aspects of the sport. We will also examine the branding and management aspects of leisure rugby as part of this process. Whilst we will seek to ensure that leisure rugby is developed in conjunction with our member clubs we must also recognise that players may just want to participate in a modified leisure version of the game.

***Develop the RFU Leisure Rugby Delivery Team and resources to ensure national coverage through regional delivery***

- 390** The growth in leisure rugby activities is stretching our resources in terms of staff and budgets. We will review the existing staffing and resource allocation and consider formalising the usage of external delivery companies. Several commercial operators have now been established in delivering leisure rugby activities. We will continue to work with them to meet the demand being requested from the game to support leisure rugby activities. We will also review their role in the context of the governance issues covered earlier and the overall resourcing issues.
- 391** We need to create effective methods of website communication for leisure rugby event support in the areas of event registration and guidance, competition management and signposting for resource support. Effective communication is vital for the organising and promotion of leisure rugby activities. The iRugby project is addressing many of these issues and will need to be expanded in phase two of that project to meet fully these needs and requirements.
- 392** The current playing membership does not recognise the leisure rugby player. We need to identify the most feasible method of recording leisure rugby participants without detracting from the unregulated nature of leisure rugby activity. When this has been resolved, future RugbyFirst and website developments need to incorporate, in a user friendly way, the information relating to leisure rugby participants.

***Create recognised national branded programmes for regional and local delivery***

- 393** We will create more centrally managed leisure rugby playing projects that will create a national focus for participation but be delivered on a regional basis. We will seek to reduce the number of one off leisure rugby events to increase the effectiveness of promotion and sustainable participation opportunities. This will also deliver clearer commercial opportunities for sponsorship and merchandise that could generate additional resources for development.
- 394** A review of RFU delivery across all departments will be undertaken to establish a central resource for departments to utilise and eliminate the current duplication of promotional activities. We will seek to provide a clear promotional platform to support leisure rugby events and to demonstrate RFU leadership in this area.

***Deliver a series of inner city leisure rugby events over the Plan period***

- 395** Leisure rugby formats are ideal for introducing rugby into places where high population densities exist and where playing facilities and opportunities are limited. The casual nature of these formats is also helpful in breaking down any social barriers which at the same time providing a high quality experience. We will develop and deliver a series of inner city events across the country over the Plan period to provide playing and promotion opportunities.

## **REGULATIONS**

***Monitor and evaluate dual registration regulations in order to increase the game time for England Academy players and England U20 players***

- 396** The introduction of the dual registration scheme for England Academy players has seen a

marked increase in playing opportunities for these players by enabling them to develop through playing competitive league rugby at the most appropriate level. The benefits of this scheme will be seen over the period of the Plan with more young talented players being exposed to competitive rugby. Consideration should be given to extending the dual registration process to improve flexibility and playing opportunities for professional players.

***Ensure the compliance of member clubs with all regulations, including Government regulations such as those on work permits***

- 397** There are a number of regulations where compliance by member clubs is not universal. We will put in place a review process each year that identifies those regulations where compliance is patchy. All clubs not complying should be contacted, in the first instance, to secure compliance. Any regulations that are deemed unnecessary will be referred to Governance for review and withdrawal.
- 398** We will ensure that the rules on foreign workers of all types are enforced. The migration of sports people is now a global issue and the RFU must work closely with key stakeholders to determine how best the movement of foreign players in England is controlled for the overall benefit of the game.

***Continue the process of de-regulation where appropriate at Level 5 and below***

- 399** We will continue with the policy of removing and/or reducing the barriers to participation at the lower levels of the game created by regulations whilst ensuring that clubs maintain a structured and competitive fixture list. By understanding the purpose of competitions at Levels 5 and below we will ultimately help identify the appropriate level of regulation required within the Community game.
- 400** In Youth and Mini rugby we will seek to remove all barriers to participation created by regulation while ensuring that Youth and Mini players develop their skill set to prepare for adult rugby. In conjunction with the Player Development Committee, Continuum Review Group and ERFUSU Governance it is essential that the regulations reflect the objectives of Mini and Youth rugby union in England.

***Ensure the effective management of the Premiership minimum standards and the implementation of agreed minimum standards for the Championship***

- 401** The monitoring and determination of minimum standards is a key strategic issue in the ongoing development of the elite competitions. It is important that we continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure a fair and reasonable structure that also raises the quality of the facilities for spectators, players, medics and other stakeholders of the Guinness Premiership and the Championship.
- 402** The standards set are aimed at being appropriate, clear and unambiguous, identifying priorities as necessary whilst giving clear guidance on what is required of PRL and the Championship. It is therefore vital that the criteria are continuously reviewed in order to maintain and improve the business, facility and operating standards appropriate to the industry.
- 403** The effective management of the minimum standards criteria and the associated audit

programme will provide a tool for improving standards and applying appropriate sanctions in the case of non compliance. The integrity of the audit is fundamental in the minimum standards being adhered to and therefore the most appropriate independent auditors must be reviewed and appointed through a tendering process.

## REPRESENTATIVE TEAMS AND COMPETITIONS

### *Work with the IRB on the development opportunities for the England Counties XV within the IRB competitions development strategy*

**404** We need to open discussions with the IRB on what opportunities going forward there may be involving the England Counties XV and Lower Tier 2/Upper Tier 3 Unions that would help in the development of both and dovetail into the IRB's programmes. Although we have been trying to work with the IRB on this for a number of seasons, we now need to be slightly more forceful in bringing the England Counties XV onto the IRB's agenda.

### *Produce a robust rolling three year playing programme for the England Counties XV alongside a review of its effectiveness*

**405** The England Counties XV was established in part to support and encourage participation in the County Championship. It has grown to have a wider role in supporting the IRB's Tier 3 development strategy and providing competitive matches for the 'amateur' sides of the Six Nations countries. It is probably time that we reviewed our strategy with this team to assess what impact they have had on the Community game against the following key indicators:

- i) Value for money;
- ii) Attractiveness to players, supporters and sponsors;
- iii) Impact on administrators;
- iv) Relevance to existing competitions structures;
- v) Impact on the club season;
- vi) Quality of rugby delivered,
- vii) Relevance to elite player development.

**406** We will continue to produce a robust three year rolling programme which will include the summer tour and provision for matches against the Six Nations amateur teams within the agreed budget parameters. The number of amateur teams is growing with France, Scotland, Wales and Ireland all now having an amateur representative side. We will discuss with our fellow Unions whether it would be better to have an amateur competition going forward rather than the current series of one off matches.

**407** We will also review the eligibility criteria for selection and participation in the England Counties XV and its match programme. The criteria as it stands has to date worked successfully, but if an amateur competition were to evolve this may have to change. We will work with other Unions to agree standardised eligibility criteria that will enhance the value of these matches.

### *Review the England Students XV competitive programme*

**408** We are nearing the end of our first year after integrating with the Universities. A review process is taking place this year to produce proposals on improved and clearer structures and to confirm the status of the England Students programme in the player development pathway following the

separation from the Elite Player Pathway. The development pathway within Community rugby has also not been properly identified and we need to establish clearer guidelines to deliver a successful aspirational programme for student players.

- 409** It is important that we produce a three year rolling programme for the England Students XV with a robust budget taking into account player, coach and management development. FIRA/AER is at the forefront of match and festival organisation for students' teams. We will be seeking participation in more FIRA/AER tournaments as well as continuing with the stand alone fixtures such as England Students v France Students that currently take place.

***Undertake full review of role and purpose of the age grade teams at National, Divisional and CB Level***

- 410** The SSY and Age Grade Reviews made recommendations on the player development pathway from the Schools of Rugby at age 13 up to the Regional Academy structure at age 18 and above. The management of representative teams in the Community game rests with the Tournaments and Competitions Department through their delivery of age grade competitions and tournaments. Included in the pathway are the England U16, U18 (AER) and Students squads.
- 411** It is proposed that a full review of the role and purpose of these teams should be undertaken, in the context of the requirements of the elite player development pathway and the opportunity for players to play at a higher representative level. The option of developing the role of the Playing Development Sub-committee to form an advisory group to the Elite Rugby Department, the RFU and the PGB will be considered.
- 412** It is important that we continue to review our work in this area from both a development and performance perspective. Primary considerations will be the talent identification process linked into the academies but also the role of the volunteer in the development pathway. We need to continue to work with the IRB/Six Nations/FIRA-AER to develop robust dynamic age grade competitions that meet the development requirements of our potential elite players. This is an area that needs constant monitoring if we are to ensure that the needs of our aspirant players are met by International competition.

***Establish the Youth Structured Season on a three year rolling basis to assist performance and development planning***

- 413** The Youth Structured Season is important to all sectors of the youth game so that we manage the conflicts and pinch-points between the participation and performance objectives. Long term planning, as in other areas of the game is critical in this regard and a minimum rolling period of three years is desirable. We will develop guidelines on both the over playing and under playing of age grade players. The Youth Structured Season is a key building block in ensuring that players of all abilities obtain the right amount of rugby for their own individual development needs. Producing a robust plan for the Youth Structured Season will ensure the balance between over and under playing is recognised.
- 414** As we develop our talent identification systems more effectively, the need for Divisions as part of the selection process will require evaluation. The present system has suited the process to date but may not be relevant for future generations of gifted and talented players. We will look to develop the Loughborough and international camps and support age grade camps, similar to the Craven week and the ARU National Championships. The concept of training camps has worked very well for the U18 age grade and could now be developed at other stages in the performance pathway.