NORTHUMBERLAND RUGBY UNION

Patron: HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND
President: Noel Mather

24th September 2024

Dear Club Chairperson / Secretary
(cc Club Representatives for Information)

Northumberland Rugby has endured a turbulent period where the relationship between club and county has not been as it should. Without going back over history and in an effort to move things on in a positive way, as Club Development Director for Northumberland I would like to take a look at how we can improve that relationship and how we can improve dialogue between clubs, with the RFU and the Falcons. We have to acknowledge our game in Northumberland is not enjoying a 'heyday' and that post covid with a change in landscape, focus and priorities of players and volunteers, many of our clubs are struggling for playing numbers, revenue to maintain facilities and volunteers willing to assist all of which, when collected together, is inhibiting growth and in some cases causing directors and chairs sleepless nights.

The question is how we can make a start in changing that narrative. As a 'new' Board at Northumberland we would like clubs to introduce a new role on their Board or Executive Committee. I would like to share my thoughts with you on how this can be achieved.

I would like you to nominate a 'director' or a person who is active in your club (and is aware of all the day to day issues and problems of running a rugby club) as a Club Development Officer. That person can act as a liaison between the club and myself with the aim of developing good dialogue and also meeting periodically with others in that role to discuss the following:

- School to Club Rugby
- Funding Streams
- Facilities and Improvement grants
- Volunteer events

The meetings will be attended by RFU Club Development Officer(s) and a senior representative of Newcastle Falcons, referees and (hopefully) school representatives.

If we were all in agreement I would divide the discussions between North and South enabling a group of representatives that will have time to discuss their club needs, their issues and offer help where assistance or a steer is needed.

Throughout our clubs I am assured there are people in place who have extensive knowledge of our game and business and by utilising that capability I feel there will be an answer to any issue or development need that may be raised.

If we were to achieve the above (and I am informed that we would be the first to attempt such a group), together we can work collaboratively to ensure continuous improvement for the good of all.

I feel that the game engagement statistic below articulates the struggles that we are all now experiencing and the requirement for the role I am proposing:

Rugby has also dropped from the 4th most engaged sport in the 18-24 age range down to 25th over the past few years (Ernst & Young Report).

If you could reply to me by **Friday 11th October** (email: clubdevelopment@northumberlandrfu.co.uk) with your thoughts and view on this proposal I would be grateful.

Kind regards
Keith
Keith Atkinson
Director of Club Development for Northumberland Rugby

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