Northumberland Rugby Steering Group to coordinate school to club projects

3pm 24/08/2024 Newcastle Flacons East Wing meeting room.

Attendees:

Keith Atkinson (KA): Director Club Development for Northumberland Rugby

Mel McGee (MM): CEO Newcastle Rugby Foundation / representing Newcastle Rugby Foundation Scheme

Gavin Beasley (GB): Operations & Delivery Manager Newcastle Rugby Foundation / representing Newcastle Rugby Foundation Scheme

Jim Coulson (JC): Trustee Northumberland Rugby Trusts

Liam Nicholls (LN): RFU Regional Club Development Officer

Ash Smith (AS): RFU Club and Coaching Development Officer/ Representative Coastal Partnership Scheme

Steve Fear (SF): Director Wallsend RFC representing North Shields/ Wallsend /Northern Axis Scheme.

Rob Snow (RS): Representing Northumberland Schools

Sue Atkinson: Minutes (representing Claire Sharpe Northumberland RFU Administrator who was unable to make the meeting)

Apologies:

Claire Sharpe Northumberland Administrator

Minutes

Overview:

- KA gave a comprehensive overview of his role, his vision and strategy for the 'Club Development' arm of Northumberland RFU.

  A lot of learning from Berwick RFC who have had Dougie Hall in place for a number of years now. When speaking to Dougie, Keith noted a comment he made which really resonated... "Without me, this place would not be here". This is a telling statement and demonstrates the need for support in an ongoing capacity for the game.

- This meeting was the first step in creating/developing a NRU school to club programme which will benefit all clubs in Northumberland. It is imperative that these type of schemes are initiated in the 2024/25 season, years 2 and3 will look different
- Transition is imperative to the success of any programme like this and having a 'Friendly Face' to link the club and school is vital.
- Coordinating all the activity across NRU is also a key aim to avoid duplication and get the maximum amount of benefit for ALL clubs across the County.
- Currently NRU is not feeling the stabilisation or growth in the game that was communicated by the RFU in the 'Pre Season 24/25 Briefing Document'. It was felt that a decline was more appropriate.

LN added to that background.

Latest statistics across the whole game from Electronic Match Cards showed the following:

- The average squad size to run a single team now is 46 (Down from 54 post covid)
- The average amount of game a player plays across a season is around 12-13, so there is decreased commitment contributing to the above.
- So although a decline may be felt... we need to bear in mind that we need increasingly more players to run a single team now and this has a knock on effect to lower team rugby.
- 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).

MM Falcons scheme (Please see attached document for list of clubs involved)

- Falcons overarching theme is to 'Support the recruitment and retention at clubs by...'
    - A more targeted approach across all clubs (Similar age ranges to develop together).
    - Work with schools on really developing links with their local club.
    - Added value projects at both primary and secondary level to support the overall CB strategy.

  Actions : SF.LN & MM: Falcons Scheme to seed North Shields/ Wallsend /Northern Axis Scheme.

  AS. MM: Falcons Scheme to seed Ashington involvement in Coastal Project

- There is a 13th club who applied to the trust, but the support required for this club is altogether different and will be dealt with on an individual basis.
- The Newcastle RGS School Rugby Manager Post has been filled with Charlie Maddison and it has been agreed that Charlie or a representative should be part of the group as a key deliverer in the County.
- Gosforth RFC are doing their own thing too along with Next Generation Sports Camps and as above a representative should be invited to the group to coordinate planning and avoid duplication of effort where possible.

  Action : MM: Falcons team to seed West End U11 side – continual development separate project required

- A marketing strategy was discussed with the following actions agreed

  Actions: MM: Falcons: Develop and produce Generic Flyer for transition events

  MM. Falcons/AS: Produce 60 second promotional video to support school to club rugby

  Rob Snow (Schools Rep) pointed out that Rugby is now on the Northumberland School Games Organiser (SGO) Calendar thanks to the efforts of Gavin Beasley. This is

a big step forward and now means 'Rugby is on the Menu' for teachers in the overall calendar as an option. This hasn't been so in the past.

Action: RS: To introduce rugby on the SOG calendar at the head of P.E meeting

- Young Leaders and Referee Awards are very important in this process and schools are happy to support these. We need to ensure they are flagged early though with the relevant people, Ash Smith will be looking at this going forward.

Summary of Actions:

SF.LN & MM: Falcons Scheme to seed North Shields/ Wallsend /Northern Axis Scheme.

AS. MM: Falcons Scheme to seed Ashington involvement in Coastal Project

MM: Falcons: Develop and produce Generic Flyer for transition events

MM. Falcons/AS: Produce 60 second promotional video to support school to club rugby

AS.GB: Produce school/event calendar for school to club schemes

MM: Falcons team to seed West End U11 side – continual development separate project required

GB: To inform Gosforth RFC of decision.

RS: To introduce rugby on the SOG calendar at the head of P.E meeting

Next Meeting; **25/09/2024 Newcastle Flacons East Wing meeting room, 3p.m.**

Action:

MM/KA: Invite representative of Next Generation Sports re Gosforth Scheme

MM/KA: Invite representative of RGS Scheme re Newcastle Schools

MM/KA: Invite Dougie Hall Berwick scheme (Teams?)

For future agenda:

AS: University Rugby and how we can utilise this scheme in university's.

SF; business intelligence modelling to identify schools to target where participation is low/non-existent