Club Development / Schools Project - Steering Group Meeting – 18th November 2024 at Newcastle Falcons RFC

Attendees: KA: Keith Atkinson (NRU Dir of Club Development), GB: Gav Beasley (Falcons Operations and Delivery Manager), SF: Steve Freer (Wallsend / NTP Scheme), JN: Jon Nugent (Gosforth / Gosforth Scheme), AS: Ash Smith (RFU / Coast Partnership Scheme), JC: Jim Coulson (Trustee), LC: Lydia Cowell (Schools), JL: Jess Laider (RFU), LN: Liam Nicholls (RFU), JS: Jack Smith (NTP Scheme).

Summary Statement – school to club – grow from the bottom to reenergise rugby and develop the relationship with the Falcons and projects they run and support.

1.Falcons Activity

GB summarised current work being undertaken:

Delivery update

- Clubs have identified school they would like delivery to take place in at years 7 and year 8 boys and girls.
- Classes receive a block (5 weeks) of delivery by a NRF development officer and invited to a transition session linked to the club.
- Club coaches are being invited to these sessions to aid the recruitment
- Clubs will be offered the chance to host a festival to aid the transition
- All teachers participating to receive training opportunities and support from NRF and wider NRU partnership to assist in the continuation of rugby within the school post the delivery block

Reminder of Clubs involved in this programme –

Alnwick/Ashington*/Blyth/Seghill/Morpeth/NorthShields*/Wallsend*/Novos/Northern*/Gosforth /Tynedale/Ponteland.

*The Rugby Development Steering group and clubs are aware that these club are part of the Coastal partnership or North or Tyne Partnership and the NRF will seed these clubs and gradually pass the delivery over to the Development officers when in place.

The NRF are running a number of Funded programmes through premiership rugby or other local funders. The locations of these are depending on the funders

There has been some primary delivery in Ashington in the first half term, and this half term in North Shields area.

Attached is a brief outline of what has been happening in Northumberland this half term and planned in in the future – see attached.

Other points of note/discussion:

Fliers have now been produced and can be used (a number were handed to clubs at the Gen Comm meeting held later that evening). If anyone wants fliers, get in touch with Gavin at Falcons as there is a plentiful supply.

Banner for Clubs – some discussion around design and colours (make it stand out) and the information that you need to see when passing.

Action: GB Time line required for printing and delivery of banners.

Jack Smith (welcomed) now in post for the NTP – Falcons seeding at Years 7 and 8 and then handing over to JS.

West End – Falcons working with Years 7, 8 and 9 through Project Rugby. Seems to be some conflicting views (and conversations with different people around) on where the help for West End is needed – Falcons working as noted, others saying focus needs to be on colts. Club is in danger of folding and does need help so lines of communication need to be resolved.
Action: GB to communicate with West End and establish a clear activity-based focus

Prudhoe and Stocksfield players are playing with Ponteland 2nds and are continuing with Touch Rugby.

Action: Falcons team: Establish what can be done with year 7 & 8 and club involvement. (If we are not in a position to assist KA to liaise with Northumberland to discuss)

RGS Newcastle Scheme– see attached report from CM: Charlie Maddison.

Berwick Scheme – DH reported that he is currently working in a school with Years 9,10 and 11 boys and the boys are allowed to attend rugby training on a Friday if they behave during the week.
5 players from Berwick are mascots for the Scotland v Wales match.
Girls are now playing with players from Kelso and Gala.
Next year the Colts will buddy up with another conference team in the Borders.
Action: DH to establish junior travel costs need and approach Northumberland if additional help is required. Travel costs continue to be an issue.

North Tyne Partnership (NTP) – SF welcomed JS who as been appointed to the School Rugby Manager role. The project which feeds Northern, North Shields and Wallsend will have a different a recruitment focus for each club as each club has a different focus and different needs. JS will initially spent time with Nyle Godsmark (Coastal Project) and will also get assistance from Falcons with initial seeding work already underway.
JS is also looking to do his Level 3 Coaching Award and is being mentored by Ash.
JS induction should be completed by January.

SF noted that with the Circus on site at the Wallsend ground, around 3,500 potential age grade players are on site over the course of the duration of the summer event. Each day people have to queue for around 30 minutes so there are big opportunities to engage with these people and we need to think how we can do this.
Action: At next similar event on site SF to contact Falcons team for surplus fliers.

There are also a lot of new housing developments in the Wallsend area – again, we need to try and engage in these areas.

We also need to **reach out to ethnic groups** and encourage them to think about rugby as a sport – potentially engage with community leaders.
Walking Rugby in the winter, Walking Cricket in the summer.
Gosforth is a multisport venue with both rugby and cricket – is there opportunity to work together?
Action: SF & JN to consider how this may be achieved. Report considerations at next meeting.

Coastal Partnership Report – AS reported that Nyle Godsmark is currently working in six schools with five festivals planned (three in early December).
Astley High and Monkseaton High are schools on the list for the New Year.

8 more festivals are planned for the new year.
There is an issue with transition to clubs despite best efforts, as festivals seem to be more two school teams rather than multiple teams and this is not producing the transition numbers.

AS: Introduction to Refereeing – 21 on the recent course.
Need to get more teachers on to the refereeing courses but the issue is with getting staff the time out of school.

LC: Schools
LC reported that for the festivals she runs for U12, U14 and U16 Girls at Ponteland High (two per age group per term), the uptake this year is not as good as last year.
School staffing is an issue.
LC always get support from QEHS, Duchess, Prudhoe High and Ponteland High but she struggles with the Morpeth schools, Dame Allans and RGS.
She feels a bit stuck on what to do as she organises everything for them, but still doesn't get the buy in.

The above reports on engagement with Festivals led to a discussion on how we try and break this cycle and get buy in from schools.

Action: LC: GB: AS. Idea – Schools Festival in February – Thursday 13th February, 1pm to 3pm at Kingston Park. Branding – promote the brand – NRU and Falcons
We now have 3 on the ground CRCs – Nyle Godsmark, Charlie Maddison and Jack Smith – we need to promote them and the work they do. All three need to be at the festival.
We need visual promo material – posters etc to attract players
We need visual promo material – video of work we do.
We need visual promo material – posters / fliers / info in staff rooms for teachers.
AS agreed, to work on visuals
GB to work on setting up the festival and will liaise with LC.

2. RWC 2025 / T1 Rugby – Reports from LN and JL
Please see the attached reports.

Other points of note/discussion:
Girls Primary School **recruitment workshop** – 300+ attended.
Impact 25 – Ashington, North Shields, Northern and Novos.
Volunteer Grants of £500 available (no one from Northumberland has applied yet). Clubs need a W&G bias if applying. (*Post meeting note – 7 clubs applied before the cut-off date).*
Every Rose – 20 places for Level 3 Coaching.
Work on RWC will focus on 200 days to go, 100 days to go, 50 days to go.
Sales are good 130k sold pre-sale, 100k in applications, Group tickets go on sale in February.
WI links to Rugby Clubs – national initiative. Morpeth RFC have been linked to Morpeth Town WI (walking rugby / arts and crafts) so gets a WI into a rugby club.
Novos, Wallsend and WBR have not been matched with a WI yet (ongoing).

3. Steering Group Forward Planning
Discussion point: We need to think about how this group works together and can be developed in season 2025-26. How do we achieve this?

Next Meeting – Monday 17th February, 3pm at Kingston Park