Board Meeting – Monday 9th February at Gosforth RFC

Present – Pete O'Brien, Graham Crozier, Dean Gray, Kieth Atkinson, Tony Lenderyou, Brian Russell, John Austin, Ruth Scott, Penny Stewart, Craig Wrightson, Paul Tanny, Howard Ingram and Claire Sharpe
Apologies – Jim Pollock and Rob Gibson

Minutes from Meeting held 1st December – true record with no matters arising.

Board Reports
Please see February Folder:
https://northumberlandrugbyunion.com/board-minutes-reports-february-2026/

Matters Arising from Board Reports:
Impact 25 – reference to comms with Novos. Being followed up by Ruth Scott and Penny Stewart.
Rugby – U20s played first match 8th February and won. **Centurions** – no other CBs able to play us this season, Cumbria keen to play next season.
Pre Match event at U20s match – invites out to Chairs of Rugby, Club Secretaries and Club Chairs as a thank you – poor uptake and some no shows. Opportunity for members of the County to engage with clubs – poor engagement from the clubs which is disappointing.
Compliments to Neil Thornton for providing excellent food once again for County events and for being so accommodating with last minute changes at the weekend, as the U16s Girls ended up at WBR as well as the U20s, having lost their match against Yorkshire earlier in the week due to unplayable pitches.

Vision and Strategy Statement and Development plan
Chair introduced the first draft of the vision and strategy statement and thanked John, Keith and Penny for their input in this initial draft. Initial comments were that is was overly Corporate and will need reviewing.
Statement will sit in front of the Development Plan which is now a priority.
This will provide clear vision for the Trustees (for funding of CB projects and events) and clubs.
An overarching framework to help the CB achieve its goals.

Small working group of Board Members to be asked to assist with finalising the wording and draft outline of the Development Plan.

University Meeting with Katie Storey
How we can engage with Universities in a more positive way.
Some interesting discussion and points of view raised by likes of Darren Fearne (Ncle Uni).
Talk about how the Universities and CB can work together to get players into clubs.
Discussion around how injuries are recorded and reported – two way process. If players are at Clubs, the Uni needs to be informed, if players are at Uni and also play at clubs, clubs need to be informed. Working on a solution that best fits University rugby.
Other discussion items: Students as part of their sports coaching development by

supporting the Red Bulls Foundation project going into schools (to link in to club development project)
Transition of players who finish Uni – how we get them into clubs
Transition of players who finish Uni – how we get them back into their clubs when they have been away out of the area.
400 Intra Mural players who don't play Saturday rugby.

Another meeting due to take place mid March with date to be confirmed – wider invite group to this next discussion and will include Dir of Club Development (students into schools), Dir of W&G and Dir of Rugby (for club engagement).

A very encouraging meeting with much more discussion to be had.

Red Bulls and Club Development Programme
Keith outlined the progress in our Community Programme. There has been notable successes in transition at Morpeth, Tynedale and Wallsend rugby clubs. Greater success has been achieved where the Newcastle Foundation representative has been able to generate a good relationship with their parent club. The area of concern is where that relationship is not very strong.

To assist, the programme hosted an event at Kingston Park which brought all club representatives and Foundation coaches together. We talked about the value of relationships and the need to work with each other to make the scheme a success.

Keith also outlined our future relationship with Newcastle Red Bull and how that is likely to look moving forward. A number of 'spinning plates' although we have a consensus of direction. We will see what happens with planned future discussions.

RFU Rep Report
Please see RFU Council Rep Report in February folder.

Age Grade Discipline
Succession planning discussed and to be progressed with Fraser McDermott.

D&N3
Chair updated members on discussions and meetings that have taken place locally, wider with Durham Clubs and also with ROC and RFU staff.
The devolved powers of the ROC are hampering approaches to deal with the issues in the league as there is no flexibility in process.
Durham Board have agreed to allow 2nd teams in the Leagues but await the outcome of the clubs vote. Question being asked of the ROC, if Northumberland opposes this, what happens – where is the CB control in process as we need to look after our clubs.
Concern around entry points – past lessons learnt.
Views around poaching of players from 1st teams at clubs to play 2nd team rugby.
14 teams suggested – RFU/ROC wont allow.

Chair has had a meeting with another CB Chair, the CB having pulled out of the RFU leagues and re structured to local competition as issues being experienced with league rugby was leading to a reduction in player numbers so a restructure was seen to be the solution.

Further updates on discussion points to be circulated once answers to questions being posed have been received.

Revenue Generation Manager

5 candidates shortlisted and interviews being set up.
Contracted role.
Successful candidate will report to CB Chair and to Martin Woodward (RFU)
4 Clubs to be involved in the project.

AOB

Dir of Finance raised subject of purchasing of items and in particular medals and trophies. Some discussion around this as inaccuracies in observations. Budget holders have control of their budgets and can manage appropriately.

Dir of Comms – Dean reported that he hopes to get to Wallsend / WBR to do a piece for the BBC on the Womens Rugby World Cup when its in the area on the 17th February.

Chair – it is the 150th anniversary of the CB in 4 seasons time – 2030 – heads up!

Meeting closed 9pm.