



Project Scoot

Interim Development Strategy 2020-2021

The Strategy of Wales Rugby League is:

“To make Rugby League accessible to everyone in Wales through a lifelong participation in the sport”

The Vision of Wales Rugby League is:

‘To be recognized as a leading national governing body for in sports development and governance in the UK and Europe’

Foreword by Gareth Kear

This is an interim development strategy which will form the basis for the new WRL Development strategy for 2021-2025. My involvement with Wales Rugby League began in April 2019. I was tasked by the board to take a handover from the then General Manager and look after WRL operations on an interim basis until a new CEO and National Development Manager could be appointed. As the WRL community pre-season was already underway, I decided that a watching brief would be best advised until the end of the season in November.

Observations

During the season, I visited all community and semi-pro clubs and solicited their opinions and views. This strategy is based on those views and has already been discussed at club meetings and at board level. The overriding observation was that the community game had been allowed to wither and standards had significantly dropped, there was little presence and visibility from the governing body. The key relationship with grant funders Sports Wales was completely broken and the funding withheld. Engagement from the Rugby Football League (RFL) was limited and strategies did not align.

Project Scoot

A ‘scoot’ is used to get a team back onto the front and rolling forward again and that’s exactly what this strategy seeks to achieve. The first and most important action was to remind everybody in Wales that Wales Rugby League is the governing body and responsible for all rugby League activities in Wales. All matches and clubs must be sanctioned by the WRL. Improving standards and striving to be better at what we do is a key pillar. We also must build relationships with our key grant funders Sport Wales and the RFL and immerse ourselves in Welsh sport.





Improving Standards

Competitions

Objective: To ensure that the competitions organised by or on behalf of the WRL and the competitions organised by the constituent bodies of the RFL are fully integrated, well managed, of an appropriate standard for the level of player, and are open to the relevant groups.

Competition Framework

Ensure that the competitions framework is well organised and caters for the needs of all participants.

Community Game Competitions

Ensure that the competitions offered at all levels are suitable for the participants, encourage growth in participation and allow for the optimum development of all participants.

Match Officials Department

In April 2019 we had a total of five qualified match officials, there was no ongoing CPD or support from WRL and little confidence from the community clubs. A complete overhaul of this department was needed. A new Head of Match Officials and a new Match Officials Coordinator was required.

The match Officials strategy would be:

- Target was to create 20+ qualified match officials.
- To encourage greater gender split.
- Free match officials courses to be run in North and South Wales.
- A new combined course to be implemented with the coaches' course.
- Fitness testing for all match officials compulsory.
- Monthly CPD run by the Head of Match officials in conjunction with Ben Thaler and Liam Moore from the RFL.
- All new match officials would have their kit provided.
- Match officials would be provided with cards and a whistle.
- A new 'silence' rule would be introduced for coaches and players.
- All clubs would have to supply a qualified touch judge and side-line manager.
- Match officials would be welcomed after games with a one hour ban on match discussion.





Coach education Department

Objective: To establish a UK-wide coaching system that meets the standards of the UK Coaching Framework and increases the number and quality of coaches developed, employed and deployed at each stage of the WRL Player Pathway. Recruit, retain, develop and deploy coaches to work within Wales.

Coaching System

Provide strong coaching pathways aligned to the UK Coaching Framework via the RFL and Rugby League European Federation (RLEF).

Desired Outcomes:

- The WRL coaching pathway to provide coaches with the best opportunities to reach the highest level.
- Drive coach education through the RFL and RLEF coaching framework.
- Provide a supportive mentoring and skill development structure for aspiring coaches.

Coach (Work Force)

Improve access to high quality coaches at each stage of the player pathway through the recruitment and deployment of professional coaches and improved management of volunteer coaches.

Desired Outcomes:

- Eight community coaches deployed to meet the needs of pathway.
- Improved gender split for community coaches.
- Twenty volunteer coaches skilled to work with talented players.
- Increase the number of active coaches.

Coach Education

Improve the quality of coaches through provision of initial and post qualification education and learning support.

Desired Outcomes:

- Increase the number of WRL foundation coaches.
- Increase the number of RLEF level 1 coaches.
- Increase the number of RLEF level 2 coaches.
- Increase the number of UKCC level 3 coaches.
- A skilled coach educator workforce deployed regionally.
- Increase the number of active coaches.

The coach education department would be created with the lead from The National Development Manager and assisted by an international pathway coach.

The Coach Education strategy would be:

- To create 20+ level 1 coaches.
- Liaise with the RLEF coach tutor Martin Crick.
- Ensure all outstanding certification completed.
- Create new level 1 course combined course to be implemented with the match officials course.
- Coaching CPD to run monthly in conjunction with match officials.



Wales Rugby League Pathways



Please see <https://wrl.wales/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/WRL-Pathway-and-Strategy.jpg> for an enlarged picture of the above.



Community strategy

It is a key part of the WRL strategy to develop rugby league from the bottom up and also to make community clubs more accessible. All clubs need education and guidance on inclusion, diversity and equality. Each community club must offer open age, Juniors, Masters and Wheelchair Rugby League, for men and women, boys and girls. All new clubs must offer open age for men and women and at least one junior team, with the intention to also provide Masters and Wheelchair Rugby League.

Objective: To ensure that community clubs are fully functional and compliant with WRL and RFL standards. For players and clubs to be in an environment that makes playing rugby league accessible to the maximum number of people from every part of the community with the minimum number of barriers and the best quality conditions.

Desired Outcomes:

- Ensure all clubs have a designated club committee which meets WRL standards and are affiliated to WRL and have signed the club partnership agreement and new club competition handbook.
- Ensure all clubs have quality facilities, qualified coaches and match officials and trained volunteers.
- All community clubs to have a team entered in all Junior, Senior, Masters and Wheelchair competitions of the Wales Rugby League.
- Ensure all clubs achieve their funding needs with full support from WRL.
- All clubs to have a governance plan and a public statement of inclusion, equality and diversity.
- All clubs sign the new code of conduct.
- All games to be filmed and pitches fenced or roped off.
- All clubs to receive a presentation on...
 - An introduction to Wales Rugby League.
 - Anti-doping training.
 - Concussion (brain injury) awareness training.
- Increase the number of touch line managers and linesmen.
- Increase the number of club welfare officers.



WRL Club Mark

Continue to develop a high quality, club and League competition environment which encourages an increase in participants from all communities.

Desired Outcomes:

- Ensure all community clubs achieve WRL Clubmark Status.
- Increased participation and club standards will equate to additional support from the WRL who will provide...
 - Three match balls.
 - Eight x size 4 training balls.
 - Colour coded VX3 T-shirts for physio, water, and doctor.
 - Additional funding.
- Starting a new Wheelchair Rugby League team
 - Working with WRL and insport development officer.
 - WRL to provide VX3 team playing kit.
 - WRL to supply size 4 balls.
 - WRL to provide training chairs.
 - WRL to prepare funding applications.

North Wales Community Strategy

To set up a working party specifically aimed at re-building rugby league in North Wales. Strategic plan to achieve:

- Appoint 2+ community coaches.
- Run free match officials and coach course.
- Create 15+ new match officials and 15+ new level 1 coaches.
- Create a 9s and Masters Festival in Bethesda in May 2021.
- Create 2-4 new community clubs.
- Set up regional Physical Disability Rugby League (PDRL) and Learning Disability Rugby League (LDRL).



Regions

Desired outcomes in regions. The two semi-pro clubs to deliver development in their own geographic areas in partnership with the WRL.

- West Wales Raiders to develop 2+ new community clubs in West Wales.
- North Wales Crusaders to develop 2+ new community clubs in North Wales.
- WRL to develop 2+ new community clubs in South East Wales.
- A team of zero hours community coaches to be attached to community clubs and regions.



Education

Primary Schools - Develop and increase the number of opportunities to participate in rugby league throughout primary school education.

Desired Outcomes:

- Increase number of primary schools participating in WRL Primary Cup from 80 to 200.
- Establish a primary link with WRL community clubs and develop a healthy schools programme.

Secondary Schools - Develop and increase the number of opportunities to participate in rugby league throughout Secondary Education.

Desired Outcomes:

- A local and regional Champion Schools competition in all nine regions (East, Central, Bridgend & Vale of Glamorgan, Neath Port Talbot & Swansea, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Powys, North East & North West).
- Increase the number of Champion School teams from 20 to 150.
- All schools involved in Rugby League to develop link with the local community club. This will provide an exit route for participants.
- Increase the number of girls' teams competing in Champion Schools from 0 to 30

Further Education

To maintain and enhance the opportunities for players in the 16-19 age bracket, and after leaving school, to participate in rugby league within further educational and quality club environments.

Desired Outcomes:

- Increase the number of 16–19 year olds participating in Champion Colleges competition throughout nine regions.
- Increase the number of 16–19 year olds that transfer into participating in club competition throughout the regions.



- Increase the number of sixth form and colleges playing rugby league from 1 to 20.



Development Academy

A new RFL accredited dual development academy for men and women to be created, with the education partner Coleg y Cymoedd and a Super League club.

- Create a permanent base for WRL offices and training ground at new facility in Treforest with joint branding.
- Create partnership with University of South Wales for fulltime further education.
- Use of Coleg Cymoedd and USW facilities for all courses and international pathway training.

Higher Education

Maintain and enhance the opportunities for players in the 18-24 age bracket, and after leaving further education, to participate in rugby league within higher educational and club environments.

International pathways

All international pathways to be run by Wales Rugby League.

- Male – U16, U19, Students, Dragonhearts, Masters, Senior.
- Female – U16s, Masters, Senior.
- Wheelchair.
- Physical Disability Rugby League.
- Elite Pathways...
 - Men Senior.
 - Women Senior.
 - Wheelchair.
 - All elite teams to wear black off-field kit.
- All other pathways to wear red off field kit.
- Playing kit to be the same for each pathway team.
- Group forums to be set up for international team managers.
- Group forum to be set up for international coaches.
- Team managers and coaches to have induction and one day seminar.
- Mandatory for players and parents to receive anti-doping and concussion awareness training.



Branding and Social Media

Previously the use of logos and branding collateral was very confusing. We need to simplify our branding and insist on corporate branding guidelines. We also had to have a clear messaging to promote the work the WRL currently do. We also need to build better relationships with the BBC and S4C.

Desired outcomes:

- New website.
- New marketing guidelines.
- Create and use a new hashtag [#FutureIsBright](#)
- Working group for media team.
- Create a forward planning calendar for all marketing and social media.
- Consistent e-mail signature to be used by all.

Social Media outcomes:

- Grow the number of followers on Twitter to at least 15,500 by December 2020 and achieve at least 300,000 total impressions each month.
- Grow the number of likes on Facebook to at least 8,000 by December 2020.
- Grow the number of followers on Instagram to at least 2,500 by December 2020.



- Post at least three times a day on both Twitter and Facebook, generating regular content across the two platforms while making sure it is relevant and high quality.

Governance

Objective: To be recognized as a leading national governing body for in sports development and governance in the UK and Europe.

Wales Rugby League has always had a rich heritage of inclusion, equality, and diversity. It is a heritage that we are immensely proud of, since the 1950s Rugby League has welcomed players of all ethnicities and backgrounds. These players include Clive Sullivan - who was the first ever black player to captain a side representing Great Britain - Roy Francis, Colin Dixon and of course Billy Boston. We also signed the first British openly gay professional rugby player in Gareth Thomas.

Desired Outcomes:

- To amend our articles of association to provide equality to all, irrespective of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.
- To ensure that our board reflects today's society with an intention to achieve a 60-40 gender parity and also to recognise our history by also encouraging applications from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.
- To provide better protection for individuals from lower socio-economic groups, poverty and the Welsh language.

Gareth Kear CEO and Mark Jones National Development Officer
March 2020