



## RFL COMMUNITY BOARD CHAIR SUMMARY – 15<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

Dear Community Game Colleagues,

The Community Board met for this first time in 2022. The previous couple of years have been dominated by the impact of the pandemic and it was a pleasant change to see an agenda without any reference to Covid and to meet face to face.

We were joined by Ralph Rimmer our CEO who provided members with an update relating to the proposed realignment of the sport which has involved all key stakeholders with the aim of ultimately driving more revenue into the sport. The RFL will retain the administration and development functions of the sport. All revenue generating objectives will be delivered through a shared ownership vehicle which will benefit the whole game. An RFL Council Meeting has been scheduled for next week which will seek approval from members to approve in the same way the RFL Board and Super League Europe Board have. Further information will be shared with the Community game in due course.

We were also delighted to be joined by Tracy Power the RLWC2021 Social Impact Director who provided a comprehensive update of the programmes being delivered by the RLWC2021. Tracy outlined the refreshed RLWC strategic framework which has a particular focus on making a positive impact on people's lives across communities. To date, 233 projects have received £7.9m investment, with total project values of £19.5m which is outstanding, as is the impact of small grants on making the sport more inclusive, including great support for the Wheelchair game. Attracting new volunteers remains a focus although deployment of volunteers has been a challenge and there will be a more targeted approach for 2022. The importance of working with partners with specific expertise was reinforced by the great inclusive volunteering opportunities being provided in conjunction with Community Integrated Care. And the partnership with Movember continues to deliver a comprehensive mental health programme.

Keeping the RLWC2021 theme going, Marc Lovering, the RFL's Director of Development and Participation outlined the plans to ensure the whole Community Game maximises the opportunity to increase participation which the tournament will offer. All members fed into possible opportunities which will arise both before, during and after the tournament. This is a subject that we will return to at every opportunity in the run up to the RLWC2021 and we will be working with and encouraging the whole game to get involved with the tournament and Team England.

Last week we were very pleased to announce a new funding partnership with Sport England which totals £11.9m and lasts through until March 2027. Members were given details of the new staffing structure which will be in place to deliver programmes together with associated budget. I was delighted to see that funding will be in place to support the considerable growth we have seen in the women and girls' game and our inclusion sports, Wheelchair RL, Learning Disability RL and Physical Disability RL. The most significant support will continue to be focused on our core Community Game. The Board congratulated Marc Lovering and team on the work they have undertaken in creating the strategy and in securing the new funding.

The Board received an update on Our League Active and were pleased that the introduction of the membership scheme had not had an adverse effect on the number of active participants. We have just announced our second monthly prize draw winners that see individual adult and youth and junior players winning prizes, but also a community club receiving a prize which includes money can't buy prizes, such as a coaching session with a coach of their choice. It is also



encouraging that 323 people have voluntarily chosen to join Our League Active and we have received many additional donations which the Community Board will reinvest into the Community Game.

'Enjoy the Game' was next on the agenda, where a considerable amount of work has been undertaken by the RFL and Leagues during the off season to improve touchline behaviours and deal with a rise in match official abuse. There are now standard reporting forms for match officials to use and the RFL together with the Leagues will be monitoring discipline cases across the board to address behaviours within the game. In conjunction with this, the NCL has purchased 6 referee cams to be trialed in the NCL. These are in operation on 6 NCL matches per weekend. The footage is of very high quality and will enable MO coaches to review to aid development and coaching, but also the NCL disciplinary to use as video evidence. We are also working with Liverpool John Moores university on a touchline behaviour project. Thank you to those Clubs that have expressed an interest in taking part. In addition we also have new resources available on the website [HERE](#) and if Clubs are interested in any bespoke club and Enjoy the Game resources please get in touch.

Turning to more formal matters, the Board reviewed the Community Board Terms of Reference and it was agreed the terms of reference be adopted for a further year. As we are at the start of a new funding cycle and a new Community Rugby League Strategy and Vision, 2022-2030 was approved at the last Council Meeting, we took the opportunity to discuss both the need to ensure the sport is aligned with the wider requirements of the Sports Governance Code and also whether the make up of the Community Board adequately represents the whole of the Community Game as we look to deliver new strategic objectives. This process will begin in 2022 and all stakeholders will be involved in the review.

Finally, the Board reviewed a Good Governance Framework for Clubs and Competitions. This has been produced in consultation with Sport England. Many will be aware of Sport England's views on improving governance structures across sport and many have already started work on this. The matter will now be considered by the Regulatory Group to produce clear guidance, documents and support for Clubs.

The Community Board also wanted to register its thanks to the various RFL teams which providing unwavering support during the two years of Covid and, without which it was felt some Community clubs might not have survived. This was particularly, but not exclusively, in the area of obtaining grant and emergency financial support.

**Sandy Lindsay MBE, Chair, RFL Community Board**