



ANNUAL REPORT

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RUGBY-LEAGUE.COM



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CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

SPORTING AND SOCIAL IMPACTS IN 2019



This Annual Report is being written in very different circumstances to those of previous years, as our sport deals with the Covid-19 crisis which has so impacted the national life of our country.

There has been change on a Governance level since last year I was given the honour of succeeding Brian Barwick as Chair. In the Autumn, we strengthened the Board with the appointment of Sandy Lindsay MBE and Rimla Akhtar MBE as Non-Executive Directors. The Board is now more diverse and has wider skills and experience, which has already been of benefit to the organisation.

Tony Adams MBE was appointed to serve as RFL President last year. He has brought visibility, profile and focus to the role. He has been a tremendous Ambassador and I thank him for his wonderful service. We look forward to welcoming Clare Balding OBE as RFL President at this AGM.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Simon Johnson".

Simon Johnson
Chairman
Rugby Football League

Our Patron, the Duke of Sussex, honoured us with his presence as Chief Guest at the Coral Challenge Cup Final at Wembley in 2019, presenting the Cup to Warrington Wolves at the end of a compelling victory over St Helens. The Duke also participated in the Draw for Rugby World Cup 2021 in a glittering ceremony at Buckingham Palace in January 2020, which gave the World Cup a high profile launch in to the public's consciousness.

At Wembley, on the same day as the Coral Challenge Cup Final, we held the inaugural final of the AB Sundecks 1895 Cup. We were able to inaugurate the Ray French Medal for Man of the Match, presented by Ray. Johnny Whiteley MBE was the Guest of Honour and presented the first 1895 Cup to Sheffield Eagles.

The Coral Women's Challenge Cup was won by Leeds Rhinos. The women's game had a great season, supported by Coral and BBC, in respect of the Challenge Cup, and by Betfred and SKY in respect of the Women's Super League gave the women's game a deservedly high profile.

Our England Women's team participated in the World Nines in Australia where they rightly received equal pay, before embarking on an historic two match tour of PNG.

England's Wheelchair team had a historic win in France, which was followed by a 100% success rate on their tour of Australia.

It has been a third year of growth in the community game, with pleasing visibility for our PDRL and LDRL games, helped by the magnificent documentary "Take His Legs" fronted by Adam Hills.

On the field in the men's game, we saw a Super League match played in Barcelona, the Magic Weekend in Liverpool and Summer Bash in Blackpool. St Helens triumphed in the Betfred Super League Grand Final at Old Trafford having led the League for most of the season. London Broncos fought to the very end to stay in Super League, only succumbing on a tense final weekend. Their place was taken by Toronto Wolfpack, capping their four-year journey since they joined League One.

Lower down, Whitehaven and Oldham were promoted to the Betfred Championship.

The impact of Rugby League was felt off the field. Having launched our Social Impact Report, demonstrating that Rugby League is a sport which punches above its weight, we saw the caring nature of our sport from the outpouring of support for Rob Burrow after his diagnosis with MND and Mose Masoe after his serious neck injury. RL Cares continues to provide player welfare services and to care for those who have suffered loss or hardship and their families.

I want also to take this opportunity to thank the Government and the Secretary of State, Oliver Dowden, for confirming the Government's exceptional financial support for our game. It is significant that we are so far the only sport that the Government has seen fit to support specifically and we are very grateful indeed.

We also had cause for pride when one of our most high-profile supporters and members of the APPG for Rugby League, Sir Lindsay Hoyle was elected Speaker of the House of Commons. Mr Speaker has been a consistent friend of our sport and we are very proud of his appointment.

CEO'S SUMMARY

2019 PROGRESS - NAVIGATING CHALLENGE AND CHANGE TOGETHER - AND EMERGING FIT FOR A NEW FUTURE



Our long-term priorities are underpinned by our ambition to build a culture in Rugby League with a greater focus on excellence, performance and return on investment, aligned to our values and expectations. Throughout 2019, the RFL continued to build on its primary assets; Representative Rugby League, Championship and League 1, the Community Game, the Challenge Cup and Our League as well as driving an evidenced-based narrative for the whole sport centred on inclusion, and the wider social outcomes of the sport. 2019 was an important year of execution and we made good progress in delivering on our objectives.

Throughout 2019 we worked in partnership with Super League Europe as it took responsibility for the broadcast, marketing, commercialisation, and promotion of the competition. Throughout 2019 the focus remained on 2021 as the significant key milestone for the whole sport with the conclusion of the current broadcast deal, the Sport England cycle, and the hosting of the Rugby League World Cup. The focus remained on optimising these opportunities and the strategic re-alignments - in the RFL Reset of 2018 and delivered throughout 2019 - were designed to achieve these objectives.

We lived our corporate commitment to an open and consultative approach with all stakeholders in the game, with clear and frequent communications, reporting and feedback loops mainstreamed into core business and promoted by the refreshed Board.

2019 thrilled us on the pitch and once again the outstanding successes of players, clubs and coaches are detailed in this report and we congratulate every single player, professional or amateur, who entertained and inspired us. In the professional game we congratulated Warrington Wolves and St Helens winners respectively of the Coral Challenge Cup and the Betfred Super League Grand Final. The inaugural winners of the 1895 Cup, a new competition for non-Super League clubs which attracted sponsorship from AB Sundecks - were Sheffield Eagles. We congratulated Toronto Wolfpack on promotion to the Betfred Super League; Whitehaven the Betfred League 1 champions with automatic promotion to the Betfred Championship, and Oldham winners of the play-offs.

As well as exciting on-pitch entertainment, the sport is synonymous with delivering wider outcomes in its communities. This social impact elevates the sport and



Ralph Rimmer
Chief Executive
Rugby Football League

sets it apart. The work of clubs, the Foundations, RL Cares and the governing body demonstrated this throughout 2019. The RFL launched the Rugby League Dividend Report, authored by the Sport Policy Unit of the Business and Law Faculty, Manchester Metropolitan University, highlighting the unique role of the sport in providing significant social capital through sporting and volunteering opportunities in core disadvantaged communities.

Similarly, our commitment to becoming the nation's most inclusive sport was front and centre of the continued rise of Women's Rugby League from the Betfred Women's Super League to the RFL's girls' growth programme and talent pathway. Disability Rugby League had a special year with the continued growth of Physical Disability Rugby League, and the development of Learning Disability Rugby League with the sport's national socialcare partner, Community Integrated Care.

Wheelchair RL, social RL - Touch and Tag and Masters - all grew during 2019; as did each of the age groups in community clubs - junior, youth and open age for the third consecutive year; proving once again that the multi-partner approach to growing the sport, supported by the RFL is driving growth. We congratulate and thank the thousands of volunteers who make Community Rugby League happen.

Internationally 2019 was a mixed picture with important learnings in each of the programmes and notable wins - detailed in this report - amid high profile losses. The senior England team's only appearance of 2019 came in the Downer World Nines in Sydney - in which they were beaten by New Zealand in the semi-finals. The England Performance Unit's (EPU) energy was also invested heavily into the return of the Great Britain team for a first Rugby League Lions tour since 2006. However, this tour, deliberately challenging as part of preparations for the 2021 World Cup, was a major disappointment. The preparation for RLWC2021 continued to intensify for all three England teams.

2019 saw a suite of positive broadcast and digital engagement results detailed in this report. We committed to continue to invest in the Our League platform, and to innovate. More live streams, more content, more connectivity, more members, and more growth were all delivered in 2019. Alongside the Our League app, the RFL also delivered Our Learning Zone - an online space to support the development of the game. The platform offers instant access to digital learning resources and information on topics from coaching to first aid, game day management and inclusion and diversity.

We continued to strengthen our international partnerships and play a significant role on the Boards of both the Rugby League international Federation (now IRL) and Rugby League European Federation. The RFL continued to support and

promote safeguarding and player welfare through delivery partner Rugby League Cares and its many relationships in the service of the sport; and we were inspired by the personal commitment of RFL President Tony Adams MBE.

Work continued apace with the Rugby League World Cup 2021 team and the joint delivery of the CreatedBY legacy funding scheme for grassroots clubs' facilities was a significant focus in 2019 - proving transformational for community clubs.

Rugby League is built on partnerships and the role of the governing body is to develop, nurture and grow partnerships which further the sport's objectives. The growth and impact in 2019 are testament to the diverse group of stakeholders who commit their time, resources and energy to Rugby League, and we thank them all. Our sponsors and broadcast partners; Sport England, TASS, UK Coaching, Women in Sport, Activity Alliance, Sporting Equals, the Sport and Recreation Alliance, the All-Party Parliamentary Group, and the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport.

As we reflect on the progress made in 2019 and the successful implementation of the reset strategy, the RFL and all in the sport are in the midst of an unprecedented global crisis. The RFL has been and remains focused on steering the sport through the immediate impacts of Covid-19 and the 'lock-down' period which occurred so soon into season 2020; and is working in anticipation and mitigation of the longer-term impacts, in particular on the sport's finances. Financially, 2019 saw a small return to profit and an opportunity to look to 2020 with some confidence. We must inevitably acknowledge the impact of the current situation - and the adaptations necessary.

Our collective and considered response to the longer-term socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 is key to how we emerge together and reshaped in 2020, 2021 and beyond. The RFL in its role as a custodian of the sport continues to adjust as a business and governing body so that it is in the optimum position to ensure the sport continues navigate its way through the challenges collectively - and is fit for a new future. The creativity, co-operation, flexibility, and agility shown in 2019 will be required by all over the coming months and years and must be the guiding principle for the sport.

2020 is the sport's 125th year. Once more we have shown the resilience, co-operation, and ability of the sport as a collective to adapt, respond and to look to the future together. Rugby League is a sport which fundamentally matters, and which makes a huge local, regional, and national contribution on and off the pitch. That is a testament to the sport and everyone in it.



2019 RUGBY LEAGUE LIVE IN STADIA



CHALLENGE CUP AGGREGATE ATTENDANCE:

172,812

↑ **159,999**

**+8.0% increase
vs 2018**

SUPER LEAGUE GRAND FINAL ATTENDANCE:

64,102

↓ **64,892**

**-1.2% decrease
vs 2018**

**SALFORD RED DEVILS
FIRST BETFRED SUPER LEAGUE
GRAND FINAL APPEARANCE**

RECORD SUPER LEAGUE ATTENDANCE AT CAMP NOU, BARCELONA



31,555

**SUPER LEAGUE RECORD ROUND ATTENDANCE FOR
A 12 TEAM SUPER LEAGUE ACHIEVED AT EASTER.**

Round 11, played over Thursday and Good Friday - 79,173

The Betfred Super League held strong in an ever more crowded sport and entertainment market with total attendances for the 2019 Season being **1,575,536** (Regular Season & Super 8s 1,498,388 in 2018). This was following the new season structure introduced in 2019. It introduced playoff fixtures amongst the top 5 placed clubs and eliminated the Super 8s & The Qualifiers rounds.

Super League again saw some strong attendances. A record Betfred Super League attendance for the Catalans Dragons v Wigan Warriors game held at Camp Nou, which had 31,555 in attendance. Another record broken in 2019 was the highest attended round for a 12 team Super League. This was achieved at Round 11 on Thursday evening and Good Friday; this round had an aggregate audience of 79,173. Surpassing the record set in Round 25 of the 2007 when 78,917 turned out.

Average home attendance for a non-finals Super League game was 8,433. Average home regular season attendances were greatest for Leeds Rhinos and Wigan Warriors at 12,727 and 11,701, respectively. The Super League Grand Final once again was a success which hosted a crowd of 64,892 at Old Trafford.

Aggregate attendances for Championship & League 1 was up +34,000 vs 2018, reaching 559,000 in total. The average attendance for regular season games in the 2019 Championship season was 2,433, up +31.9% vs 2018. Attendances increased with the promotion of Bradford Bulls & York City Knights. There were several strongly supported teams in the Championship in 2019 and we would expect attendances to reflect that. Toronto Wolfpack achieved the highest average home attendance of 7,556 in 2019, exclusively in their Canada based games.

The average attendance for League 1 regular season games in 2019 was 660 compared to 864 for the 2018 season. Attendances reduced YoY largely due to the promotion of Bradford Bulls & York City Knights at the end of the 2018 season. Newcastle Thunder achieved the highest average home attendance of 1,028 in 2019.

2019 attendance for Summer Bash was +27.7% higher vs 2018. 2019's aggregate attendance was 15,070.



2019 RUGBY LEAGUE ON OUR SCREENS

CHALLENGE CUP FINAL PEAK VIEWING TV AUDIENCE ON **BBC** OF

1,037,300

TOTAL **OURLEAGUE** SESSIONS

2.4m in 2018 **+79.2%** **4.3m** in 2019

PEAK BETFRED SUPER LEAGUE GRAND FINAL TV AUDIENCE OF

672,600

2018 V 2019 +36.5% [492,900 V 672,600]

THE 2019 SUPER LEAGUE GRAND FINAL SET A NEW SUPER LEAGUE RECORD FOR LIVE TV AUDIENCE SINCE THE COMPETITION'S INCEPTION IN 1996.

Average match audience of 508,500.
2018 v 2019 +43.1% [355,380 v 508,500]

BBC BROADCAST OF 4 GAMES FROM THE GB TOUR - AGGREGATE MATCH AUDIENCE JUST UNDER 1 MILLION

TV and online audiences

The 2019 Super League season had an average match audience of 131,850, a +3.3% increase compared to 2018. Audiences grew from July, reaching an average match audience of 143,785 in the final 3 months of the regular season. The aggregate TV audience over the 2019 Super League season was just under 11 million, whilst the 2018 season had an aggregate live audience of 10.1 million with 4 fewer games broadcast; this is inclusive of the regular season & Super 8s. The Super League Grand Final broke viewing records reaching an average live match audience of 508,500 which is the highest for a Betfred Super League Grand Final since its inception in 1996. For comparison 2018's live match audience was 355,380. 2019 was the first year Salford Red Devils have reached the Grand Final.

During 2019 Sky also broadcast additional Rugby League content. The Betfred Women's Super League was broadcast for the first time on Sky. The Women's Super League Grand Final captured an average live match audience of 78,770.

Many Championship games were also broadcast, typically Toronto Wolfpack games and the playoffs. The average Championship match audience in 2019 was 56,153. The most watched game was the Million Pound Game between Toronto Wolfpack and Featherstone Rovers and had an average live match audience of 144,000.

Television audiences on the BBC remained strong throughout 2019, with the Coral Challenge Cup attracting a cumulative live TV audience of 4,567,700 and the Coral Challenge Cup Final peaking at 1,037,300. As part of the 2019 Coral Challenge Cup competition there featured a derby game between Bradford Bulls and Leeds Rhinos. This was played in Round 6 and reached a peak audience of 1,173,400. The highest Round 6 audience since 2016.

Four games from the Great Britain tour were broadcast on the BBC, reaching an aggregate match audience of just under 1 million. The time zone difference was noted to significantly impact viewing; one game being played at 3:30AM BST.

Non-live programming continued to engage substantial TV viewer numbers. The cumulative Super League Show and Highlights attracted 5,533,500 views throughout 2019. Over the course of 2019 the cumulative audience on the BBC was 11,559,800. Rugby League was also featured on Channel 4 in the 'Adam Hills: Take His Legs' documentary which had an average audience of 438,800.



2019 DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT



RFL TWITTER ENGAGEMENTS:

2.74m



197% on 2018



RFL FACEBOOK VIDEO VIEWS:

7.36m



484% on 2018

From a digital point of view, 2019 represented a tremendous year of growth across the board, particularly across our social channels.

On Facebook, we saw total impressions go up 197% on 2018, with a record engagement total of over 4.5m. We also saw massive gains in total video views and minutes viewed (484% and 553% respectively).

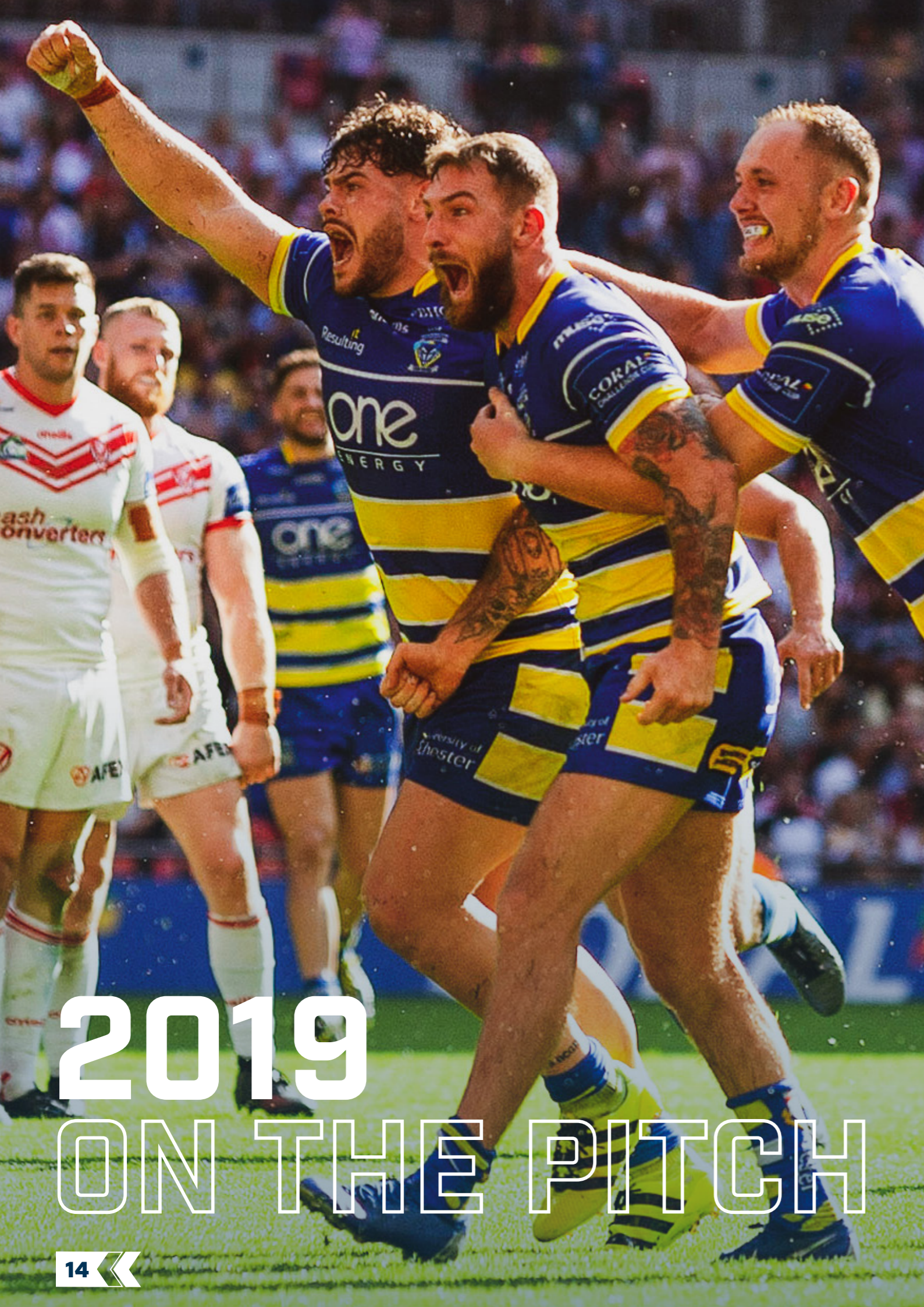
On Twitter, again we saw massive growth, with impressions up 168%, engagements up 197%, total video views up 407% and minutes viewed up 383%. This is testimony to the terrific work put in by the digital team in creating consistent, innovative and engaging content.

Instagram also saw a great deal of engagement, with almost 1m across all three RFL channels, rising significantly again year-on-year.

We also launched a TikTok account, specifically to appeal to a younger demographic, and have seen really encouraging signs of engagement in the short period since launch.

The organisation put a great deal of resource and commitment into covering the Great Britain RL tour at the end of the year, and the digital results were particularly pleasing, especially in comparison to 2018's England v NZ series. Our social channels saw 29% more impressions, 46% more engagements, 43% more new followers, 26% more video views and 109% more minutes viewed during the tour, compared to 2018.

We also delivered successful and engaging digital and content campaigns around the Coral Challenge Cup Final, the AB Sundecks 1895 Cup Semi Finals and Final, plus the Betfred Championship and League 1 play-offs.



2019 ON THE PITCH

SAINTS END HOLBROOK ERA IN STYLE; HILL LEADS RHINOS TO WOMEN'S DOUBLE

It was the year in which St Helens bounced back from another bitter disappointment, this time in a first Wembley meeting with their old local rivals Warrington, to end in glorious Grand Final triumph at Old Trafford, claiming their first Super League title in six seasons to ensure their hugely popular coach Justin Holbrook returned to Australia with the trophy he so richly deserved.

The year in which the women of Leeds Rhinos went one better than the Saints men, doubling up with victories over Castleford Tigers in the Coral Women's Challenge Cup Final in Bolton in July, and again in the Betfred Women's Super League Grand Final at St Helens in October – with both matches featuring title sponsorship, live national television coverage and considerable additional media attention to underline the acceleration of the development of Women's Rugby League.

Castleford gained huge sympathy and credit for an otherwise dominant season in which they finished on top of the table having completed a double over the Rhinos and suffered a single defeat, and there was a similar story for the men's Grand Final losers, as the Salford Red Devils

provided some of the most memorable performances and images of 2019 with their stirring run to a first appearance in decades at the citadel of the Manchester United club with whom they are so closely linked.

Meanwhile the Betfred Championship featured a narrative which raised eyebrows well beyond the regular Rugby League audience, as Toronto Wolfpack secured promotion to the Super League in only the third year of their existence by beating Featherstone Rovers on a memorable Ontario evening at Lamport Stadium.

Little more than a month later the Wolfpack, whose appointment of the former Leeds Rhinos coach Brian McDermott had proved a masterstroke, were making global headlines by confirming the signing of Sonny Bill Williams in a media conference at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium.

London Broncos, who had denied them promotion 12 months earlier by winning the 2018 Million Pound Match at Lamport, added considerable value to the 2019 Super League, and burnished the reputation of their straight-talking coach Danny Ward. Some high-profile pundits had suggested the Broncos

would struggle to win a game at the highest level; but a 20-16 victory at Hull KR in the penultimate round of fixtures in September was their 10th in 28, dragging Rovers, Wakefield Trinity and Huddersfield Giants into a four-way scramble to avoid the drop.

Wakefield held their nerve to beat the Broncos 19-10, securing not only their safety, but also that of Rovers and the Giants.

Whitehaven had already secured the first promotion spot from Betfred League 1 to the Championship, and Oldham earned the second through the play-offs, beating Newcastle Thunder in an exciting final.

The Betfred Super League play-offs, restored to the top five format originally imported from Australia in 1998, began with Castleford Tigers dispatching a Warrington team who had struggled to lift themselves after August's Wembley triumph.

The following night Wigan moved to within 80 minutes of another Old Trafford Grand Final, holding off a Salford team for whom a return to the play-offs through a third-placed finish was way beyond pre-season expectations.

However the following weekend the Red Devils bounced back impressively to beat Cas 22-0 while Wigan were soundly beaten at St Helens, setting up a repeat fixture between the Warriors and Salford at the DW Stadium for the right to face Saints at Old Trafford.

That proved to be an unforgettable night for all connected with the Salford club, as they demolished the champions 28-4 in their own backyard, inspired by Jackson Hastings and roared on by thousands of supporters in the away end.

There were thousands more at the East end of Old Trafford the following Saturday, many having walked to the ground on the other side of the River Irwell and the Manchester Ship Canal. Ian Watson's underdogs acquitted themselves admirably and ended the first half on a high with a Jake Bibby try which cut St Helens' lead to 12-6. But Holbrook's Saints held their nerve – quite a feat after so many recent disappointments – to earn the title their dominance of consecutive Super League seasons deserved.

Inspiration there, perhaps, for the Tigresses of Castleford. They were outstanding throughout the regular season in the Betfred Women's Super League, wrapping up the League Leaders' Shield by winning their first 13 fixtures, in which they scored 611 points and conceded only 140, and regularly attracted four-figure crowds to the Mend-a-Hose Jungle – remarkable progress, as their coach Lindsay Anfield pointed out, for a team who struggled at the wrong end of the table in the early years of the competition.

At that point, their only defeat in 2019 had come in the Coral Women's Challenge Cup Final, which had a higher profile than ever as it kicked off a triple header with the semi finals of the men's competition. Cas were again well-supported – but Leeds, coached by Adam Cuthbertson and inspired by Courtney Hill, made their greater big-match experience pay.

There was further disappointment for the Tigresses when their attempt to complete the league season with a 100% record was scuppered at the final hurdle at St Helens. And when they returned to the Totally Wicked Stadium for the Grand Final, being played for the first time on the Friday night before the men's climax at Old Trafford, they were beaten again by the Rhinos – with Hill again outstanding, although 16-year-old Fran Goldthorp grabbed the headlines with two tries.

The season ended with an announcement that the BWSL would be expanded again, to 10 clubs, in 2020, with the promotion from the Championship of Huddersfield Giants and Warrington Wolves.

The Wolves had beaten Barrow in the Women's Championship Grand Final in Manchester, with Keighley Albion beating Cutsyke to win the League 1 Grand Final – ahead of their promotion to the Championship, which also saw them renamed Keighley Cougars to confirm closer ties with the town's established men's club.

The major honours in the domestic Wheelchair game were shared between Leeds Rhinos, who beat Kent's Skeleton Army in Sheffield to win their first Challenge Cup, and Halifax, who denied the Rhinos a double in a thrilling Wheelchair Super League Grand Final in Kent.

Last but not least in the list of 2019 winners, Sheffield Eagles seized the opportunity provided by the creation of the 1895 Cup, a knockout competition for non-Super League clubs which was sponsored by AB Sundecks, to revive memories of the club's finest hour 21 years earlier. The Eagles returned to Wembley for the first time since they stunned Wigan in the 1998 Challenge Cup Final to beat Widnes Vikings – a fairy tale for Mark Aston, the Lance Todd Trophy winner as man of the match against Wigan, as he plotted the latest triumph as their coach.



2019'S AMAZING INDIVIDUALS

A pair of Australia-born half-backs were recognised, to widespread acclaim, as the outstanding performers of the two Betfred Super League competitions in 2019 – in a year which saw a fresh focus on Rugby League's individual awards.

Jackson Hastings was named Steve Prescott Man of Steel for his pivotal role in the fairytale story of the season, Salford's completely unexpected emergence from the pack to finish in the top three and then reach their first Grand Final at Old Trafford.

His compatriot **Courtney Hill** won the equivalent award for the Betfred Women's Super League, which was presented on the same glittering night at the Lowry Theatre, and renamed the Telegraph Woman of Steel as part of the national media group's commitment to coverage of women's sport.

Hill's award was determined in the same manner as previously, by a poll of players from the eight BWSL clubs, who recognised her role in leading Leeds Rhinos to double triumph with victories over Castleford in both the Super League Grand Final and the Coral Women's Challenge Cup Final.

But Hastings was the first beneficiary of a new voting system for the Steve Prescott Man of Steel Award, under which a panel of former greats chaired by Ellery Hanley awarded points for the outstanding performers in every fixture – providing more transparency, accountability and credibility to the process. Both Hastings and Hill boasted quite a backstory.

Hastings, whose father Kevin was a fine half-back himself and spent a single season in England with Barrow, had come to Salford midway through the 2018 season seeking redemption, after falling badly out of favour at Manly. He was an instant hit with the Red Devils supporters and earned admiration across the game for his combination of skill, invention, and a courageous willingness to play well above his weight.

In an eventful autumn, Hastings then confirmed a move to Wigan – and was selected for Great Britain's tour of New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, having made himself available through his family roots in Devon.

Hill had arrived at Leeds after playing professional cricket for Brisbane Heat in Australia's Big Bash. She married her long-term partner, the Yorkshire and England opener Lauren Winfield, in early 2020.

Two of the best forwards in the game, **Daryl Clark** and **Luke Thompson**, won the major match awards for 2019.

Clark, the hooker who joined Warrington from Castleford in 2015 after being named Man of Steel the previous year, added the Lance Todd Trophy to his personal collection for his sizeable contribution to the Wolves' surprise 18-4 win against St Helens in the Coral Challenge Cup Final at Wembley.

He became only the third hooker to win the award, following Tommy Harris of Hull in 1960 and his Warrington predecessor Michael Monaghan in 2009, and was the first to do so





under another modified and more transparent voting system, in which he earned 21 of the 34 votes cast by members of the Rugby League Writers and Broadcasters Association present at Wembley.

Thompson crowned an outstanding season in the St Helens pack with a towering 72-minute performance in their Grand Final victory over Salford to win the Harry Sunderland Trophy – the first prop to do so since Andy Platt for Wigan against Saints in 1992.

Saints' dominance of the Super League season was reflected in the selection of **Justin Holbrook** as Coach of the Year, and **Matty Lees** as Young Player of the Year, while **Tommy Makinson** was the leading try-scorer with 23.

Hull's workaholic hooker **Danny Houghton** won the top tackler award for the fifth time for a phenomenal total of 1,259, and there was also recognition for the Leeds Rhinos veteran **Jamie Jones-Buchanan** who picked up the Ward Hadaway Spirit of Super League Award – with **Warrington Wolves Foundation** winning the Foundation of the Year Award.

In the Betfred Championship, Toronto's supremacy was recognised with **Gareth O'Brien** pipping his team-mates Jon Wilkin and Andy Ackers to the Player of the Year award. **James Ford** was named Coach of the Year for guiding York City Knights to the play-offs following their promotion from League 1, and the prolific Swinton full-back **Matty Ashton** was named Young Player of the Year ahead of a move to Warrington.

Whitehaven swept the board at League 1 level after a memorable season on the Cumbrian coast, with **Gary Charlton** Coach of the Year, **Andrew Bulman** Young Player of the Year, and the Papua New Guinea scrum half **Dion Aiye** Player of the Year.

The introduction of the AB Sundecks 1895 Cup Final at Wembley allowed the creation of a new individual award for the man of the match named after Ray French, the hugely popular and respected dual code international and former BBC commentator. French presented the inaugural award to **Anthony Thackeray**, the Sheffield Eagles half-back, after his performance in their victory of Widnes Vikings.



PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMERCIAL GROWTH

2019 saw a significant rise in commercial growth for the Rugby Football League.

In January the RFL announced a two-year partnership with UK betting firm Coral to become title partners of both the Men's and Women's Challenge Cup competition. The betting firm which is part of GVC Holdings Ltd. one of the world's largest betting and gaming groups, were delighted to be associated with Rugby League's flagship cup competition.

After a positive experience with England Rugby League, Sherwin-Williams increased their commitment to the sport becoming principal partners of the match officials displaying both their Ronseal and Valspar brands on the referees' shirts.

The return of the Great Britain Rugby League brand brought nostalgia and excitement with Dacia and Ronseal coming on board as main partners and Hummel producing a technical kit with a heritage look and feel. Great Britain RL also announced three additional partners all new to the game: global recruitment company Randstad, travel brand Imagine Cruising and major online retailer Boohoo Man. Boohoo Man launched the partnership with a compelling content series featuring Great Britain players' Oliver Gildart and Chris Hill putting Former World's Strongest Man Eddie 'the Beast' Hall through his paces on a Rugby pitch.

Partner brands continued to innovate with Checkatrade becoming the first sponsor of the Try of the Week competition. This gave fans the opportunity to vote via the OurLeague app on their favourite try from the past week. The competition was extended to include all tiers of the Rugby League pyramid and in some cases pitting Super League players against school kids.

AB Sundecks sponsored the 1895 competition. Warners sponsored the Champion Schools competition.

Dacia also launched their latest campaign 'A Hero's Journey' telling stories of players from the Men's, Women's and Wheelchair England teams and the struggles they have overcome to play Rugby League. This was followed up with media partnerships with Men's and Women's Health and the Telegraph which gained great exposure in mainstream media.

The RFL is grateful for the support of all its commercial partners in 2019.



MOMENTUM TOWARDS 2021

2019 saw a breakthrough year for the England Performance Unit in terms of providing 'great Rugby League experiences' for its players and staff.

ENGLAND WOMEN

The England Women's programme gained considerable momentum and profile as we head towards RLWC2021. A full season of programme delivery to 40 players was capped off with two major international events: The World Cup of 9s in Sydney and the two-test tour to Papua New Guinea. The series was drawn 1-1; the players benefited from unforgettable experiences, especially in winning the first Test in Goroka, in which the captain Emily Rudge scored four tries; and the BBC televised the second Test live from Port Moresby, breaking more new ground for women's Rugby League.

Both the World Cup of 9s and the Tests in PNG provided excellent learning opportunities for our players in getting to play against our major competitors at the 9s (i.e. Australia and New Zealand) but also for the women to understand better their roles as international athletes and get used to the rigours of international travel and residential camps.

Both tours have provided a valuable opportunity for both the staff and players to reflect upon where we are at in our preparations towards 2021. Consequently, after a thorough de-brief of both events, the programme has been able to set new benchmarks and targets as we progress towards RLWC2021.

A ground-breaking moment for Women's RL came in 2019 when for the first time the squad was paid for representing England.

Mention should also go to the off-field impact that the women's tour had on the people of Papua New Guinea. Much is made of the struggles faced by many women in PNG. The England Women's squad was held in high regard and in a small way was able to help bring down social barriers and raise awareness of issues within PNG society. High praise was received from both the PNG RFL and the British High Commission.

ENGLAND WHEELCHAIR RL

The England Wheelchair RL team enjoyed great performance successes during 2019. In June, the squad undertook its first ever two-match tour to our major competitor – France. France is credited with creating the sport of Wheelchair RL. The team drew the series 1-1, earning a 31-25 win in test one and a narrow 46-50 loss in test two. The objective of providing players with the exposure to elite level international Wheelchair RL was achieved.

This was followed in September by winning the Home Nations Championship in Wrexham.

To finish off the season, the Wheelchair team (10 players and 6 staff) jetted off to Australia for a 5-game tour which included three test matches against the Wheelaroos. This was a hugely successful tour, providing players and staff with valuable learning experiences of the international camp/tour environment. The team

enjoyed a resounding 3-0 test series win. To finish off a memorable year for the Wheelchair programme, England captain Jack Brown was awarded the inaugural Wheelchair RL 'Golden Boot'. This is in recognition of being voted the World's best Wheelchair Rugby League player.

ENGLAND KNIGHTS

After the successful tour of Papua New Guinea in the autumn of 2018, the RFL supported a recommendation from the EPU about the importance of maintaining momentum of the Knights programme, and in addition to a number of meetings of the Knights Performance Squad through the year, arranged a home international against the Jamaica team who have qualified for the 2021 World Cup.

The England Knights won the game 38-6, with Greg Minikin scoring a hat-trick. The event will be remembered for the tremendous atmosphere created at Emerald Headingley by over 7,000 fans, many of whom were watching live Rugby League for the first time, inspired by the opportunity to watch Jamaica.

The England Knights programme has now progressed 13 players to full international status in the last two seasons.

ENGLAND YOUTH AND ACADEMY

England Youth (U-16) and Academy (U-18) continued to provide development and playing opportunities for 110 of our talented young players. The Youth team played two home tests versus France, winning both games. This was followed by an away win versus Wales.

The Academy programme enjoyed three 'Origin' games where 47 players took part in a 3-match Lancashire versus Yorkshire series. These fixtures were played at a variety of venues including being part of the Blackpool 'Summer Bash' event.

England Academy had been due to make a four-match tour of the southern hemisphere in 2020. The tour was made impossible because of the Coronavirus pandemic, but there are hopes of reviving it for 2021.

We are continually grateful to the support provided by Sport England to run these talent and performance programmes and provide opportunities for players to make progress in an inclusive environment.

ENGLAND MEN

The senior England team's only appearance of 2019 came in the Downer World Nines in Sydney – in which they were beaten by New Zealand in the semi-finals.

The EPU's energy was also invested heavily into the return of the Great Britain team for a first Rugby League Lions tour since 2006. However, this tour, deliberately challenging as part of preparations for the 2021 World Cup, was a major disappointment, with defeats in each of the four Tests against Tonga, New Zealand (twice) and Papua New Guinea. After the tour, a review of all aspects led to the decision to appoint Shaun Wane as head coach in place of Wayne Bennett. Kevin Sinfield stood down as the RFL's Rugby Director as a result of that decision, and the RFL paid tribute to the contribution made over a number of years by both Kevin Sinfield and Wayne Bennett.



British High Commission Port Moresby

"At all times, the team and accompanying party were exemplary Ambassadors for their sport and their country – always professionally turned out, engaging and accessible, both in formal media interviews and with British and Papua New Guinean fans (no child peeping into the team room in Goroka was turned away without autographs or having their hair braided). The particular benefits were:

***Rugby league.** The game in Goroka was the first women's international match to be played outside Port Moresby. By full time, 7,000 spectators were in the ground (or in trees or on top of lorries outside). The IRLF were delighted that the team had agreed to play in Goroka and help spread the women's game. The Australians, by contrast, never leave Port Moresby (to the frustration of all). I am in talks with the IRLF about how to support the PNG Orchids when they go to England for the 2021 World Cup.*

***UK profile/interests.** It was hugely appreciated that the team (at your expense) had travelled huge distances to play in PNG. Prime Minister Marape (himself a big rugby league fan) asked me at the match in Port Moresby to thank both UK teams for taking the trouble to visit – and for the positive image their reports back to the UK were giving of PNG. Blanket media coverage was positive for UK interests in PNG, and, on the back of the matches, I gained face time with the Prime Minister (twice), a Governor, Ministers and influential businesspeople.*

***Women's rights.** According to a UN survey, 70% of women in PNG have been either sexually or physically abused (usually by their own family). None of PNG's 111 MPs are women and there are few role models for girls. It may not have been obvious to them but the tour had huge significance in this respect, demonstrating what women can achieve (again, this was acknowledged by the Prime Minister).*

"As you know, this is a society fanatical about rugby league (as the touring party experienced). But their respect still needs to be earned. The conduct of the England Women's team did that – the crowd in Goroka ended up cheering as much for England as for PNG – and opened doors for me that made it much easier to do my job. I expect too that your standing with the IRLF will have grown and there may be positive benefits too for the 2021 Rugby League World. In short, I would strongly support future tours to PNG. You are a credit to the UK."

Keith Scott
High Commissioner
Papua New Guinea



RUGBY LEAGUE WORLD CUP 2021 THE POWER OF TOGETHER

Rugby League World Cup 2021 enjoyed a successful 2019 as the tournament preparation gathered pace with several stand-out moments which once again celebrated a trail blazing approach to inclusivity and a desire for a tangible social impact.

RLWC2021 promises to be a tournament of 'firsts' and it began the year with a world-class host announcement revealing the match venue locations. The men's, women's and wheelchair tournaments will be held simultaneously for the first time ever in a global celebration of the sport. Fans can look forward to 61 action packed games staged across 21 international standard venues featuring 21 nations.

The host announcement cemented the tournament's commitment to staging more than 80% of the games in the 'Northern Powerhouse' region of England – the heartland of the game.

The 'CreatedBy' capital grants programme has provided a prominent support throughout the year with its first grants into the grassroots game. The £10m government grant will be invested through another series of small grants and larger transformative awards ahead of the tournament commencing.

Ambassadors are always crucial in gaining public traction and attention and so the appointment of England star Luke Gale and former dual code legend Jason Robinson have been crucial. With Luke appointed to champion the 'CreatedBy' funding programme and Jason the international profile and development of the sport.

The International Development Programme continued with two special trips to Jamaica and Brazil. The programme, delivered in partnership with UK Sport and International Rugby League, provided a mixture of organisational development, soft power, and trade opportunities for the participants. A trip to Nigeria was also undertaken to coincide with the Middle East and Africa Championships.

The InspirationALL legacy programme continued to develop with the release of a 'How to play Rugby League' schools' resource aimed at growing participation and the launch of a spectacularly successful recruitment drive to attract 2,021 tournament volunteers.

The RLWC2021 men's qualifying, concluded with the Cook Islands taking up the final berth in the tournament. However, the headlines focussed on Greece, who epitomised Rugby League's in-built strength of overcoming adversity, to secure their place in the competition without playing a qualifying game on home soil.

The 2019 summer heralded another first with the commissioning of a brand-new Wheelchair Rugby League World Cup trophy – made by the master craftsmen at Royal Warrant holding Thomas Fattorini - to sit alongside the iconic men's and women's trophies. The new trophy reflects the incredible growth of Wheelchair Rugby League.

Continuing the momentum, the wheelchair and women's tournaments continued to build excitement with the announcement of the 16 competing teams. Brazil (women) became the first South American team to

take part in a Rugby League World Cup whilst Norway (wheelchair) became the first-ever Scandinavian participant.

Commercially the tournament welcomed 'Big Four' accountancy firm Deloitte and Manchester Metropolitan University as official partners joining legal-specialists Eversheds Sutherland and charitable partners UNICEF, the worldwide children's charity.

This most successful of years culminated in the announcement of equal participation fees for all teams and the introduction of prize money for the women's and wheelchair tournaments, and so laying the ground for the greatest ever Rugby League World Cup.



PLAYER WELFARE

SUPPORTING PLAYERS IN THEIR PLAYING AND POST-RUGBY LEAGUE CAREERS

In January 2019, the RFL's Welfare provision was passed to Rugby League Cares under a Service Level Agreement which included the Welfare Director being seconded to RL Cares four days a week.

The transfer had been well prepared for by both the RFL and RL Cares and went smoothly. One of the first decisions RL Cares made was to employ the Careers Coach, Julie Measures, on a full-time basis (she had previously worked as a consultant since 2012). This had an immediately beneficial impact with more time dedicated to the framework which supports the one to one advice given to players, direct work with club Welfare Managers.

Rugby League Cares Trustees also considered the Welfare Director's business case for a Transition Manager to ensure proper provision across the sport for players leaving the full-time game whether through natural retirement, injury, discipline, or performance

It was decided that this was a vital role and following a recruitment process Steve McCormack, previously a high performing Welfare Manager at Wigan Warriors, was appointed. Steve took up the post at the end of March.

During 2019 Steve has had contact with approximately 180 players, mostly but not all retired, who have required various levels of intervention. This work was very varied, from managing to befriend a retired player who is a homeless drug addict and persuade him to enter detox to the reaching out to players who have retired and reconnecting them to the Rugby League family.

In general, the experience of the Transition Manager has been that there are a significant number of retired players leading a sub-optimal life for one reason or another such as poor employment prospects, debt, addition, or just general low mood. This further emphasises why the Welfare role is so important at clubs and why it is vital that clubs fully buy into the full time, personal development model.

The full-time clubs can be broadly split into three categories, those delivering excellent, those that are delivering to a good standard and those that require improvement. However, this simplistic grading does not always take into account the complexity of the role; for instance, a club may have a Welfare Manager that is well respected and talented but has too many other duties and works in a less supportive environment.

The focus remains on ensuring Welfare Managers are focused on core activities signed off by the RFL and on ensuring that all Welfare Managers achieve their Level 3 Counselling Skills and Concepts qualifications.

The third annual Players' View on Welfare survey carried out in September 2019 was completed by 90% of full-time players. Overall a number of metrics were slightly down on 2018, which was expected with the increased participation from 70% to 90%, but all metrics were still significantly above 2017.

During the year of Tony Adams' Presidency of the RFL work has taken place to ensure that he talks to all full-time playing squads and also spends some time with the Head Coach. Sporting Chance has been a fundamental and



essential part of the Welfare programme with over 150 players using services during 2019. Fewer players needed the residential clinic particularly now that Sporting Chance has started to deliver a short one-week residential programme.

The Super League clubs collectively did not achieve the KPI of 78% of players Career Engaged reaching only 75%. This can be explained by a less strong performance of two clubs – and the target was exceeded if an average of the other ten clubs is taken. Work is taking place with those two clubs to improve their performance in 2020.

Outstanding local initiatives include a programme developed by Stu Dickens, Wakefield Trinity Welfare Manager, with Wetherby Young Offenders Institute which has led to great opportunities for players wishing to work in this field as well as helping improve outcomes for the youngsters who are being mentored.

2020 work continues to focus on the importance of full-time welfare provision, meaningful work on personal development as well as a continuing focus on post RL careers. An ongoing focus is to ensure that education and work experience by clubs is proactive and is embedded in the culture.

COMMUNITY RUGBY LEAGUE

THIRD YEAR OF CONSECUTIVE GROWTH

2018 » **2019**

Players: 102,304 > 109,501

Women: 7,714 > 12,236 up 58%

U7-U11: 13,057 > 13,374

214,974 children and young people were reached through the Sky Try activities in 2019 up 29% 2018 (114,974)

The 2019 End of Year Report to Sport England demonstrated that the numbers of people regularly participating in rugby league increased from 102,304 to 109,501. This represents a third successive year of growth this funding cycle; slightly above the Sport England target of 5% growth. We continue to make good progress against other contractual targets against which the Sport England public funding is based.

The Sky Try programme reached record numbers in 2019. At the midpoint of Year 6 the programme was ahead of target by 9863. The programme has enabled the sport to reach a broad and diverse audience with delivery in every primary school and most high schools in core Rugby League areas. With the programme due to end in 2021 work is underway to replace what has become a key part of work in the Participation and Development team.

In terms of regular participation, we have achieved growth across our core market settings of Primary, Junior, Youth and Open Age for the first time this cycle. Whilst we

have consistently seen good growth amongst our youngest players, to see growth across all core areas is positive. Well-run well-structured competitions informed by player surveys are beginning to impact and these figures should continue to improve once all the recommendations from the Whole Game Review are implemented.

The requirement for more flexible playing offers has led to the creation of RFL Player Development Leagues - which have a focus on player development as opposed to winning. Player Development Leagues are underpinned by a collaborative approach involving all key stakeholders with professional clubs playing a pivotal role. These new offers are proving popular and will be a key part of the culture change that is required within the sport to address the 'win at all costs' mentality that affects growth and retention. The North East League and the new City of Hull League provide great examples - with the new Hull offer delivering 11% growth in its first season.

We have seen strong growth in the schools setting. The Champion Schools framework has been revamped and our 'Inspired By 9s' linked to the RLWC2021 has proved an attractive offer and entry point for schools who are new to the game or may struggle to compete at 13-a-side. Nines is also a product that addresses some of the challenges of delivering sport in schools such as staff resource and transport costs.

We are continuing to see rapid growth in our women's and girls' game. Women's Super League and a higher profile England RL women's team continue to be the 'big levers' attracting new participants and a new audience. We are seeing expansion across all settings with significant numbers of new women's and girls' teams playing within our existing community competition framework but also in higher and further education establishments. Masters Rugby League has introduced an offer for women and the more social variants of the sport continue to prove popular.

Our key inclusion offers of Wheelchair RL, Physical Disability RL and Learning Disability RL continue to grow and showcase the diversity and inclusive nature of the sport and how transformational to people's lives sport can be.

Strong partnership work is key to growing the game and the work we have done with national social care partner Community Integrated Care together with professional club Foundations to drive the CIC Learning Disability Super League is a great example of this.

Several Foundations deliver interventions designed to increase the reach of the sport in BAME communities through schools, and clubs. The focus in 2020 and 2021 is to work across the sport to support and increase these activities.

We continue to strive to be the most inclusive and diverse sport which embraces the entire Rugby League community and acts as a force for good. Our role goes beyond sport and we have continued to impact significantly on the Governments wider social outcomes in socially disadvantaged areas.

Half of all Rugby League players in all settings are from areas of considerable socio-economic disadvantage – including health and education outcomes. We must do more to support this group and ensure more players and volunteers from these groups continue to have access to outstanding sporting opportunities that Rugby League can offer.



THE RUGBY LEAGUE DIVIDEND REPORT LAUNCHED IN 2019

THE REPORT LOOKS AT RUGBY LEAGUE'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS IN DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

£185m impact can be attributed to social wellbeing – health outcomes, crime reduction, improved education and employment outcomes, volunteering opportunities and improved life satisfaction

Grassroots clubs generate a **four-fold return** on social investment

The sport has a **reach, visibility, and value** beyond its core followers

The Dividend report was **commissioned by the Rugby Football League** and written by the **Sport Policy Unit of the Business and Law Faculty at Manchester Metropolitan University**.

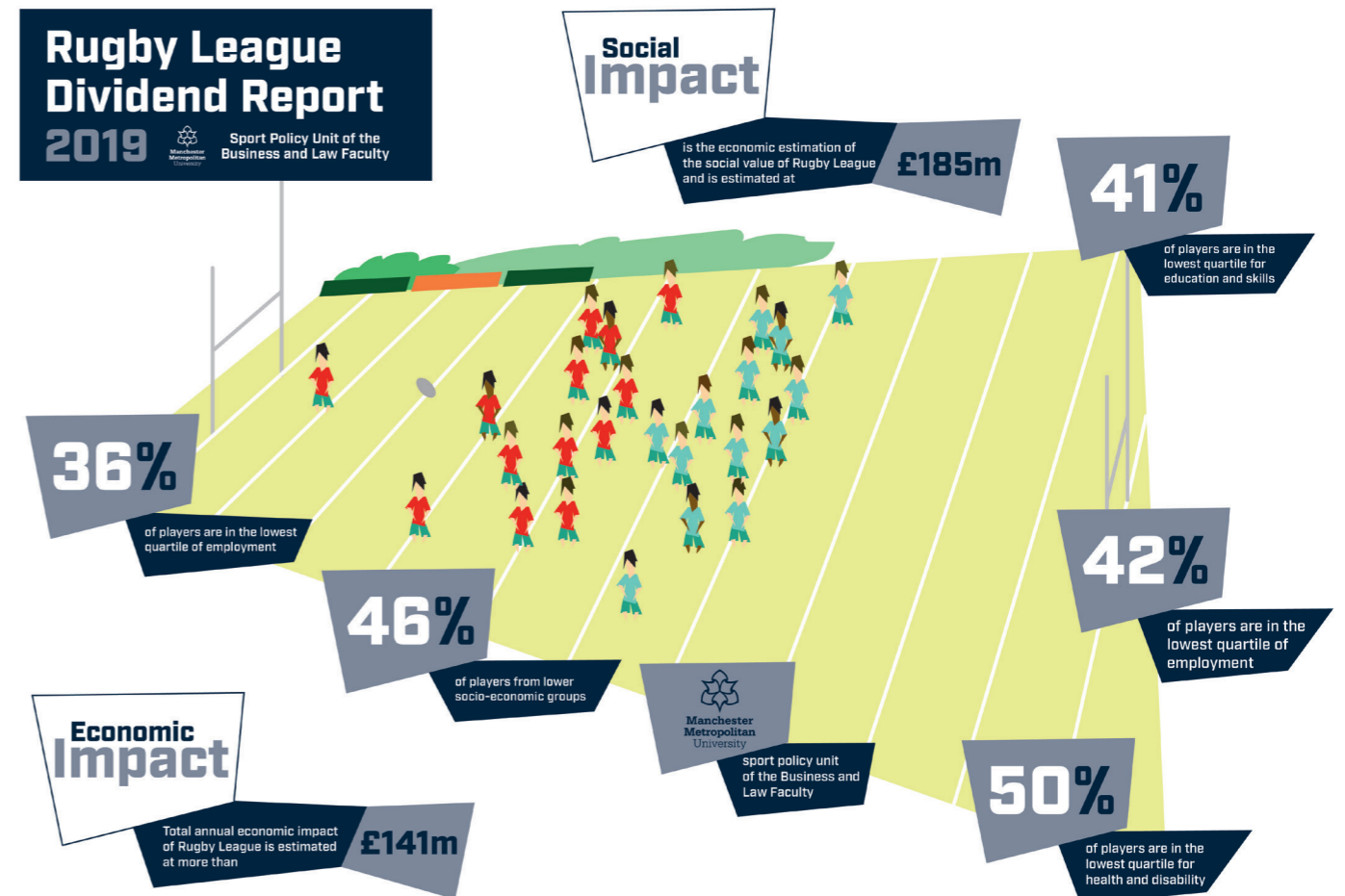
The Dividend Report is part of the RFL's campaign to evidence to policy makers and funders the breadth and depth of the sport's sporting and social impact in communities and how this meets local needs. The RFL actively shared the report across Government, local authorities, think tanks, policy forums, charitable foundations, media, and commercial sectors – demonstrating the sport's unique role, in particular in core disadvantaged communities. Social capital is the measurement of community cohesion, sense of identity and aspiration through role models and local sporting and civic pride and inclusion.

The Dividend Report will be followed in 2020 with a further 'impact report' on the wider social benefits of the development of Women's Rugby League. The aim of the reports is to set out the specific and

measurable contribution of Rugby League clubs and charitable Foundations to local economies, community cohesion and the health, wellbeing and aspiration of children, young people and adults who play, volunteer and access wider opportunities delivered under the Rugby League umbrella. The Dividend Report considered the array of services and opportunities offered through the charitable Foundations of professional clubs and via grassroots clubs, from education to mental health, dementia support, diversionary activity that reduces crime, alongside exercise, healthy eating, and all formats of Rugby League. This social impact is valued at over £185m a year; and the total annual economic impact of Rugby League exceeding a further £141m a year.

Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, championed the work which led to the Dividend Report in his voluntary role as RFL President in 2018-19. He said: "I am delighted that, on behalf of the sport, the RFL has embarked on a series of independent research and insight activities, to demonstrate in particular the social impact of Rugby League. This Rugby League Dividend report is the first in the new RL Impact Series.

"I am committed to sharing the story of how this authentic sport delivers a huge range of social and economic benefits – the Rugby League Dividend - in its core communities in the North and beyond. This report highlights the central and varied role that clubs and charitable foundations play at the heart of their communities in providing vital social hubs and outreach activities which extend far beyond the provision of regular sporting opportunities for children, young people, women and men; and the considerable



value of those services and activities.

"The return on investment in Rugby League is a significant social return which can be measured, and which makes a positive difference to people's lives. I am particularly pleased to see the contribution that Rugby League makes to social mobility brought to the fore in this report. And I look forward to the next in the RL Impact Series which will look at the social value of the exciting growth of Women's Rugby League."

Andy Burnham was joined in launching the report to the media by **Jamie Jones-Buchanan**, of Leeds Rhinos and England:

"As a Super League and England player I can say that the sport has given me a great deal. Even more in my role with a Rugby League Foundation I see first-hand the powerful differences the sport makes to huge numbers of people in communities like my own. It is the social glue that still binds us together in communities where much has changed,

and some can feel marginalised. It cares for people and opens eyes to opportunities on and off the pitch. We are on the ground, real and relevant. Investment in Rugby League helps clubs and Foundations play even more of these vital roles in communities and helps level the playing field when people face disadvantage and challenges in life."

In addition, the Rugby League World Cup in 2021 will see some of the most innovative social impact assessment work ever undertaken in sport. RLWC2021 will undertake evaluation of the impact of the legacy programmes that are collectively known as "InspirationALL", assessing the wider impacts as InspirationALL develops, and to measure its effectiveness before, during and after the tournament in 2021. This research is being funded by RLWC2021, Sport England and UK Sport to provide evidence and insight for all future major sporting events.



MATCH OFFICIALS

Recruitment

It was recognised that the recruitment and retention of match officials needed a refresh and the appointment of Liam Moore as Recruitment and Development Manager at the start of 2019 provided the opportunity to reset the dial and implement a new strategy going forward as part of the wider RFL Reset.

Ahead of the 2019 season, the priorities were to provide stability, improve relationships with societies and to lead and implement effective recruitment, retention, and development strategies. In 2019, we made significant steps forward as highlighted by the increases in the numbers.

In 2019,

- The number of courses run was up **75%** on 2018
- The numbers attending courses was up **82%** on 2018
- The numbers joining a society was up **92%** on 2018
- The number of MOs officiating their first game doubled from 2018

Although these increases are pleasing, we still have a long way to go. The retention of match officials continues to be the biggest challenge faced by the sport, and the new 'Every Official A Better Official' strategy has outlined how we can address this problem.

Performance

The widely accepted scoring system implemented by the Match Officials Standards Panel (MOSP) demonstrated how the full-time squad have made improvements in their performance.

The number of 'critical errors' reduced in 2019 (compared to 2018) and the speed of decision by the video referee was also made quicker, averaging 69 seconds per decision.

Alongside the scoring system, our full-time squad also received training and support from leading sports psychologist, Ross Shand. Ross' work with the group has focused upon self-management after making a mistake and realistic performance evaluation. This has helped foster a more resilient attitude in the match officials and has provided coaches with a renewed focus in their relationships with the match officials.

Achievements

Chris Kendall had a stand-out season in 2019. Chris refereed 4 major finals: 1895 Cup (Wembley), Million Pound Game (Toronto), Super League Grand Final (Old Trafford) and Men's World Cup of Nines (Sydney). Chris went on to referee three further test matches in New Zealand: Great Britain versus Tonga, Great Britain versus New Zealand, and Fiji versus Papua New Guinea.

Robert Hicks, Tom Grant, James Child, Liam Moore, and **Scott Mikalauskas** all gained valuable international experiences in the World Cup qualifying matches.

Ben Thaler refereed the England Knights versus Jamaica international at Headingley.

Robert Hicks officiated the Warrington versus St Helens Challenge Cup final at Wembley.

Greg Dolan officiated the Women's Super League Grand Final between Leeds Rhinos

and Castleford Tigers, whilst Cameron Worsley officiated the Women's Challenge Cup final between the same teams.

Tara Jones was awarded NCL referee of the year for her consistent performances throughout 2019.

Neil Horton, James Jones, Liam Rush and **Luke Bland** were all promoted to Grade 1 status.



SAFEGUARDING

WORKING TOGETHER FOR OUR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

The widespread publicity of abuse in sport continued in 2019 (and in year to date 2020), with significant cases making headline national news. Safeguarding remains a priority for all governing bodies, including the Rugby Football League. All sports continue to be vulnerable to predatory and unscrupulous individuals and vigilance must therefore remain high.

The RFL Safeguarding Team continues to support the Child Protection in Sport Unit's (CPSU) projects and initiatives. The team strive to promote positive coaching to clubs and work with Club Welfare Officers (CWOs) to create a constructive environment for young people within Rugby League. Through individual requests and issues arising from safeguarding cases, the RFL Safeguarding Team responds and assists individual clubs with issues and signposts to other agencies, where appropriate. The RFL continues to obtain feedback on how their issues are dealt with and the responses we receive continue to be extremely positive.

The number of safeguarding cases dealt with by the Rugby Football League in 2019 was slightly lower than the previous year; although we continue to monitor cases for trends so that resources can be aimed towards priority areas. There was also an increase in the number of more serious cases. These cases are mostly from outside of the game (i.e. where the offence has occurred outside of the sport itself) and we consider this demonstrates good communications in working with other organisations and agencies to safeguard children.

The governing body continues to provide appropriate education for employees and volunteers within the game on all safeguarding issues. The Listening Club initiative has been taken up by more clubs and provides children and young people with a voice to influence their environment and playing experience. We also know that a number of clubs have adopted the principles of the Listening Club initiative whilst not fully registering as a Listening Club and there will be a drive to ensure as many clubs as possible are registered in the coming year.

Throughout 2019, the Rugby Football League engaged in Government-led activity to address issues and share best practice, including round table events, meetings and information sharing. Edge Hill University has developed a research unit (Child Protection and Safeguarding in Sport) and the Safeguarding Manager has agreed to be a member of the Advisory Board.

In 2019, CPSU awarded the RFL with an 'Excellent', the highest award possible for a governing body meaning that the RFL operates excellent safeguarding practices.

The Safeguarding Team continually strives to ensure best practice throughout the department.

The Rugby Football League again volunteered to have its Safeguarding Case Management Systems audited by CPSU consultants. The feedback was extremely positive and the RFL Safeguarding Case Management Group followed this up with a full review of its processes using the audit results. There have been some changes already including

refreshing some of the education courses as well as the implementation of a Live Streaming Policy the RFL has also continued with an ongoing regular independent audit of case management.

The RFL Safeguarding Action Plan was approved by the CPSU and agreed by the safeguarding team and makes good progress in delivering its key objectives around management, communication, education, listening to children, case management and evaluation. These messages are primarily communicated via the bi-monthly safeguarding newsletter, directed in the first instance, to CWOs, but for dissemination more widely within clubs. The Safeguarding Mandatory Requirements has led to a more accurate record of current and qualified CWOs.

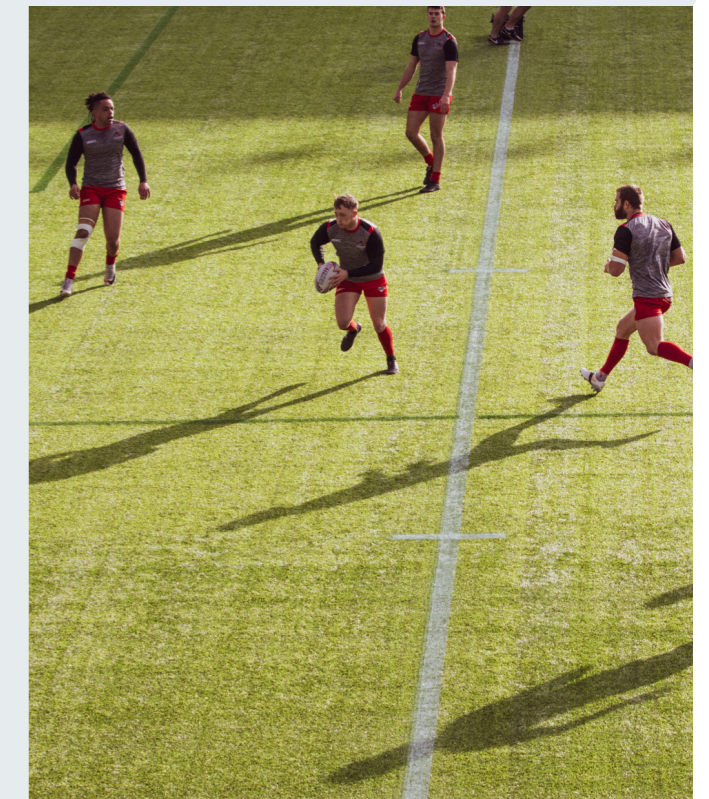
The Annual Safeguarding Conference took place in Halifax with approximately 120 attendees. It was opened by Ralph Rimmer (RFL Chief Executive) and the keynote speech was from Liza Ware from the CPSU. Dave Rotheram (Chief On-Field Officer) gave insight from the 12-18 Review and Robert Hicks (Safeguarding Case Management Group member) reviewed the previous year's cases. The afternoon was given over to an update from Kelly Barrett (Head of Delivery, Community Game) on the Enjoy the Game campaign and a Question and Answer Panel Session. As in previous years, the feedback from the delegates was extremely positive.

DBS for regulated activity continues to be a priority for safeguarding and for the sport in general. At present this service is offered free to volunteers but costs incurred are being re-evaluated by the organisation to bring Rugby League in line with most other sports.

2019 saw an increase in racism cases in the community game. The RFL has a zero tolerance to any unacceptable language or behaviour based on race and is committed to Rugby League being a fully inclusive and accessible sport including through delivering its Equality and Diversity Action Plan. We consider the increase in the number of reports is in part due to the understanding of how

to report and the confidence that action will be taken in each case. The actions taken in each individual situation will be tailored to the specific circumstances involved. In certain cases, an education course was offered where it was considered more appropriate than an investigation. The Safeguarding Case Management Group continued, where appropriate, to refer cases back to the relevant league and/or club. The RFL continue to look at best practice in dealing with racism cases in the youth game.

During 2019, 820 people attended 47 Safeguarding and Protecting Children (SPC) courses with an additional 484 completing the SPC online Refresher Course. It is envisaged that the number of face-to-face courses will decrease as candidates can complete the online refresher after three years, where previously they would be required to revisit the face-to-face course. The Time to Listen course attracted 79 attendees over 6 courses and this decrease was expected as only new Club Welfare Officers need to attend the course. All of the course numbers saw a healthy increase from the previous year's figures.



RUGBY LEAGUE FOR EVERYONE

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

EMBEDDING I&D ACROSS THE SPORT

The RFL is committed to playing a lead role in ensuring that Rugby League is a diverse and inclusive sport. To ensure we continue to meet the wider objectives of the sport (increasing participation, financial sustainability, new and engaged supporters and viewers) and wider community engagement, Inclusion and Diversity needs to be embedded in the sport ensuring the sport is welcoming to all, representative of our communities and wider society, and together we enable everyone within the sport to be safe, supported and to reach their potential.

Each RFL Department takes responsibility for the I&D Action Plan and work with stakeholders across the sport, in particular with clubs and Foundations and volunteers, to increase the impact of the Plan. And a mix of external stakeholders check, challenge and add value to the activity.

Throughout 2019 – and to date – the focus has been on activity as an NGB and on influencing and supporting game-wide stakeholders, in particular clubs.

ON-FIELD AND OFF-FIELD ACTIVITY AND ACHIEVEMENTS

2019 was a year of considerable activity including:

- **Women's Grand Final played at St Helens stadium and screened live for the first time on Sky.**
- **150% uplift in views of Women's RL games on Our League compared to previous year**

- **Nearly 40% increase in the social media coverage from 2019 in both the Women's Challenge Cup and Grand Final**
- **Keighley Pride event held for the community at the stadium in July 2019**
- **Masters players increased from 1825 to 2065**
- **Number of PDRL clubs increased from 2 to 6**
- **Number of PDRL players increased from 104 to 126**
- **Number of LDRL players increased from 81 to 128**
- **Number of wheelchair players increased from 173 to 239**
- **Caitlin Beevers nominated for BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year 2019**

CLUB INITIATIVES

The RFL is currently working with a number of clubs on specific Inclusion and Diversity initiatives with a focus on taking positive and lasting action.

Featherstone Rovers: In 2019, the club were fined for racist chanting in the ground. It was agreed though that the fine monies could be used by the club to fund a project that encouraged engagement through inclusion with the local community.

The project is now being run in primary schools in the Featherstone area. The aim of this is to support learning amongst children on discrimination and judgment based on culture, religion, and/or race.

The project and its aims have been shared with other local professional clubs and because of this, Wakefield Trinity have also agreed to run the project in primary schools in their area.

The project is supported by the Featherstone Rovers Foundation and Wakefield Trinity Community Foundation along with professional Rugby League players. The project will support the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) initiative in primary schools with the aim of improving positive behaviour and the emotional well-being amongst year 6 children. The clubs will work together to celebrate the differences in spectators attending games and help younger supporters be aware of the positive behaviour expected of them - in everyday life as well as sporting environments.

Featherstone have also introduced a restorative practice project in relation to fan behaviour. It aims to educate those fans who have used offensive words or behaviour in the stadium – and the project supports Featherstone's zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, and the club's belief that education is key to both improving behaviour within stadia and club culture.

Keighley Cougars: A project has also been scoped out with the aim of increasing engagement with the town's Asian community. The RFL has partnered with Keighley to understand and address the barriers to engagement.

The RFL has worked with Sporting Equals – an equity partner in sport which works to increase BAME inclusion in sport on a range of issues over a period of time. Sporting Equals has provided guidance to an outline plan, developed with the club, who have just recently opened improved education facilities. The plan centres on work with schools and youth clubs in the area to promote the sport and increase participation. A funding bid (which is delayed at the time of writing due to the immediate issues around Covid-19) will enable full roll out. Learnings will be captured, evaluated and where appropriate disseminated across the sport.

Swinton Lions: Swinton Lions in partnership with the Lions Foundation, Leeds Rhinos Foundation, Salford CVS and Trafford Borough Council will deliver a range of workshops and taster sessions in schools to promote

positivity and encourage diversity within Swinton – the club's traditional base – and Trafford the Borough the club currently plays in.

The Jose Kenga Rugby League Diversity Programme has targeted 12 schools for delivery x6 in Swinton (3 Secondary and 3 Primary) and x6 schools in Trafford (3 Secondary and 3 Primary). It is envisaged that more schools will take part in future years as part of the RLWC2021 Legacy Programme and the RFL Development Plans for each Rugby League area. The trial project will run in the coming school year, with a wider roll out to follow.

Leeds Rhinos Foundation: Leeds Foundation have also put together a Restorative practice project aimed at tackling off-field incidents. The project aims to provide an alternative model of dealing with conflict whereby the 'victim' feels more included and ultimately empowered by a process while the 'perpetrator' has a learning and education opportunity, is aware of the harm their behaviour has caused, and ultimately entered into some form of reparative programme with the aim of repairing relationships and reducing the likelihood of repetition.

TRAINING

Training and learning opportunities are at the forefront of the I&D Action Plan and partnership working. In 2019 and in 2020 to date the training programme has grown; the RFL has worked with stakeholders to develop resources (for online and face-to-face delivery) and uses appropriate resources from external partner organisations.

Training for all in the sport can be accessed through the Our Learning Zone portal. Our Learning Zone is a platform for a vast range of coaching and skills content as well as communities of best practice where coaches or match officials or volunteers in particular roles can support each other. It is important that I&D training is within this growing platform and not separate from it. Modules include an Introduction to Inclusion

and Diversity, and Unconscious Bias. In 2019 these modules were accessed by RFL staff; delivered direct to Ground Safety Officers, the Operational Rules Tribunal Match Review Panel and at the Championship and League 1 Forum. At the time of writing the Player Welfare Managers are undertaking the Introduction to I&D module before a rollout to all players.

A module around Inappropriate Language has now been trialled and was set to be delivered to Wigan Warriors Academy prior to lockdown, with feedback to inform the next iterations of this module.

The RFL is mindful of the many pressures on clubs especially at this time; and the rollout of training will be tailored to the situation of each club.

I&D ADVISORY GROUP

The I&D Advisory Group was established in 2018 to provide ongoing strategic advice and input to the RFL on all aspects of I&D and the Action Plan. The group is made up of both internal team members and external stakeholders who all have experience, understanding, creativity and expertise to bring to the work on all the protected characteristics. The Terms of Reference for the Group have recently been reviewed and will be shared on rugby-league.com and directly to RFL Council members.

The I&D Action Plan is being reviewed in 2020, with a particular focus on additional commitments on BAME inclusion, equality and anti-discrimination actions and campaigning.

The Group has welcomed new members from within the game and will expand further to ensure a greater understanding of the issues faced by players, coaches, volunteers, and supporters. Dr Rimla Akhtar (Non-Executive Director, RFL) has taken on the role of Chair.

LISTENING WORKSHOP SESSIONS

The Group's work, and that of the RFL in-house team, is further informed by

listening workshop sessions within the sport. In 2019 sessions took place with female players; with young players through the Listening Club project; with players with disabilities through Community Integrated Care; and most recently (in 2020) a series of online sessions have taken place with Black players and coaches.

PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout 2019 the RFL was very active on behalf of the sport with a number of key partner organisations and we are grateful for their engagement, support and check and challenge.

Women in Sport support the 21by21 campaign to get 21,000 women and girls playing by the end of the home World Cup.

Sporting Equals provide support on positive action recruitment as well as anti-racism projects.

The sport's partnership with **Community Integrated Care** developed considerably in 2019 and the charity is providing expert insight and partnership support on volunteering opportunities for people with learning and/or physical disabilities and will help the RFL develop new training modules which will be freely available to all clubs in Autumn 2020. The RFL has also worked with Mencap and the Downs Syndrome Association and **Activity Alliance**.

Throughout 2019 the RFL built on long standing relationships with **Pride Sports**, and with **Stonewall** and regular information sharing took place and guidance was sought on LGBTQ inclusion training and communications. The Stonewall x Sky Sports event – to which the RFL and Super League were invited to take part – will be rescheduled (postponed due to Covid-19). 2020 work to date has focused on drafting simple messages and inclusivity content for clubs (building on good practice in some clubs); mindful of pressures on clubs is available to clubs ready for upload to save colleagues' time.

UK SPORTS COUNCILS EQUALITY STANDARD - ADVANCED AWARD

The RFL currently holds the UK Sports Councils Equality Standard-Intermediate Award. During 2019, this was self-evaluated in partnership with Sport England to understand if we were in a position to apply for the Advanced Award. Currently, out of approximately 150 NGB's of sport, 2 have the award and 3 are applying/ considering applying. The Executive team have agreed that the RFL will now proceed with its application for the advanced award. This is likely to take approximately 18 months to complete.

YOUTH BOARD

The RFL Youth Board (YB) was established in summer 2019. It provides the RFL with more insight on what young people (18-24) think and feel about the game and how engagement can be improved. Current membership stands at 12, with further opportunities to get involved as the season restarts. The YB has evolved overtime and is increasing its input into Rugby League projects. These have included website design, safeguarding, interaction via twitch and other social media and digital platforms.



THE CODE OF SPORTS GOVERNANCE

Overview

The RFL has continued to seek to ensure that the principles of good governance are embedded in all aspects of its work and remains fully compliant with the Code of Sports Governance.

A detailed Governance Statement reporting on the RFL's governance arrangements and performance during 2019 is published on the RFL website.

The key governance changes and matters for the Rugby Football League during 2019 were:

- Brian Barwick completing his second term as Chair, deciding not to stand for a third term and therefore leaving the RFL Board as at the July Council meeting;
- Simon Johnson being appointed as Chair (his appointment being approved by the RFL Council in December);
- Sandy Lindsay MBE being appointed as a Non-Executive Director (her election was approved by the RFL Council in December);
- Rimla Akhtar MBE being appointed as a Non-Executive Director (her election was approved by the RFL Council in December);
- Completion of discussions with Super League (Europe) Limited ("SLE") on changes to the structure of that company;
- Approval of RFL Strategy Reset for 2019 to 2021; Completion of an external evaluation of the RFL Board by Value Alpha Limited and circulation and publication of the Value Alpha report. ValueAlpha made a number of

recommendations designed to move the Board from being 'fit for purpose' to being 'fit for the future'. These recommendations have been built into an action plan which is an agenda item at each Board meeting and is also reported on to Council members.

Board and Meetings

The current Non-Executive Directors of the RFL are Simon Johnson (Chair), Chris Brindley, Chris Hurst, Sandy Lindsay and Rimla Akhtar. The current Executive Directors are Ralph Rimmer and Karen Moorhouse.

During 2019 there were 7 formal Board Meetings. There was 100% attendance at these meetings by all directors (from appointment). In addition, there were a number of Board conference calls on specific time critical matters.

The sub-committees of the Board (being Audit and Risk; Remuneration Committee; Nominations Committee; the Laws Committee; the Whole Game Board and Community Board) met as required throughout the year.

Working with Stakeholders

As outlined in the Strategy Re-Set, in seeking to achieve its objectives, the RFL works in partnership with all its stakeholders including Super League (Europe) Limited, RL Cares, the RFL Facilities Trust, professional clubs and community game leagues and clubs.

The RFL is the governing body for the whole sport – all clubs (including Super League clubs), all players and other participants.

Super League (Europe) Limited ("SLE") is a separate legally entity with the shareholders being the Super League Clubs (from time to time) and the RFL and the SLE Board consisting of nominated representatives from each Super League Club, the RFL and the SLE CEO. The Articles of Association of SLE specify which matters are determined by the Clubs, which matters are determined by the RFL and which are joint decisions.

Role of RFL

As set out in the Strategy Reset, as the governing body of Rugby League, the Rugby Football League governs, develops, promotes and grows the sport. As part of this:

- **GOVERNANCE:** Regulatory and operational matters concerning the entire sport is the function of the governing body including: the appointment of match officials, player registrations and the enforcement of the salary cap, facility standards, safeguarding, medical standards and on-field and off-field disciplinary matters.
- **PARTICIPATION:** Working with foundations and other partners, the Rugby Football League remains focused on developing and growing grassroots rugby league in clubs and educational settings. Inclusive playing offers range from primary school age opportunities to youth, open age (including Women's Super League), Touch, Tag, Disability RL (physical disability and learning disability), Masters and Wheelchair RL.

PROFESSIONAL COMPETITIONS:

The Rugby Football League owns and is responsible for the operation of and marketing, promotion and presentation of the Challenge Cup, the 1895 Cup, the Championship and League 1. SLE is responsible for the marketing, promotion and presentation of the Super League competition. The Rugby Football League provides several core services to the SLE in relation to the operation of the Super League. SLE pays a management fee to the RFL and makes a further solidarity payment towards the operation of the other professional league competitions.

• **REPRESENTATIVE TEAMS:** The Rugby Football League is responsible for the England Performance Unit made up of the England Men's Senior, Knights Women's Senior, Wheelchair, Academy and Youth teams. The Rugby Football League is also responsible for the Great Britain Rugby League Lions.

• **WORLD CUP 2021:** The company running the Rugby League World Cup in 2021 (RLWC2021) is a wholly owned subsidiary of the RFL with an independent Board. The Rugby Football League works closely with RLWC2021 to ensure that the benefits and legacy of hosting the World Cup benefit the whole of the sport.

OURLEAGUE



In the second full year since its introduction by the RFL in the autumn of 2017, Our League went to a new level in 2019.

This included nominations for two prestigious national awards – and an invitation to Camp Nou in Catalonia, to address the Barca Sports Technology Symposium, alongside representatives from UEFA and Formula 1.

Throughout the year, Our League continued to deliver new opportunities for the RFL, our clubs and the sport of Rugby League – as well as tens of thousands of new members.

The RFL broke new ground for a British sporting governing body when we launched Our League as a membership product, website and App for all Rugby League fans, coaches and players - helping to deliver on customers' preferences to consume their sport often in segments across multiple devices.

We had started regular live streaming of matches in 2018, laying the foundations for a far more ambitious service in 2019, to members and the clubs.

We invested centrally in our production, which was necessary to add quality as well as quantity, and by the end of the year we'd delivered 105 live matches from numerous levels of the game – as well as two award ceremonies.

Matches covered included England Knights v Jamaica in December (our first paid stream); regular coverage of the Betfred Women's Super League and Coral Women's Challenge Cup; Betfred League One fixtures including the promotion decider between Oldham and Newcastle; the Wheelchair Challenge Cup Finals Day from Sheffield; the Warners Champion Schools Finals Day from Warrington; and other big Community and Youth occasions. The introduction of the AB Sundecks 1895 Cup provided a new competition including Betfred Championship and League 1 clubs, and the semi-final between Leigh and Widnes created a record streaming figure, beating the mark set by a Betfred Championship match between Sheffield Eagles and Bradford Bulls earlier in the year.

This all offered an exciting indication of potential further growth in future years. The two award nominations underlined the impact being made beyond Rugby League. The BT Sport Industry awards of April 2019 saw Our League through the finals within the category of Fan and Community Engagement. The Our League Membership also secured The RFL a finalist position for the Sports Business Award in the Best Fan Engagement Programme category.

Then in November it was off to Barcelona, for the fifth edition of the club's event. Our League was discussed in depth under the topic of Mobile Obsessed - and in two days of discussion, we learned so much.

Significant improvements to the experience on Our League for a Rugby League fan in 2019 included:

- Improving speed of match centre live score updates
- Homepage re-design
- Integration of OL to RL.com
- Our Learning Zone integration
- Community league tables in match centre
- More divisions in match centre
- Rewards4

Our League members have an average age significantly younger than that of paying spectators at matches or television viewers, and the total membership had reached 128,000 by the end of 2019.

In addition, awareness of the Our League Membership has become more apparent throughout the Rugby League community. On social media many use the hashtag #OurLeague when referencing non-membership specific conversations or content.



FINANCIAL REVIEW

SUMMARY AND RESULTS

Business review and results

The consolidated accounts for the RFL show a profit for the financial year of £75k for the year ended 31 December 2019 (2018: loss £327k). The RFL has maintained an aggregate positive cash balance throughout the year. At 31 December 2019, this aggregate balance was £4,868k (2018: £4,516k).

During 2019, short-term cash flow has been carefully managed. The medium-term external finance arranged in 2017 is still in place. This will support the cash flow of the business for the foreseeable future. As part of the RFL's move to the Etihad Campus in 2021, its office in Leeds is held for sale and the proceeds from the sale will make a significant positive impact on cashflow. In the meantime, cash flow is monitored closely and the adopted budget for 2020 generates a profit of £109k to further increase cash and reserves.

Detailed Analysis of Trading

Year on year turnover has decreased by 2% from £23,391k to £22,876k which can be attributed in the main to the absence of a home international test series in 2019 as opposed to the New Zealand Test Series occurring in

2018. This drove Match income to decrease to £2,203k in 2019 from £2,919k in 2018 – a reduction of 25% and Sponsorship income increased to £1,896k (2018: £1,773k) – an increase of 7%.

Government funding through Sport England has increased from £4,166k in 2018 to £4,898k – an increase of 18% mainly due to grants received by Rugby League World Cup 2021 Limited in support of preparations for the Rugby League World Cup which is to be held in England in 2021.

The existing BBC and Sky broadcast contracts continued in 2019. Overall broadcast income reduced from £10,338k in 2018 to £9,907k in 2019. The reduction is due to additional broadcast income earned in 2018 by selling the rights to screen the New Zealand Test Series. There were no home international series held in 2019. In partnership with Super League (Europe), the RFL is currently in negotiations with Sky ahead of the expiry of the current broadcast rights contract at the end of 2021.

Within the RFL accounts, the cost of sales heading is broken down into two sections. The first being the external, third party costs of making the sale and the second being the

cost of sales that are internal to the RFL's stakeholders such as payments directly made to clubs. External cost of sales decreased in 2019 by 20% from £6,932k in 2018 to £5,524k in 2019, this reduction is attributable to the higher costs of staging a home international series in 2018.

Grant funded activities expenditure has increased by 12% from £2,583k in 2018 to £2,903k in 2019 reflecting the level of programme activity delivered and its associated income. Sport England funded expenditure within this line has decreased in the year shadowing the financial profile of the current Sport England award.

Payments to and on behalf of clubs is made up of the cost of sales element of £2,537k (2018: £2,580k) and a further amount shown below Gross Profit on the Profit and Loss Account, which in 2019 brought the total payable to and on behalf of clubs to £9,210k (2018: £10,268k). In 2019, Operating Costs have increased to £7,921k from £6,737k in 2018. This is due to the tapering of Sport England back office funding and therefore less income to offset against the RFL's back office costs. This is part of Sport England's drive towards more financially sustainable NGB's. The classification of grant

funded expenditure in Rugby League World Cup 2021 Limited as operating costs has also contributed to this increase as activity and planning of the event begin to ramp up. Staff costs have significantly reduced from £6,719k to £5,754k in 2019 – a decrease of 14%. This is driven primarily by a reduction in head count as well as director remuneration decreasing by 13% from £515k in 2018 to £450k in 2019.

In order to continue to manage costs in response to Covid-19, further temporary cost savings have been made in relation to Executive and Non-Executive Director's salaries in 2020 whilst the Executive continue to plan for the delivery of the RFL's core objectives post pandemic.

Interest receivable by the RFL in 2019 was £17k (2018: £24k).

FINANCIAL REVIEW

CONSOLIDATED PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

	2019 £	2018 £
Turnover	22,875,547	23,390,592
Cost of sales	(5,523,799)	(6,931,815)
Cost of sales payable to or on behalf of clubs	(2,537,453)	(2,580,113)
Total cost of sales	(8,061,252)	(9,511,928)
Gross profit	14,814,295	13,878,664
Payments to or on behalf of clubs and other member organisations	(6,672,093)	(7,688,053)
Operating costs	(7,920,922)	(6,737,307)
Administrative costs	(14,593,015)	(14,425,360)
Operating loss	(221,280)	(546,696)
Other interest receivable and similar income	16,816	23,690
Amounts written off investments	(163,241)	0
Profit/(loss) before taxation	74,855	(523,006)
Tax on profit/(loss)	0	195,649
Profit/(loss) for the financial year	74,855	(327,357)

Notes

1. Turnover

	2019 £	2018 £
Match income	2,203,005	2,918,918
Broadcast	9,906,856	10,338,463
Sponsorship	1,895,515	1,772,909
Government funding	4,897,927	4,165,741
Other	3,972,244	4,194,561
Total Turnover	22,875,547	23,390,592

All turnover is generated in the UK

2. Cost of sales

Match costs	1,723,818	2,994,236
Grant funded activities	2,902,515	2,583,385
Sponsorship and promotional costs	371,516	810,681
Other	525,950	543,513
Total cost of sales	5,523,799	6,931,815

3. Payments to or on behalf of clubs and other member organisations

Awards to clubs	4,398,362	5,178,788
Awards to other sections of the game	115,000	100,000
Match officials	1,298,445	1,324,385
Insurance	558,879	628,246
Disciplinary costs and banned substances testing	104,321	228,469
Player welfare	197,086	228,165
	6,672,093	7,688,053

FINANCIAL REVIEW

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

	2019 £	2018 £
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	1,914,636	2,022,634
Investment property	750,000	750,000
	2,664,636	2,772,634
Current assets		
Debtors	13,152,046	11,992,375
Cash at bank and in hand	4,867,576	4,515,628
	18,019,622	16,508,003
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(20,606,231)	(19,471,623)
Net current liabilities	(2,586,609)	(2,963,620)
Total assets less current liabilities	78,027	(190,986)
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(194,158)	0
Net (liabilities)/assets	(116,131)	(190,986)
Capital and reserves		
Revaluation reserve	565,219	565,219
Accumulated (deficit)/surplus	(681,350)	(756,205)
Shareholders' (deficit)/funds	(116,131)	(190,986)



THE RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT



TONY ADAMS MBE RFL PRESIDENT

Tony Adams MBE became the 29th honorary President of the Rugby Football League in July 2019.

The former Arsenal and England captain has developed a close working relationship with the sport through the Sporting Chance organisation he founded in 2000 - now the largest provider in the world of education and treatment for sports professionals.

The RFL entered an official partnership with Sporting Chance in 2011 and since then the charity has helped well over 400 Rugby League players – while Adams himself has become a familiar face at clubs and matches, delivering seminars on the dangers of addiction and the importance of mental health.

During his 22-year playing career with Arsenal, Adams earned the unique distinction of captaining a title-winning team in three different decades. He also led the Gunners to three FA Cups, two League Cups, the European

Cup Winners' Cup, and two FA Community Shields.

In international football, he won 66 cap for England between 1987 and 2000 and played at four major tournaments.

Adams is also a Patron for the Forward Trust, a charity which empowers people to break the often interlinked cycles of addiction or crime to move forward with their lives; NACOA (the National Association for Children of Alcoholics); and for the School-Home Support charity (SHS) – which helps disadvantaged children and young people overcome barriers to education such as poverty, domestic abuse and housing issues.

He was awarded the MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 1999 for his services to football.



CARL HALL RFL VICE PRESIDENT

Carl Hall became the Rugby Football League honorary role Vice President in July 2019, in recognition of the New Zealander's contribution over three decades to British Rugby League, as well as his commitment as the longest serving member of the RFL Council.

He first came to England in 1987 with the Junior Kiwis touring team, after which he signed for Doncaster as an 18-year-old.

He made more than 150 appearances for Doncaster in three stints in South Yorkshire, and also played for Hull KR, Bradford, Featherstone, Leeds and York.

He also had a successful spell in rugby union with Moseley, but returned to Doncaster in a crucial off-field role in 2009, helping to assemble a consortium which steered the club away from serious financial trouble.

He has been Chief Executive at Doncaster RLFC since 2013.

THE RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE BOARD



SIMON JOHNSON CHAIR

Simon Johnson, previously the RFL's Senior Non-Executive Director having joined the Board in July 2014, became the Chair of the RFL in October 2019. Alongside his appointment, two additional Non-Executive Directors were added to the Board.

Simon runs a Consultancy business advising clients in the sport and leisure industries and charitable third sector. He spent 7 years as Chief Executive of the Jewish Leadership Council. Before that, he had a 20-year career that saw him operate at the highest levels of the sports and media industries. After a period as the senior lawyer at the Premier League, Simon's career in sport saw him spend four years as Director of Corporate Affairs at The Football Association, followed by a role as COO of England's Bid to host the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

He started his career as a lawyer, spending 10 years with ITV, the majority as Director of Rights and Business Affairs.

Away from sport, Simon lives in London with his wife and three children. He is an active participant in community and charitable institutions.



CHRIS BRINDLEY MBE NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

After Executive roles in the UK with NatWest, British Gas and Metro Bank, Chris now has a portfolio of Non Executive Director (NED) and Chair roles in Business and Sport. He also is a global keynote speaker and Executive Coach.

He is Chair of the Rugby League World Cup 2021, Senior NED at the Rugby Football League, Senior NED at the Manchester Football Association, NED at Equilibrium LLP, NED at Her Spirit, Business Adviser to Zellar Limited and Chair of the Sporting House Group. From an Executive coaching perspective, Chris is the Leadership and Business Coach at Metro Bank, Switch the Play, Athlete Inspired Programme and Goodson Thomas. Chris has coached executives from companies such as Heineken, Muller, Telent and Halfords. Chris is also a Business Mentor for the Premier League Elite Academy Managers Programme, and subject lead for the people module on the Executive Education programme 'How to be a CEO in a Sporting Organisation'.

He has also worked extensively with academics from leading business schools as well as executives, managers and team leaders within global PLCs. His accolades include Britain's Best Boss, Most Outstanding Workplace at the National Business Awards; Sales & Marketing Director of the Year (3 consecutive years), and in 2017 was awarded United Kingdom Non Executive Director of the Year by the Institute of Directors.

Chris has spoken in the UK, Europe, Africa and Australia on topics including ChangeManagement, Culture, Building High Performing Teams, Customer Experience and Coaching.

In June 2018, Chris was awarded an MBE for his services to sport.

THE RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE BOARD



CHRIS HURST NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chris Hurst joined the RFL Board in December 2018 after almost 20 years of experience in the sports industry working for the Premier League, International Cricket Council, BBC Sport and Nielsen Sports, before launching his own digital sports business in 2018 – C J Hurst Consultancy – which provides strategic advice to leading organisations across the sports industry.

At Nielsen Sports, Chris oversaw the organisation's digital offer in UK and Europe, working with leading rights holders and brands on a range of key digital issues.

As BBC Sport's first dedicated social media editor, he developed and delivered a strategy focused on growing BBC's social media reach and engaging younger audiences.

In his role as Digital Development Editor for BBC Sport's award-winning interactive services, Chris oversaw the editorial development plans for the Rio Olympics that were used by 102 million unique browsers across the globe.

Chris also works as a Trustee on the Board of the Women's Sport Trust.



DR RIMLA AKHTAR MBE NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dr Rimla Akhtar MBE has over 18 years' experience in the sports industry across the UK, Middle East and Asia, after a successful career in the City at leading global professional services firm Pricewaterhouse Coopers.

In 2014, she became the first Muslim and Asian woman on the FA Council in addition to her role on the Inclusion Advisory Board at the FA, and in 2015 she was awarded an MBE for her contribution to equality and diversity in sport. She holds a portfolio of additional strategic and boardroom roles, including as an Independent Director of the Sports Ground Safety Authority, and Council member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland.

She was ranked 14th in the 2018 Forbes global list of the most powerful women in sport. She founded the leading global sport development consultancy, RimJhim Consulting; she was Chair of the Muslim Women's Sport Foundation until December 2018; and co-founded the global Muslim Women in Sport Network.

THE RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE BOARD



SANDY LINDSAY MBE NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Sandy Lindsay MBE is Chair of Tangerine, the specialist creative communications agency she founded in Manchester in 2002.

In 2015 she was awarded the MBE for services to business and young people, and in the same year she was named North West Director of the Year by the Institute of Directors (and Highly Commended in the same awards nationally). That followed the launch in 2013 of The Juice Academy, the UK's first industry-led social media apprenticeship which has created jobs for almost 350 young people in the North West.

A champion of social mobility, Sandy chairs Skills Groups for the North West Business Leadership Team and the Institute of Directors, is on the Business Leadership Council of Teach First, Vice Chair of Forever Manchester and is a Non-Executive Director of Flock and Northcoders.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

RALPH RIMMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Ralph Rimmer was appointed CEO of the Rugby Football League in July 2018, having taken the role on an interim basis in January 2018.

He has been a member of the RFL Board since 2013 after joining the organisation as Chief Operating Officer in October 2010. He has a wealth of experience at every level of the game, coupled with extensive knowledge in stadia and leisure development.

He played community rugby league for many years as a junior and senior for Ulverston ARLFC and went on to captain the Liverpool University team and play at student international level, before playing for Wakefield side, Stanley Old Boys. He began his professional career within the sport in South Yorkshire in 1991 as a Development Officer with Doncaster. He then took up a similar role with Sheffield Eagles three years later, going on to become General Manager and then Chief Executive of the then Super League club. Following the club's historic Challenge Cup

Final victory over Wigan at Wembley in 1998, Rimmer went on to spend five years as the Chief Executive at Huddersfield Giants before moving on to the board as a non-executive director and taking on the role as the managing director of the stadium company, Kirklees Stadium Development Ltd.

Rimmer spent four years as a non-executive director of Huddersfield Town AFC, helping to take the club out of administration; and also managed the Ireland national rugby league team from 1997 to 2002 (including the 2000 Rugby League World Cup) and the Yorkshire Origin team in 2002. He was also non-executive Chairman of The Sporting Pride Community Trust, in Huddersfield, between 2007 and 2010.

As Managing Director of KSDL he was Project Lead on the £2m stadium redevelopment in 2007 and also on the £150m The HD One Leisure Development. He acted as a management consultant on several stadia developments including; Leigh Sports Village, Colchester United FC Stadium and also the Salford City Stadium.



KAREN MOORHOUSE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND COMPANY SECRETARY

Karen Moorhouse is the RFL's Chief Regulatory Officer with overall responsibility for all governance and regulatory matters across the whole of the game including Salary Cap and Player Registrations, Facility Standards, Safeguarding, Medical, On Field and Off Field Disciplinary matters and Player Welfare. She has been Company Secretary since 2017 and became a Director in January 2018. Karen is also a non-executive director of Rugby League World Cup 2021 Limited - the company organising the next Rugby League World Cup in England.

Karen joined the Rugby Football League in 2008 as Compliance Manager. In 2009 she became Head of Legal and then in 2014 assumed her current role. Whilst Head of Legal, Karen was also on the Project Board of the Rugby League World Cup 2013.

Karen is a qualified solicitor having read law at Cambridge University graduating with a First Class Degree. She completed her solicitor training contract at Magic Circle law firm Linklaters, subsequently qualifying into the Banking Department.

In 2005 Karen joined the Football Association as an in-house Lawyer with responsibility for a range of sponsorship, commercial and other legal matters.





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