



DORSET & WILTS. RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

Hon Treasurer
John Palmer

County President
Stuart Murrow

Hon Secretary
Gerald Burden
28 Springfield Road
Wincanton
Somerset
BA9 9BL

Date: 9 July 2018

Please note that a copy of this open letter will be posted on our website and social media feeds in order to keep our rugby community informed.

For the attention of

Mr. Stephen Brown – RFU Chief Executive Officer

Mr. Andrew Cosslett – RFU Chair

Mr. Stephen Grainger - RFU Rugby Development Director

Mr. Rob Briers – RFU Community Game Board Chair

Ms. Lucinda Pullinger – RFU Human Resources Director

Re: PROPOSED RFU STAFF RESTRUCTURING PROGRAMME

Dear Sirs/Madan

We are writing to express our grave fears relating to proposed staffing restructuring programme currently underway for all RFU staff, especially those within rugby development. We feel that this review should also include local representation, because the RFU is controlled by the clubs and not the other way around.

Currently we have two Rugby Development Officers (RDO's) and four Community Rugby Coaches (CRC's), one RDO and two CRC's in each county; covering a total area of 2,370 square miles. Which makes Dorset & Wilts RFU the second largest CB not only within Area One but also within Areas Two and Three. To put that in perspective England's largest county is Yorkshire which measures a total of 6066 square miles and is sub-divided by the RFU into five regions. Therefore, Dorset and Wilts in comparison is 40% of the size of Yorkshire.

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County	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3
	Area Sq/mls		
Devon	2590		
Dorset & Wilts	2370		
Somerset	1610		
Hampshire & IOW		1602	
Essex			1542
Sussex			1461
Kent			1442
Cornwall	1376		
Gloucestershire & Bristol	1258		
Oxford		1006	
Herefordshire		833	
Bucks		723	
Surrey			642
Berks		487	
Middlesex		285	
Total area	9204	4936	5087

Our unique geographical and road infrastructure is a major factor which impose daily constraints on travel across our two counties. On average front line staff are travelling for up to 3-4 hours per day and on some days, this could be as high 6 to 7 hours to carry out their duties with our member clubs. Much, of this travelling being done during the late evenings because club or CB committee members/coaches are not available during the day, thereby, increasing the risk of a traffic incidents involving the RFU front line staff.

To travel from our most northern club (Cricklade) to our most southern club (Bridport) is 117 miles. The fastest route is via the M4 Swindon to Bristol and then by the M5 to Taunton and onwards across country, with a total travel time of 2hrs 24mins without any delays. To travel from our most western club (Bridport) to our most eastern club (Amesbury) is 64 miles. The fastest route is via “A” classified roads (Dorchester – Blandford – Salisbury), with a total travel time of 1hr 32mins without any delays.

However, our limited number of north-south roads within the two counties are often congested by normal traffic. Holiday and weekend traffic exacerbate this congestion further creating routing delays especially around the A303/A350 area in Wiltshire and towards the main coastal locations in Dorset where many of our clubs are situated. For example, a journey from Bournemouth to Dorchester is a distance of 28 miles; and should take 48 minutes but can routinely take up to 2 hours with the additional holiday and weekend traffic.

Our front-line staff make a major contribution to rugby in our counties, focussing on retention and recruitment programs and the organisation and financial health of our clubs. Their work with clubs who are “at risk” is key to sustaining the game in our more remote areas. You will know from GMS that our RFU front line staff currently have a workload of 39 clubs (38 voting and 1 pending), and 3 Universities.

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We currently have 16 Woman's and Girls (W&G) teams established and 2 further teams are expected to emerge in the coming year. W&G team growth is one of D&W RFUs strategic priorities and both the RDOs and CRCs are instrumental to realising this potential.

With the current RFU staffing levels the travel burden is manageable. However, the impact of any reduction in staff would be exacerbated by the journey time constraints for the remaining staff; resulting in a substantial reduction in club visits and any development activity.

In conclusion, we foresee the following impacts arising from staff reductions and other efficiency changes:

1. Reduced morale amongst front-line RFU staff; regrettably, it appears to us that the RFU front-line staff throughout the whole country are already very dejected by the conduct of the current review and the lack of uncertainty about their futures.
2. A drop in the overall number of people playing rugby in all forms of the game, once these cost cuts are implemented due the lack of support available.
3. The overall standard of rugby being played at grass roots level will drop.
4. The Twickenham management team will become more distant and disconnected from grass roots rugby.
5. A negative impact on the Targeted Delivery Programme.
6. A decrease in the performance of the remaining front-line staff.
7. An increase in front line staff turnover.
8. More anti-social working hours for the remaining front-line staff.
9. An increase in front-line staff illness due to the extra work load (i.e. stress, mental health issues like depression etc).
10. There will be an increase in costs to manage the game due longer travelling times, replacement vehicles and possible of overnight stops etc.
11. There will be an increase in-house meeting's, resulting less time being spent on the ground.
12. A greater lack of support from the top clubs within the area.
13. There will be a sharp decline in players progressing to top flight rugby from the grass root clubs.
14. Smaller clubs will not get the level of support they currently receive and need.
15. More clubs will be put at risk, with some of the smaller clubs disappearing. Which will result in the reduction of numbers playing the game.
16. The larger clubs will take all the support available from the front-line staff, leaving little to none for smaller or at-risk clubs.
17. Clubs that are close to the staff's home location will receive the majority of support.
18. Less funding applications due to unavailable staff, if not a total withdraw of funding in its current format.
19. Less Club Accreditation being processed due to unavailable staff.

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20. Higher level of support will be needed from the CB's without an increase in funding.
21. Less volunteers at both club and CB level due to the increased work load, or illness caused by the increased work load.
22. Less opportunities for training courses, both on and off the pitch.
23. An increase in player injuries due to a lower standard of coaching available.
24. An increase in insurance claims due to more major injuries, which will result an increase in insurance premiums to the RFU.
25. More outsourcing of resources, resulting in higher costs.
26. Possible moves to combine CB's (i.e. like Devon and Cornwall – Somerset and Dorset & Wilts) to reduce funding costs (PFR) and the level of front-line staff needed ever further.
27. Increase in international ticket costs to clubs, which will result in lower numbers of genuine supporters attending international games to meet the growing cost of managing the RFU.

Yours Faithfully



Stuart Murrow

President – Dorset and Wilts RFU



George McElroy

Management Board Chair – Dorset and Wilts RFU

Cc Gerald Burden – Dorset & Wilts RFU General Secretary

Dorset & Wilts RFU Webmaster

All members of the Dorset & Wilts RFU Management Board

Ron Jones – Dorset & Wilts RFU Council member

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