

Reports for Council – 12th December 2023

Area Representative

South Wiltshire

Huddle Area – South Wilts	Date – 11 Dec 2023 – via Zoom
Attendees/ Clubs: Wheatsheaf, Pewsey Vale, Devizes, Salisbury, Amesbury, Warminster D&W: Dave Wookey (chair), Hon Sec, President RFU: John Constable, Scott Sturdy, Ben Smith Apologies Marlborough (on an RFU meeting),	
<u>Actions from Last meeting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bids for support – all – No forthcoming yet, Grants are based on need not any specific topic• Volunteers needed to help run Dorset & Wilts. https://dwrugby.co.uk/vacancies/ - More will be added to this page. – still more needed, including possibly role of Area rep for S Wilts at next season or one after	
<u>Agenda</u>	
1	
a Mens & Womens Leagues- No issues from the Men's league or the Ladies. Appears a Women's team at Warminster is starting to build.	
b Mens Cups (National and local) & Women's Cups (National and proposed local) Ladies RFU Cup is underway with several D&W teams still involved. The Men's PJ cup starts 13 th April, with draw hopefully out to clubs mid/late January.	
Within the above I would like all to consider the problem of late cancelations of matches which has caused considerable financial hit on host clubs where funds have been spent in preparing for hosting visitors (food and clubhouse hire where that has to be done).	
There are no hard and fast rules, the advice is to make sure teams are in communication with each other if potential issues are likely to arise. Don't forget, for leagues to involve the League Secretary who is there to help advise on options. These can include Game on at counites 2 and below. See supplementary note below	
ACTION- League Secretary to write to clubs reminding them of need to communicate with everyone around games.	
2 Age Grade Rugby – Hamish Morton who is head of Age Grade for the CB was to join us, but late personal issues precluded this.	
U14-16 Competitions have been arranged for after Christmas as advised earlier in the season. These are knock outs for D&W Clubs only and the draw has been issued. It is noted that some clubs have made totally inappropriate comments about the running of these, and this should not continue. We are all volunteers, and this should be respected. U12/13 are looking at running events as festivals over 2-day periods. The key message for all is the aim to supply Competitive fixtures but it's not 'win at all Costs'.	
U16 Girls are building numbers at Warminster and Salisbury numbers increasing but Devizes have lost their Girls but are trying to rebuild this group.	
3 Walking Rugby initiatives (and other forms of Rugby)	
More clubs in Wiltshire are running Walking rugby, including Marlborough, Warminster & Wheatsheaf. Devizes and PV want to start but struggle to find a volunteer to run the section. DW has access to finding and equipment for new clubs.	
Salisbury running an event for new clubs on 20 Jan – contact richardlloyd@btinternet.com for details	
4 Pitch situations and clubhouses	
No issues raised by clubs. Wheatsheaf have hopefully sorted out their issues with the ground and are now back playing home games. The new Landlord of the Wheatsheaf pub however, after 32 years, no longer	

wants any association with the team. They have secured a new more local venue in Harnham to go to post match.

5 GMS tidy up, verifications and missing data

Still a live issue for clubs, the smaller ones are getting it sorted but a lot of work for larger clubs to tackle, often with limited volunteer resource. Wheats stated a Rugby Safe issue had been brought to their attention from RFU. DW will assist in clearing this, a reminder about loading certificates via Self Help, especially First Aid qualifications

6 CB roles – request for people to come forward from clubs

See the list of vacancies at the end of this note.

7 RFU points (Ben Smith should be joining us for this)

Club visits done including W&G check in. Webinars are being run (list off of Ben where to find those done). Club health check is still ongoing, and Ben has set up a WhatsApp Wiltshire Community.

8 Future meeting Schedule – We currently look for 4 per season, September, December March and end May. Too many, not enough, would you prefer more “off line” comms?

Agreed to remain quarterly looking at 3rd Monday of the Month so provisionally next meeting 18th March 2024.

9 AOB – From Aimi: To note that one of our last seasons ERDPP U16 girls - Hayley Jones – has been selected for the England Under 18s this season

Actions

- GMS cleanse and player logons. Happy to help clubs in this group sort things out.

Date of next meeting: I would like next meeting to be around Easter I am suggesting 18 March at 7 PM via Zoom or Face to Face – depending on host availability and weather

East Dorset

Note to go to Chairs, Secretaries, Treasurers and Presidents of clubs in the East Dorset area cluster.

Apologise for maybe helping to fill your inbox but I thought I would reach out via yourself about trying to restart the East Dorset area Clubs cluster. The clubs that form part of this group are Lytchett Minster, Wimborne, Poole, Bournemouth, Oakmeadians, Christchurch & East Dorset Dockers.

The cluster group is more to help share news, information, current issues and a general discussion forum that is part of the communication lines between clubs, D&W and the RFU and vice versa.

We are looking for someone to lead this cluster, it doesn't necessarily have to be one of you or a club officer, we are just looking for someone to act as the cluster lead. Is there anyone in your club that might be interested in this role.

They would be part of the D&W Council, helping to influence the working of D&W at Council meetings. Support in the role would be given by senior D&W officers, including myself and Dave Wookey.

If you are interested or know of anyone interested in your club, can you/they please get in touch with me in the first instance. If there are any questions again, please direct them to myself or Dave Wookey.

Many Thanks

John Constable

j.constable4swansrugby@btinternet.com

West Wiltshire

Confirming there has been no West Wiltshire Area meeting. I hope to be at this meeting providing I can log in at the appropriate time.

Discipline

Use of VEO in Disciplinary Panel Hearings

Any club has the ability to use VEO to support their case, in order to challenge a Red Card (RC) or to bring a citing. The Panel have the ability to consider any footage that is sent to them, in accordance with 19.10.11.

19.10.11 A Disciplinary Panel or Appeal Panel shall be entitled to consider footage from any source, including (but not limited to) footage commissioned or obtained by a Referee Society, Referee Group, Match Official or any other person.

It must also be noted that if the Panel are made aware of any footage that could be available but is being withheld by a club then they are able to remind them of 19.10.10.

19.10.10 Where match footage is in the possession or control of the Club or a member of the Club, of which the person, Player or Club appearing before the hearing is a member and, without reasonable excuse, the footage is not produced to the Disciplinary Panel or Appeal Panel the panel shall be entitled to infer that it is unfavourable to the person, Player or Club.

You can also make sure the Club are aware of the need to support any discipline process as set out in 19.1.4

19.1.4 All individuals and entities under the jurisdiction of the RFU are required to cooperate with an RFU (or Constituent Body) disciplinary investigation or disciplinary proceedings....

(The RFU recently had a club that tried to put a copyright agreement in place for any footage they supplied, in that a fee of £1000 was due if it was used for any disciplinary process (which may lead to their player being sanctioned). Needless to say, they were reminded of the regulations and have now agreed it can be used for no fee).

Role of VEO in Red Card Cases

I am aware of a number of Clubs using VEO to argue that the RC should not have been issued.

The Club are entitled to use that footage as part of their case, however, the Panel must also consider the position and report of the referee. If the footage is not absolutely conclusive in determining if a RC should have been issued then the Panel should ensure they consider 19.5.1

19.5.1 The integrity of the Laws of the Game and the Referee's position as sole judge of fact and law during a match is unassailable.

There appears to be a misconception amongst clubs (certainly those at levels the RFU deal with) that if an incident is not shown on the video footage or the footage is inconclusive then the player should be given the benefit of the doubt.

This is absolutely not the position and if the footage is not clear or if the actions cannot be seen on the video, the evidence of the Referee should be given full consideration with the Panel being mindful of 19.5.1.

There was a recent case of Swain (Rams) that was dealt with by an RFU Panel and attached. In this case the video did not show conclusive evidence of head contact (it was an angle behind the tackled player), however, the Panel determined that given the position of the referee and his verbal evidence, there was no grounds to overturn the appeal.

Aside from the visual side of VEO, the audio function has proved extremely useful for MOA cases. Please also remember that there is the ability to move the camera position

Age Grade - 2023/24 Regulation Changes

<u>Regulation 19 Appendix 6 - Age Grade Rugby Disciplinary Procedures</u>
<u>Regulation 19 Appendix 6, Subsection 1 - Alternative Sanctions</u>
<u>Regulation 19 Appendix 6, Subsection 2 - Half Game Rule Sanction Table (Clubs)</u>
<u>Regulation 19 Appendix 6, Subsection 3 - Half Game Rule Sanction Table (Schools and Colleges)</u>
<u>Regulation 19 Appendix 6, Subsection 4 - Playing Up or Down Discipline Breach Protocol (Clubs)</u>
<u>Regulation 19 Appendix 6, Subsection 5 - Playing Up or Down Discipline Breach Protocol (Schools, Colleges and Regional Academies - Centres of Excellence)</u>

CB Audit : Friday 5 January 2024 - Friday 1 March 2024

As you will know, last season we undertook an 'in-person' CB audit in which we setup a zoom call with the CB Discipline team and wider CB Exec members. This year, we will be asking CB's to complete the same form but we won't be asking you to join a meeting. This is more of a self-reflection process, hopefully you're all aware of this as it's been mentioned at a few drop-in sessions and at conference briefly.

The audit will be coming out to you all via the CB Relationship Managers team (in copy) in the first week of January. Our CB call on Monday 8 January will go through some of the key outcomes from the last audit process, our aims in this upcoming review and the timelines. I appreciate that the form will take a little time to complete but its hugely important that we get a response from each CB (I'm sure we can rustle up a prize for the first CB to provide a full response!!) so that we can continue to identify any areas in which we can offer support and, more importantly, shout to others about what a wonderful job you are all doing.

Management

Handbook Updates – Information wanted or to be Updated

D&W Clubs
Amesbury RFC
Blandford RFC
Bournemouth RFC
Bradford-on-Avon RFC
Bridport RFC

Calne RFC
 Chippenham RFC
 Christchurch RFC
 Colerne RFC
 Cricklade RFC
 Devizes RFC
 Dorchester RFC
 East Dorset Dockers RFC
 Lytchett Minster RFC
 Melksham RFC
 Oakmeadians RFC
 Pewsey Vale RFC
 Poole RFC
 Sherborne RFC
 Supermarine RFC
 Swindon RFC
 Swindon College Old Boys RFC
 Weymouth & Portland RFC
 Wheatsheaf Cabin Crew RFC

Others

Ellingham & Ringwood RFC
 New Milton & District RFC
 Fairford RFC
 Bath Saracens RFC

BATH COMBINATION RUGBY

Referee Training Officer

DORSET & WILTS RFU COMPETITION REGULATIONS FOR SENIOR MENS RUGBY – To be Checked

Rules and Guidance for D&W Age Grade Competitions 2023-24 – To be checked

Club Support

Honda Volunteer of the Year 2024 Update

Please see attached email.

RFU Council Representative

<p>Previous month's activity:</p>	<p>Will be circulating report from recent RFU Council as a separate document.</p> <p>Attended recent CB drop in- some notes made as follows.</p> <p>Started with a representative from the Youth Council in NLD explaining how they were set up and what they have done recently. Key focus on organising Primary School festival and also U12 festival. Now looking at Colts festival.</p> <p>Trying to help work with individual clubs to develop Youth Council in each club.</p> <p>Has given the young people confidence to speak up, organise events and communicate with wider groups.</p>
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	<p>Safeguarding This is the 5th year of the Annual Club Safeguarding audit and thanks to everyone's efforts 100% were completed.</p> <p>Please note and let clubs know- the audit WILL BE an annual event going forward so the sooner the club completes once the window opens the better. Slides were shown of the scores under the various headings- the lowest was around using the recommended Application form for new volunteers, followed by having an assistant CSO in post.</p> <p>Also shared was a slide showing the trends over the years and thankfully in most areas the scores have got better year on year.</p> <p>Next steps- each CB will get a breakdown of their club responses and follow ups with clubs where there might be some difficulties can be worked on.</p> <p>CB Audits- some areas identified include need for regular opportunities for CBSM to catch up with RFU Safeguarding team, What is best practice regarding CB's maintaining regular contact with CSO's, Notifications and Inductions for new CSO's.</p> <p>Other areas involved in Competition Development Sub Committee- looking at how to get more rugby played at lower levels. This will include trying to promote again 'Game-On' and get clubs to accept that this will enable a match to take place etc.</p> <p>The Papa John's oversight group is looking at the draws soon- over 500 clubs entered across the Country- 20 from D&W.</p> <p>Review of Reg 19 (discipline) is underway.</p> <p>Community Game Future- part of group looking at Adult Male and mainly 2 areas- lowest XV/social rugby and 16-18 Age grade transition into Senior rugby.</p> <p>Player Registration. Several feedback sessions held with RFU Council. Some minor tweaks to be made but the area which was being referred to as allowing Dual registration (enabling players to help out local clubs if no game) will now be from Level 9 down and may well be picked up under local de-regulation.</p> <p>RFU staff working on key wording to start to go out in the New Year- in the meantime advice is for clubs to get their players data up to date, e-mails verified etc. so that come the summer hopefully the issues will be less.</p> <p>Meetings on the above 3 all taking place in the next 10 days or so.</p> <p>RFU Annual Report is available via the England Rugby website.</p>
Current Budget update:	n/a
Proposed Activity (including estimated cost)	Continued attendance at meetings where possible, especially Cluster meetings (much easier if virtual), visit clubs and general pick up information around the current state of the game and our clubs.

	<p>Suggest as part of using this years Targeted Delivery funding we look to run a session for Club Fixture secretaries, if need be one in Dorset, one in Wilthisre to upskill people to help clubs find games to fill gaps rather than relying on league or someone else to do the work for them. Likely cost to cover say room hire and maybe a drink/food for attendees to encourage attendance across both Counties say £500 per event.</p> <p>Also suggest running similar sessions early spring to get clubs/teams views on whether they may prefer not to be in leagues and have a Matrix style competition, especially in Wiltshire where some teams are struggling- this would enable games to be played outside the rigid regulations of the English Clubs Championship. Again cost say £500 per event,</p> <p>Overall cost say £2000.</p>
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Age Grade

Please see the link below a summary of responses to the D&W Age Grade Rugby review for discussion.

[Click here to view](#)

Following recent issues regarding clubs participating in the D&W Age Grade Competitions, which has resulted in unnecessary comments from some towards the current Age Grade management.

The statement below has been drafted.

D&W RFU AGE GRADE STATEMENT.

The Dorset & Wilts RFU (D&W) is one of 28 Geographical Constituent Bodies (CB) within England and the CB is managed by volunteers.

The role of the D&W is to promote and manage rugby across Dorset & Wiltshire on behalf of the RFU.

The D&W have two classifications of Membership

1. Voting member – this is a club who plays league rugby, and are located within Dorset or Wiltshire
2. Non-voting member – Clubs from other CBs, Social Clubs, Schools, MOD etc

Many Non-voting Clubs do not pay their annual fee due to the D&W, despite receiving payment reminders.

We are currently carrying out a review with the aid of England Rugby on how we can delete these clubs from our GMS record, due to the lack of engagement.

Unfortunately we do find there are two main problems with direct messaging a club via RFU Game Management System (GMS).

1. What we call “The Gatekeeper” this is someone who we will inform about a subject matter, but then they fail to forward the information on to the correct person within a club.
2. The club’s records on the GMS
 - Are out of date
 - Incomplete
 - People listed under the wrong roles

We do not have any control over these issues, but GMS training is available to clubs via the RFU.

The D&W is not tasked by the RFU to provide rugby for clubs outside of our geographical area.

The Senior Mens Leagues are managed by South West Rugby, however some of these leagues will carry county names.

Historically these age grade competitions were for D&W clubs only, it was not until the previous management group allowed clubs from other CBs to participate in D&W competitions, which was done without the agreement of the D&W Council.

Over the years this management group has failed to collect all the entry fees due, which has resulted in a significant short fall in income to the D&W to offset this groups expenditure on venues, travel, food, medals, and trophies etc.

On reviewing the cost breakdown for these past Age Grade Competitions it became clear that a large part of the outstanding debt was from clubs from other CBs. Despite these Clubs being reminded these debts remain unpaid.

The D&W Council instructed the previous management group in May 2021 to stop hosting competitions for clubs outside of the D&W, and to resolve the issue relating to outstanding debts.

These instructions were ignored by the previous management group, which resulted in the disbanding of this Age Grade Management Group in June 2023.

At the D&W Annual General Meeting in July 2023 the member clubs voted for Hamish Morton (HM) to become Age Grade Lead with a seat on the D&W Council, with a mandate to review all Age Grade rugby including competitions.

It became clear that some of these Age Grade competitions were being ran outside of RFU Regulations by previous management group.

Therefore the D&W Council concluded the following

1. That all Age Grade Competitions would be suspended at the start of the 2023 season to allow a full review and they would have a phased reintroduction during the 2023/24 season. Starting with Under 18's during September/October, with the Under 14's to 16's following in January 2024.
2. All age grade competitions would be only open to D&W clubs, as per the senior competitions.
3. This instruction will be incorporated within the D&W Standing Orders and will not be reviewed again, unless the RFU introduce Cross Border Age Grade Competitions.
4. It is not the role of D&W to provide competitions for other CBs clubs, due to the lack of competitions available in their home CBs.
5. Any club with outstanding invoices from previous years, would not be allowed to participate in any D&W Competitions (Age Grade or Seniors)
6. The D&W Council was unwilling to continue to fund this type of loss, because of the impact this is having on the support we can offer our Voting member clubs.
7. The D&W Council will consider starting Disciplinary action against anyone who is deemed to be **ABUSIVE** towards any D&W volunteer regarding an **AGREED D&W RFU MANAGEMENT POLICY**.

Actions by the D&W

1. HM issued a video statement to all clubs during August 2023 outlining the course of action the D&W were planning to undertake during the 2023-24 season.
2. On the 6th of September 2023, the entry forms for the Under 18's Competition was issued on behalf of HM.
3. The policy set out by the D&W Council restricting which clubs could take part in any D&W Age Grade competitions was ignored regarding the Under 18's competition.
4. This action was also hampered by the lack of invoicing by the person tasked with managing the Under 18's competitions, which will result in another potential financial loss to the D&W.
5. On the 18th of September 2023, HM held a video conference with over 100 Age Grade Club Representatives again he outlined the course of action that the D&W were going to follow.
6. On the 17th of October 2023, HM, and members of the RFU staff issued a questionnaire to Club Age Grade Representatives, Club Chairs etc, over 500 replies were received by them.
7. Based on the replies to this questionnaire, this is how the D&W are planning to manage Age Grade Rugby in the future.

If D&W clubs wish to play a club from another English CB that is not an issue, but it is up to the two clubs to arrange the fixture.

There are several WhatsApp groups currently operating within Age Grade, these were until July 2023, being managed by the previous management group and were unable to be monitored by others. After August 2023 these groups have come under the control of the D&W Age Grade Lead, and in the new year the membership of these groups will be reviewed.

We have seen a trend of low-level abuse towards some of our age grade volunteers, if this type of action continues the D&W Council will consider cancelling all Age Grade Competitions.

The D&W Council are always looking to recruit new volunteers, especially within the Age Grade Groups. If you feel that you would like to help, please contact admin@dwrugby.co.uk

Regards

Gerald Burden
D&W RFU General Secretary

Community Rugby

Previous month's activity:	<p><u>Dorset and Wilts Cup Competitions</u></p> <p>The various draws for D&W Cup competitions including age grade were made by the Comps Committee on 28th November. These have been put onto GMS and distributed to the clubs.</p> <p><u>Dorset and Wilts Leagues</u></p> <p>We are now at approximately the half way stage of the league season. The season, as reported by the league secretaries at the recent SWROC meeting, is progressing without too many issues. Only one weekend so far has suffered any impact from the weather, which obviously has a knock on effect in the fixture list. There are however a couple of teams who seem to be struggling with playing numbers. The relevant league secretaries are in contact with these clubs.</p>
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	<p><u>Merit Tables</u></p> <p>No known issues regarding our Dorset Matrix. The case to introduce a Wiltshire Matrix seems to be gaining momentum. John Constable is to liaise with Pete Jacobs regarding this possibility.</p> <p><u>Tribute</u></p> <p>The D&W Tribute Teams of the Month so November was Swanage & Wareham II who received their award on 2nd December.</p> <p>September: Melksham October: Sutton Benger November: Swanage & Wareham II</p> <p>Once again D&W were applauded by the SWROC for their swift delivery of the winners' awards.</p>
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NOTES OF MEETING (ON LINE)

DORSET & WILTS RFU COMPETITIONS MANAGEMENT GROUP

HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2023

PRESENT:

C. Jones J. Constable D. Wookey M. Moysey A. Morrison P. Jacobs Hamish Morton

APOLOGIES:

R. Jones S. Macey E. Santer

1. 2023/24 LEAGUE COMPETITIONS

Generally proceeding reasonably well with ongoing issues around conceded matches with knock on effect on those teams immediately under pressure to field sides.

Potential issues looking forward:

Requirement to hold a play off at Level 8 as per 2022/3 season.

Potential cascade effect if a number of teams relegated from Level 6 (Regional 2)

Dual Registration issues /Students/Service personnel.

2. RFU NATIONAL CUP COMPETITIONS 2023/24

Entries have now closed and as far as known the following clubs have entered:

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Regional 1 | Bournemouth |
| Regional 2 | Trowbridge, Devizes, RWB, Chippenham, Salisbury, Wimborne |
| Counties 1 | Dorchester, North Dorset, Swanage & Wareham, Corsham, Sherborne |
| Counties 2 | Westbury, Blandford, Melksham, Warminster, Minety, Bridport |

The different grading of competitions will be determined by league positions as at 16 December 2023 (after round of 12 team leagues)

The draw will be published in early January 2024 with a period of two weeks in January during which clubs can withdraw their entry without any sanction

3. DORSET & WILTS CUP COMPETITIONS 2023/24

Second round of matches in Counties 1 & 2 competitions had taken place on weekend of 18 November.

8 out of 12 of the scheduled matches were played with 4 walkovers

The next round of the two competitions are scheduled for 24 FEBRUARY 2024.

Draw undertaken for COUNTIES 3(N&C) competition and clarification of entries and updated draws for COUNTIES 2 & 3 Plate competitions undertaken

It was agreed that in respect of the Plate competitions that any team who had played and lost a match in Round 1 or 2 would be entered.

All to be published on GMS. MM to circulate around all clubs.

Having considered the entry list for the Papa John competitions it was resolved that there were not sufficient teams at levels 6 & (Regional 2 & Counties 1) to run D&W competitions as things stand. Agreed to review after any PJ Cups withdrawals in January to establish if any alternative competition(s) required.

G. Burden has now sent invoices clubs based on current competition entry positions. MM to check what is still outstanding

Based on the entries in the two competitions to be drawn this week this amounts to £1,570

4. COMPETITION REGULATIONS & D&W DE REGS

D&W de Regs submitted to SW Region but technically still not approved.

Primary issue around number of replacements permitted at lower level league matches where we remain at odds with RFU/WR Regs.

Future registration requirements for players also identified as an issue that will require consideration probably best to address closer to end of current season.

Agreed endeavour to resolve unaligned issues at meeting in February.

5. AGE GRADE COMPETITIONS

Following the recent conclusion of the Under 14 to Under 16 Review a draw was carried out for competitions in these three age groups to commence in January.

The competitions were being restricted to Dorset & Wilts clubs only and would be a straight knock out competition with plate competitions introduced for first round losers.

All draws to be published on GMS. HM to inform clubs accordingly.

Under 18 Age Grade competitions are already up and running.

6. WOMENS & GIRLS COMPETITIONS

Nothing further to report since October meeting.

7. OTHER RUGBY COMPETITIONS:

Friendly Matrix

JC updated Matrix in place now for Dorset and early fixtures have been played with some cancellations but generally providing the focus and opportunity for those clubs involved.

Still hoping to arrange a series of potentially Friday evening fixtures with 3 or 4 teams at agreed venues to be given further consideration. Encouraging Pitch up and Play events also considered important where players may come along without the constraint of particular teams or matches.

Touch Rugby

Nothing to report.

Walking Rugby

Awaiting any input from S. Murrow on 2023/4 Wiltshire festival to be held again in March 2024

There are 8 active clubs in Wiltshire but still little evidence of activity in Dorset.

Intention to hold a training course specifically for Walking rugby referees.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Next Meeting in advance of next round of cup competitions 13 February 2024
