



# All-Party Parliamentary Rugby League Group

## Ordinary Meeting Minutes

### 5 July 2016 Committee Room 8

Meeting commenced 1823

## In Attendance

**Members:** Greg Mulholland MP (in the Chair); Jason McCartney MP; Lord Thomas of Gresford; Marie Rimmer MP; Paula Sherriff MP

**Honorary Life Members (all, no affiliation):** Maurice Oldroyd; Spen Allison

**Organisational Associate Members:** Jon Dutton (RFL); Martyn Cheney, Ash Lucas (Bramley Buffaloes); Hilary Clifford, Brian Burgess (Supporters Direct); Alistair Davis (Try Tag Rugby); Andrew Jackson (London Skolars)

**Individual Associate Members (all, no affiliation):** Chris Byron; Martin Coyd; James Chespy; Graham Oliphant; Mick O'Shea; Chris Ashton; Darren Williams; Carl Dalby; Gary Slater; David Ballheimer; Ron Knox; Judi Knox

**Secretariat:** Mark Ramsdale; Jack Baker

## Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all Members, Honorary Life Members and Associate Members.

A minute's silence was held in honour of Jo Cox MP and Ronan Costello.

The Chairman paid tribute to Jo Cox, and noted the Group's thanks for all that she did for rugby league and for the Group. The Chairman also noted that he, along with Officers Marie Rimmer MP and Paula Sherriff MP, had attended the tribute to Jo at Batley Bulldogs game against Dewsbury Rams, and thanked the rugby league community for the way it had paid its respects.

The Chairman also noted that the Group had held its AGM, and that all Officers had been re-elected.

## Apologies

**Members:** Rt Hon. Lindsay Hoyle MP; Lisa Nandy MP; Andrea Jenkyns MP; Graham Brady MP; Lord Smith of Leigh; Catherine West MP; Conor McGinn MP

**Honorary Life Members (all, no affiliation):** David Hinchliffe; Sally Bolton; Nigel Wood; Sir Rodney Walker; Mike Stephenson; Neil Turner

**Organisational Associate Members:** Roger Draper (Warrington Wolves); Richard Thewlis (Huddersfield Giants); Ian Wilson (Rugby Oldham); Ikram Butt (BARA); Dan Steel (London Rugby League Foundation); Nicola Hudson, Jacqui Forster (Supporters Direct); Sue Taylor (BARLA)

**Individual Associate Members (all, no affiliation):** Steve Evans; Richard Austin; Iain McIlwee; Charles Mather; Gavin Willacy; David Johnson

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## Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Group's May meeting were agreed to be an accurate account.

## Matters Arising

The Secretariat raised the following on-going activities not covered by the meeting's agenda:

- The Secretariat will liaise with the RFL regarding the cenotaph ceremony on the eve of the Challenge Cup Final.
- The Secretariat will work with the RFL to take a stand at the forthcoming Parliamentary Sports Fair, which will now be held on 13 September on Speaker's Green.
- The Secretariat will pull together a history of the Group.
- The Secretariat is investigating a Group scarf as an alternative to the Group tie.
- The Secretariat is liaising with the RFL Facilities Trust on a suitable date for them to present to the Group.
- The Secretariat will continue to liaise with the Royal Household on Royal Patronage for the game.

The Chairman hailed the success of the Group's last meeting, and noted that the number of Scottish MPs in attendance was unprecedented from a non-traditional rugby league playing country. He also noted that it was disappointing that no one from the RFL was present, but hoped that the Group could build on that meeting with the RFL.

## Correspondence

### Sent

- The Secretariat sent updates to all Members on the 2021 Rugby League World Cup bid.
- The Chairman sent a note of thanks to Chairman of Scotland Rugby League, Keith Hogg, for his presentation to the Group.
- A letter to Dewsbury Rams RLFC, regarding the conduct of their official photographer.

### Received

- From Sky, a letter declining the Treasurer's request for support.
- A letter from Tim Mander, Co-Chair of the Queensland Federal Parliament's Friends of Rugby League Group, in response to the Chairman's letter, expressing support for the Group and a desire to keep in contact.
- Related, a response from David Hodgett, Chair of the Victorian Federal Parliament's Friends of Rugby League Group, thanking the Group for their kind offer to visit, should they be in the UK for the Four Nations.
- A number of pieces offering condolences following the tragic death of Jo Cox MP.
- A piece regarding Rugby League in Burundi.

## Group Activity Report

### Parliamentary

The Secretariat noted that there had been no references to rugby league in Parliament since the previous meeting.

The following Early Day Motions were tabled:

- FIRST WOMEN'S RUGBY LEAGUE MATCH IN MIDDLE EAST (welcoming the first ever women's match in the Middle East in Lebanon) – Marie Rimmer MP and Paula Sherriff MP.

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- BID TO HOST THE 2021 RUGBY LEAGUE WORLD CUP (supporting the bid and congratulating all those involved in putting it together) – Greg Mulholland MP.

#### Public

The Chairman, Secretary and Vice-Chair Paula Sherriff MP took part in a tribute to Jo Cox MP at Batley's home game against Dewsbury on 26 June.

Vice-Chair Paula Sherriff met with RFL representatives to discuss plans to develop the women's game. It was noted that the Group's next meeting would have a focus on women's rugby league.

Related to activity, the Group sent press releases on:

- Scotland Rugby League's presentation to the Group;
- the Early Day Motion on the first women's rugby league match in the Middle East;
- the tribute to Jo Cox MP.

At the time of the meeting, the Group had 1,781 followers on Twitter. The Group's twitter name is @UKParliamentRL

## Political Animals Report

The Secretariat noted that the Political Animals would soon be announcing a new Supporter.

The Animals annual game against a London Select XIII will take place on the eve of the Challenge Cup Final, 26 August. Members or Associate Members interested in taking part should contact the Secretariat. Catherine West MP will kick off the game.

A Political Animals touch rugby league event will take place in London on 7 September. The Secretariat will circulate details in due course.

The Secretariat is looking to schedule a game against a Journalists XIII and will circulate details in due course.

The Secretariat noted a number of requests to play a game in Jo Cox's honour.

## AOB

Paula Sherriff MP noted that when she had met with RFL representative to discuss women's rugby league, they had also discussed how clubs can help increase cohesion in communities.

Future Ordinary Meetings will be held on 18 October and 13 December. The Group's Annual Dinner is on Monday 21 November.

Main business concluded at 1851

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#### **Presentation: Jon Dutton, RFL Lead on 2021 RLWC Bid**

The Chairman welcomed Jon Dutton, the RFL's lead on England's 2021 Rugby League World Cup bid.

A short video was shown on the bid.

Dutton opened by thanking the Group for their support for the bid, which had been vital. The RFL has been working with the Treasury, and has managed to secure a £15million commitment from the government. The government has also committed to give £10million towards a capital programme, to secure a lasting legacy.

The key parts of the bid were outlined, in particular focusing how the 2021 RLWC would build on the success of the 2013 RLWC.

Dutton outlined the next steps in the bidding process, and also the bidding process for games, if the bid is successful.

Opening to questions, Dutton stated that the bid has learned from the 2013 RLWC by looking at broadcast rights at a much earlier stage. There will be a maximum of 12 venues involved if the bid is successful, which may be a different proposition.

The 2013 RLWC was hosted by England and Wales, but there were games in Ireland and France too. Whilst this is an England bid, it is also open to games being held elsewhere.

On competition to the bid, the RFL are aware of interest shown by the USA and South Africa.

Dutton noted that there was some overlap in personnel between the RLIF board and the RFL, but that there would be no conflict of interest.

On the number of games that would be played outside of the traditional heartlands, Dutton highlighted the 15 venues in the bid document, including Coventry, Wembley and the Queen Elizabeth Stadium. He noted that London is important to the RFL and to the bid, and critical to international rugby league, as it is synonymous with great sporting events.

The importance of corporate brand sponsorship was discussed. Dutton acknowledged that these were important, but also pointed to broadcast as being vital in increasing commercial value.

On the legacy from the tournament, the RFL needs to sit down with partners, but hopes that there will be a physical legacy. There will be another committed volunteers programme, as in 2013.

The crowd targets were discussed, as was the availability of stadia. Dutton confirmed that the RFL have talked to all 15 venues, and noted that the game is used to playing international fixtures during the football season, but that there is a job to do with those partners.

Dutton looked forward to the 2017 RLWC, where the women's tournament will have a really high profile, running alongside the latter stages of the men's tournament. RFL hopes that if 2021 bid is successful, will be able to better link up with community clubs and other stakeholders.

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The Chairman thanked Dutton for his presentation, and expressed his hope that the Group could continue to work together with the RFL on areas like this. Dutton noted that the outcome of the bid should be known by the autumn, and the Chairman reiterated the Group's support for the bid.

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking all members and associate members for their support. He also reminded all that they are welcome to play for the Political Animals, and that the next game would be on the evening before the Challenge Cup Final.

**Meeting closed at 1921**

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