



# All-Party Parliamentary Rugby League Group

## Ordinary Meeting Minutes

### 30<sup>th</sup> October 2012 Committee Room Seven

## Present

Greg Mulholland MP (Chairing), Yvonne Fovargue MP, Gerry Sutcliffe MP, Ian Lucas MP, James Clappison MP, David Mowat MP, David Watts MP, Lindsay Hoyle MP, John Mann MP

## In attendance

**Group Secretariat:** Mark Ramsdale

**Organisational Associate Members:** Niel Wood (RFL), Spen Allison (BARLA), Eric Czerwionka (Pro-Build Assist Ltd), David Wilson (Pro-Build Assist Ltd)

**Individual Associate Members (no affiliation):** Anton Muszanskyj, Paul Cypher, Daniel Bunney, Gary Brook, Chris Byron, Maurice Oldroyd, Mark Billyard, Ken Edwards, Barrie Smith

**Non-Members:** Sally Bolton (RLWC2013, Presenting)

## Apologies

Lord Smith of Leigh; Jason McCartney MP; Mark Pawsey MP; David Hinchliffe; Nigel Wood; Phil Hodgson; Ikram Butt; Gary Job

## Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were considered an accurate record.

## Group Welcomes

The Chairman welcomed:

- As partners, Rugby League Cares and William Hill.
- New Members Martin Horwood MP and the Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP were welcomed, taking membership to 62;
- New organisational Associate Members The Combined Services Rugby League Association and Pro-Build Assist Ltd; and
- 12 new individual Associate Members.

The Chairman recognised this growth as very positive, noting that it was the highest number of Members and Associate Members the Group had ever had, reflecting the work of the Group and its importance as a voice in sport and in Westminster.

## Matters Arising

The Secretariat raised dialogue with:

- The RFL regarding an event on inclusivity;
- South Africa Rugby League and DCMS regarding the South African Government position on rugby league;
- Women & Girls in Sport Parliamentary Group joint event.
- The RFL regarding a memorial at the National Arboretum honouring rugby league playing and supporting servicemen and servicewomen.

**Action:** Secretariat to continue and report back to the Group.



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## Correspondence

### Sent

Letters were sent to:

- A local authority supporting a nomination for a local honour
- Steve Prescott MBE wishing him a speedy recovery and asking him to speak to the Group about his fundraising endeavours.

### Pending

The Secretariat outlined correspondence received shortly before the meeting from the European Rugby League Federation requesting support on an issue relating to the Moroccan Government's position on rugby league.

**Action:** Secretariat to raise with Chairman to take forward.

## Group Activity Report

The Secretariat provided a synopsis of Questions, Debates, Motions and all mentions of rugby league in both Houses of Parliament.

There was discussion on Early Day Motions, specifically the need for wider recognition of clubs with achievements worthy of such Motions. It was noted that EDMs are usually tabled by personal interest, but that all opportunities should be taken to ensure rugby league has wider support in Westminster. Some Members were of the opinion that such Motions were a suitable promotional vehicle.

## Political Animals Report

The Secretariat apprised the Group of the Political Animals' new main sponsor William Hill, and details of its now traditional fixture against a London Select XIII played at London Skolars on the eve of the Challenge Cup Final.

## Any Other Business

### Bradford Bulls

On behalf of the Group, the Chairman offered his congratulations to Gerry Sutcliffe MP and the OK Bulls Ltd on his and their success in securing the purchase of Bradford Bulls. The Group had done what it could, and was proud to have played a role.

Sutcliffe thanked the Group for its support. He felt that there were serious issues that needed to be addressed within the structure of the sport and said that once the administrators report had been received and reviewed, a paper would be circulated to the Group.

Sutcliffe also thanked the two fans forums specifically and the wider rugby league community, saying he was personally proud of the actions of fans.

It was felt that a paper would be crucial as there were questions about funding offered but never taken, and that there were other clubs who might find themselves in similar situations.

**Action:** Group to invite Gerry Sutcliffe and Bradford Bulls to speak to the Group.

Following the theme of inclusivity, which the Group takes seriously, there were questions about using the reinvigorated club to break into Bradford's Asian community. Related, Eric Czweronkia thanked Mark Pawsey MP and Ikram Butt for their support at a recent event.



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#### Annual Dinner

Members were reminded that the Annual Dinner was taking place on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013 in the House of Lords.

#### Rugby League Varsity Match

The Secretariat informed the Group that he was to deliver the Rugby League Varsity Match from 2013.

**Business concluded at 1833**



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## **Presentation: Rugby League World Cup 2013**

**Sally Bolton, RLWC13 General Manager**

The Chairman welcomed Sally Bolton, RLWC2013 General Manager, thanking her for speaking to the Group. He felt that the sport was fortunate to have a tournament being organised so professionally.

Speaking to a presentation, Bolton outlined the various activities that had and would take place in the build-up to the 2013 Rugby League World Cup. The Olympics provided a fantastic platform for sport, with people clamouring for tickets for all sports, many of which they had not seen before. There was therefore genuine engagement from the UK public and a hunger to experience new sports.

The RLWC2013 team discovered there had been only eight world cups of any sport held in the UK. For communities, it was therefore wonderful to have a world cup in their back yard.

After playing the most recent RLWC2013 official video, Bolton provided the statistics for the tournament and the need to prioritise, highlighting the scale facing the delivery team. She outlined the measures of success, drivers and values for the tournament.

There was a need to be innovative and use opportunities with a magnifying effect wherever possible. Digital and social media would therefore be used the major means to promote, as a cost-effective and modern communications method.

Education was a fundamental part of the tournament, and education specialists were employed to develop an education programme that will provide key stage two and three learning opportunities at schools, all of which would culminate on game day. Similarly there was a focus on cultural activities to broaden appeal, and a grant and been received from the Arts Council.

In relation to expanding the sport beyond the traditional, Bolton had taken meetings earlier in the day with DCMS, DfE and the Government Equalities Office, all of which saw opportunities to work with RLWC2013 and rugby league.

Bolton thanked the Group for the opportunity to speak and would continue to appraise the Group of activities and plans.

The Chairman asked the Secretariat what plans were in place for the Group. Ramsdale responded by discussing the visit of the World Cup to the Palace of Westminster and the opportunity for Members to have their photograph taken alongside, and discuss the tournament with Bolton the following day. The Annual Dinner would have a Rugby League World Cup 2013 focus and other events were being discussed with the RLWC2013 team and the Group would be informed. Following its visit to Parliament, the trophy would visit Downing Street alongside players and London schoolchildren.

Initial questions focussed on the opportunities presented outside rugby league heartlands. Bolton reflected on the relationship of the RLWC2013 to the RFL, saying that they don't sit entirely separately from the sport's governing body and therefore all opportunities could and would be taken. There was a Festival of World cups taking place in June and July next year incorporating World Cup Tournaments for Women, Wheelchair, Students, Armed Forces and Police in other locations in the country before the main tournament and with the semi-final double header at Wembley, the London market was very important to the event.



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Clubs were being used at all levels and were not treated differently due to location. For example, Medway Dragons was to host the Wheelchair Rugby League World Cup and the South West market and Bristol were seen as important and all was being done to support those areas.

On communities generally, Bolton explained that communities were embedded from the outset, at the point of conceiving the tournament and particularly through the Host Town & City bidding process which sought to embed the Tournament within communities, working with local partners. Bidding to host could not be led by clubs, but had to be led by local authorities. This required them to get involved and consider how to reach the widest audience. There were local fan advisers group and fan champions, all of which provided feedback and helped to promote the tournament.

On volunteering, there had been a fantastic response, with high-value opportunities afforded to fans and to the tournament through people's experiences. Bolton cited a Suffolk couple who missed-out on the opportunity to volunteer at the Olympic Games and in searching for the next opportunity to be involved, contacted RLWC2013 and will be volunteering during the tournament.

Bolton was asked to reflect on the international game, specifically in light of the England victory over Wales by 80 points to 12, which some had seen as unhelpful to the game. She felt that there was a misconception that for a tournament to be considered a success every nation taking part must have a strong chance of winning, and realistically only a very few could win in many international tournaments in a number of sports. In this case, the game showed how well the England team can do and gave hope as the team prepares for the World Cup. For Wales, it demonstrated that they are a developing side and the game provided opportunity to play a stronger side to improve.

The group structure within the tournament was designed to offer competitive games throughout and where possible avoid mismatches, with nations of different levels facing each other at the later stages. Other teams would play competitive rugby league and therefore were not making up numbers and could use as an opportunity to improve.

Bolton continued saying there was no point denying the challenges within the game and that nations needed time and competition to develop and progress and that this was not unique to rugby league, giving the example of the rugby union Six Nations, in which Italy were given the time to improve and develop to the eventual benefit of the competition.

The ticket offers to school parties was raised, with an anecdote suggesting they were too good to be true. Bolton explained that the tournament was designed to be accessible and such offers were genuine and should be taken up as early as possible.

Concluded 1925