



All-Party Parliamentary Rugby League Group

Ordinary Meeting Minutes

5 February 2019, Grimond Room

Meeting commenced 1801

In Attendance

Members: Judith Cummins MP (in the Chair); Marie Rimmer MP; Lord Hoyle; Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP

Honorary Life Members: Andrew Cudbertson; Adam Hills

Organisational Associate Members: Sarah-Jane Gray, Tom Brindle (The RFL); Ashlyn Lucas (Bramley Buffaloes); Neil Kelly (Warrington Wolves)

Individual Associate Members (all, no affiliation): Chris Ashton; Kevin Ward; John Connell; Tracey Rodger

Secretariat: Jack Baker

Welcome

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the meeting, in particular new Member Kate Green MP.

Apologies

Members: Sir Graham Brady MP; Mark Pawsey MP; Yvonne Fovargue MP; Lord Caine; Lord Smith of Leigh; Catherine West MP; Debbie Abrahams MP

Honorary Life Members (all, no affiliation): David Hinchliffe; Angela Powers; Sir Ian McCartney; Sir Rodney Walker; Jas Athwal; Spen Allison

Organisational Associate Members: Jon Dutton (RLWC2021); Shaun Currie, John Holden, Tim Powell (RLGSOA); Ian Wilson (Rugby Oldham); Martyn Cheney (Bramley Buffaloes); Andrew Jackson (London Skolars); Trevor Hunt (NCL/RLWBA); Rebecca Argyle (Toronto Wolfpack); Andy Wilson (The RFL)

Individual Associate Members (all, no affiliation): Mick O'Hare; David Ballheimer; Paul Secher; Iain McIlwee; Gavin Willacy; Simon Moat; Mathew Lancaster; Dominic Breslin; Graham McManus; David Bulcock; Ron Knox; Judi Knox; James Chespy; Carl Dalby

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

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

Matters Arising

The Group would seek to organise future ordinary meetings on and with:

- Sporting Chance;
- the Rugby League Dividend;
- University Rugby League;
- Masters Rugby League.

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The Group was investigating staging a performance of the play REF! in Parliament.

Correspondence

- The Chair wrote to BBC Director of Sport Barbara Slater, thanking her for BBC Sport's presentation at the last Group meeting.
- The Chair wrote to RFL Chief Executive Ralph Rimmer with thanks for The RFL's support for the Group's annual dinner.
- The Chair wrote supportive letters for a number of players seeking residence in the UK.
- The Group had received a request of support from the Rugby League International Federation regarding issues in Greek Rugby League. The Group was liaising with the RLIF to assist.
- The Group received correspondence from London Skolars regarding issues around their facilities, which was passed on to local Member of Parliament and Group Member Catherine West MP.
- The Group received an email from Councillor Rob Higgins from Newcastle City Council, regarding the development of the game in the north east. **Action: Secretariat to schedule a meeting involving local MPs in Parliament.**
- A request from Rugby League Cares was received for access to the Group's archive as part of a digitisation project with the Army Museum around sport and the Armed Forces, specifically to reference the Group's role in helping to lift the ban on the sport in the Armed Forces in 1994.
- A briefing note from The RFL on Physical Disability Rugby League was received and circulated to Members.
- Information on the RLWC2021 host venue announcement was circulated to members and invitations to join the Group were circulated to those Members whose constituencies would host matches.
- Information on RLWC2021 CreatedBy legacy funding was circulated to Members.

Group Activity Report

Parliamentary

The Secretariat provided references to rugby league in Parliament since the last meeting.

In the Christmas Adjournment debate, held in Westminster Hall, John Grogan MP raised matters related to Keighley Cougars in his constituency, calling on the Rugby Football League to take firm action to ensure that the club could rise again.

In the same debate, Bob Blackman MP made reference to his late father, who had set up BBC camera positions for every rugby league ground in the country when he formulated the BBC's televised coverage of the sport.

In the same debate, Paul Maynard MP referenced Red Star Belgrade's entry to the Challenge Cup and called for more coverage of the sport.

In a Westminster Hall debate on supporting fathers in early parenthood, Health Minister Jackie Doyle-Price MP referenced Offload, a men's mental fitness and wellbeing project run by RL Cares in partnership with State of Mind and the club foundations at Salford Red Devils, Warrington Wolves and Widnes Vikings.

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At DCMS questions, Chi Onwurah MP raised the announcement that the opening ceremony and first men's game of Rugby League World Cup 2021 would take place in her constituency, at St James' Park. The Sports Minister welcomed the announcement.

Whilst in the Chair at Business Questions, Deputy Speaker and Group Vice-Chair Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP highlighted the start of the Super League season to the Leader of the House.

In a general debate in the House of Commons on sport in the UK, John Grogan MP raised the recent sale of Keighley Cougars, and hoped for a safe future for the club. There were also references to the Rugby League World Cup 2021 from the Sports Minister, and Deputy Speaker and Group Vice-Chair Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP clarified the distinction between rugby league and rugby union to the House.

The following early day motions were tabled:

- KEIGHLEY COUGARS RUGBY LEAGUE TEAM (John Grogan MP) – Expressing delight that a new consortium was back at the helm of the club and thanking the Rugby Football League for their efforts to date.
- RUGBY LEAGUE WORLD CUP 2021 HOST VENUE ANNOUNCEMENT (Marie Rimmer MP) – Welcoming the announcement of host venues for the tournament and looking forward to the largest and most inclusive Rugby League World Cup of all time.

Public

Group Members met with representatives from the Rugby League Players Union for an update on their positive discussion with the RFL.

The Group sent press releases on:

- The BBC's presentation to the Group;
- The Rugby League World Cup 2021 host announcement.

At the time of the meeting, the Group had 2,323 followers on Twitter. The Group's twitter name: @UKParliamentRL

Political Animals Report

The Secretariat thanked Cheney Payroll Services, for their continued support for the club.

The Secretariat noted that the Animals were looking to resurrect the Politicians v Journalists match this year.

It was noted that the Animals played a modified version of rugby league that allowed those of any age, gender or ability to take part and enjoy their on-field experience.

AOB

It was raised that in June 2019, South London Silverbacks would lead the first ever Masters Rugby League tour to Canada.

There being no other business, the Chair brought the main business of the meeting to a close.

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Main business concluded at 1815

Presentation: Physical Disability Rugby League

The Chair welcomed Honorary Life Member and Warrington Wolves PDRL player Adam Hills, Warrington Wolves Foundation Director Neil Kelly and RFL Head of Growth Tom Brindle.

Opening, Kelly discussed the work of the Warrington Wolves Foundation, and background work in disability. The birth of PDRL in the United Kingdom was discussed, with the roles of both Adam Hills and John Welch highlighted.

The timeline of PDRL activity was raised, from starting the team at Warrington to the first game against Leeds Rhinos and a number of other clubs also launching teams. Warrington's World Club Challenge game against South Sydney Rabbitohs at ANZ Stadium in Sydney was also discussed.

A short clip from Adam Hills forthcoming documentary on PDRL was shown.

Hills outlined his involvement in the sport, and discussed how rugby league was a force for good in communities. There was further discussion of Warrington's tour to Australia, and the great moments that PDRL had provided for participants.

Brindle highlighted the RFL's role in supporting the development of both PDRL and Learning Disability Rugby League (LDRL). Plans to include PDRL and LDRL into the RLWC2021 festival of world cups were raised.

There was discussion of work to establish a full season for both LDRL and PDRL, with a number of announcements promised with regard to those competitions.

Other opportunities to promote both PDRL and LDRL were discussed including around Magic Weekend and RLWC2021.

The Chair thanked Hills, Kelly and Brindle for their presentation, and offered the Group's ongoing support.

Opening to questions, the potential for the forthcoming documentary to engage and inspire an even wider audience was discussed.

The importance of utilising the badges of big clubs was highlighted, and there was discussion of what could be done to get more clubs to buy in to PDRL and LDRL. It was noted that in New South Wales, PDRL was established ten years ago and there were five teams, whilst there were already that number in the UK in one year.

There was further discussion around work that the RFL was undertaking to find credible brands to support the two formats of the game.

The potential of promoting other campaigns through PDRL and LDRL was discussed, and it was noted that the competition's sponsors would have a theme.

The President noted his thanks to Kelly for the work of the Warrington Wolves Foundation.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking Kelly, Hills and Brindle for their presentation.

Meeting closed at 1902

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