

Why do we need a New Entity to oversee and manage rugby union in the Scottish Borders?

Scottish Borders rugby has to address the changes in social habits and increased opportunities to participate in other sports, if it is to remain a strong and beneficial influence on society.

In my view, in order to successfully address all the difficult issues within Scottish Borders rugby, a fully comprehensive review of all sectors in the sport must be carried out.

Continuing change in the structure of the game is certain and the following documents, produced by the SRU during 2019, provide evidence that these changes are likely to be substantial:

- Super6 Update document – February 2019
- Male Season Competition Structure Consultation Document – October 2019
- Independent Corporate Governance and Business Review of The Scottish Rugby Union – December 2019

Each of these documents includes proposals which have the potential to weaken the collective voice, and therefore the power, of SRU member clubs and organisations.

The Border League Committee (BLC) is currently the only forum where discussion takes place between Scottish Borders senior clubs, and the very limited BLC constitution cannot create change. Scottish Borders rugby would benefit from having an entity which could represent the unified views and aspirations of all its clubs and organisations, such as:

- The Border League
- Premier and National League Clubs
- Semi-Junior Clubs
- Schools Rugby
- Girls/Women's Rugby
- Mini/Youth Rugby
- FOSROC Academy
- Referees Society

The BLC agreed to create a Working Group (BLCWG) and this Group has presented a draft constitution, for a proposed new Scottish Borders Entity, to the BLC. The BLC senior clubs have been asked to consider its content and provide their views. The New Entity constitution has been developed with the objective of considering and proposing positive change for the benefit of Scottish Borders rugby as a whole.

There are vital factors included within the constitution to safeguard the current autonomy of individual clubs and organisations, together with increasing the ability to attract new, knowledgeable and influential individuals to being involved in managing change and, vitally, increasing financial investment in the sport.

These factors include:

- Each club and organisation will retain their autonomy to manage their affairs as they do at present.
- A properly constituted New Entity will have the potential to attract knowledgeable and driven management personnel to deliver positive change.
- All clubs and organisations, through the New Entity, will control who is to be approached to be on the New Entity Board.
- It is vital that all sectors of the sport are represented on the New Entity Board.
- The members of the New Entity Board should, if possible, be individuals who are either new to or encouraged back to rugby.

New Entity objectives:

- Assist in reviewing all sectors
- Attract new partners and new investment into the sport
- Promote the whole of Scottish Borders rugby
- Create and deliver new initiatives, to provide positive change in all sectors
- Have a Scottish Borders rugby representative on the relevant board(s) of the SRU

Most of the residents within the Scottish Borders choose to live in the region in order to provide a particular way of life for themselves and their family. The game of rugby and its values are vital qualities which make up the fabric of Scottish Borders society.

I am pretty sure that COVID-19 has made the vast majority of us think a bit differently about our lifestyle priorities but it has also put a stop to the face-to-face discussions which need to take place, if such an important development in Scottish Borders rugby is to be implemented.

The senior clubs must have the desire to create an entity which provides a unified voice and is a vehicle which assists Scottish Borders rugby in continuing to be a very important part of community life.