



**STRATEGY 2022 TO 2030:
MORE THAN
A SPORT**



Rugby League is more than a sport.

It is a cultural identity, a passion, a way of life and a practical force for good in communities. Its history is one of determination to succeed against the odds, to fight discrimination and intolerance and to be an honest and authentic sport, which cares enough to make a difference to its fans, their families, and communities. Since 1895, we have delivered a sport that delights fans across the country. We are proud of who we are, the value we add to sport and society, and the difference we make, together. We want to maintain our passion and track record in improving the lives of communities, alongside growing the visibility of the game in England and beyond, and driving greater value.

VALUES

United, Professional, Excellent, Respect

VISION

A united sport that delivers entertainment, drives commercial value, and improves the lives of our communities



INTRODUCTION

This strategy is in a different form to those that have gone before, having been forged through one of the most challenging times ever faced by not only the sport, but by society. **It recognises the requirement to change and the need to think differently.** It takes ownership of our communities and focuses on the key strategic priorities which will be required to take our sport to another level in a new, reset landscape.

Throughout the Covid pandemic **the importance of our sport has time and again been re-emphasised to not only the people it touches daily but also those much further afield.** This impact has resonated from our playing communities right through our commercial and broadcast partners, to government.

Our sport is authentic and originally born out of its working class Northern communities. It is important and we have a responsibility to protect it and grow it, from grassroots to the international stage, and everything that lies in between. **Our impact is far more wide-reaching than the game itself and our drive to tackling inequalities and having a positive social impact will continue to be relentless.**

Our strategy therefore is different as it highlights our strengths whilst also accepting that we need to react to our circumstances by developing a new way of thinking to be **bolder and more dynamic** to deliver elite competitions that will make the game even more relevant and drive revenue to support all levels of the sport.

In developing our strategy we have consulted with not only every part of the Rugby League family but also far beyond. We have all used the backdrop of the pandemic and this exercise to help pull us even closer together as we understand that we need to re-align. We have rationalised and are now reshaping to relaunch. We have worked with our partners Super League Europe, Rugby League Cares, RLWC2021, the international Boards and those other partners spread across the globe to achieve this position. **This is powerful and will now allow the sport to speak as one: this is a new us.**

Our sport will break down more barriers faster and welcome more people in over this next decade than ever before, and what lies below this strategy are the tactics we adopt to reach out further. These tactics must continually evolve to be effective, as we accept an ever-changing environment. Whilst this strategy is written for the next decade, key milestones lie ahead which will necessitate review. **The world is changing, we are adapting and we will continue to do so.**

We have collectively navigated these testing times and will now re-emerge. We will use all of the resilience we have recently shown, alongside the experience and new knowledge that we have developed to deliver the strategy and the objectives set within it. **With this as its spine, we will touch and engage more, and the positive social impact that our sport delivers, more than any other, will reach more communities.**

Rugby Football League Board, December 2021



RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

IN THE 2020s

The grassroots underpins everything,
including Rugby League's unique ability
to deliver positive social impact in
our communities

PLAYER CENTRIC

OUTSTANDING
ELITE
COMPETITIONS

FAN FOCUSED

WELL GOVERNED
AND INCLUSIVE



The grassroots underpins everything, including Rugby League's unique ability to deliver positive social impact in our communities

ENSURE GROWTH OF CORE COMMUNITY PROGRAMME, ENHANCE OFFER IN EDUCATION, DELIVER POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACT

PLAYER CENTRIC

Ensure player welfare shapes the development of the sport

The game provides players with a voice in decision-making

A commitment to safeguarding

Rugby League Cares

OUTSTANDING ELITE COMPETITIONS

Domestic growth

International growth

Revenue diversification and growth

FAN FOCUSED

Keep the sport relevant to different audiences

Celebrate and promote players

Digital to underpin the fan connection

A great spectator experience delivering entertainment

WELL GOVERNED AND INCLUSIVE

Governance

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Environmental sustainability



THE GRASSROOTS UNDERPINS EVERYTHING, INCLUDING RUGBY LEAGUE'S UNIQUE ABILITY TO 'DELIVER POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACT' IN OUR COMMUNITIES

- ENSURE GROWTH OF CORE COMMUNITY PROGRAMME
- ENHANCE OFFER IN EDUCATION
- DELIVER POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACT

The grassroots underpins everything, including Rugby League's unique ability to deliver positive social impact in our communities

ENSURE GROWTH OF CORE COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES

Sustain - Focus on making the community game more sustainable by greater engagement with the wider community, building stronger communities, and supporting new sources of funding and income.

Grow - Create a growth strategy that will involve a targeted approach identifying established Rugby League playing areas where the level of activity can be increased or where geographically it is most appropriate to focus on in terms of new activity.

Develop - Deliver enhanced communications, education and delivery programmes for players, coaches, match officials and volunteers. The RFL will help support increasing playing capacity, security of tenure and facilities, underpinned by a new RFL Facilities Strategy.

Flexible - Develop flexible, social ways to play the game - including non-contact - and provide customer choice, important retention and transition offers, and support equality.

Govern - Exhibit stronger governance and influence competition offers at the grassroots of the game.

DELIVER POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACT

Continue to be a leader in the provision of mental fitness/wellbeing services, health and inclusion, and education.

Launch enhanced programmes, including a new central hub for education and training, 'Our League Life', which will offer education, training and social mobility, supported by 'Our League Life' hubs linked to leading Foundations and community clubs delivering these programmes across communities.

Deliver positive social impact including through Rugby League Cares.

ENHANCE OFFER IN EDUCATION

Widen playing offers and educational resources to offer all variations of the sport, including in schools, colleges and universities.

Provide a resource to engage and develop young people who may not want to play, but may wish to learn to be the next generation of young coaches and match officials and administrators.

Ensure a broad and flexible educational pathway that can contribute to the growth and development of Rugby League across the country.



PLAYER CENTRIC

- ENSURE PLAYER WELFARE SHAPES THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPORT
- THE GAME PROVIDES PLAYERS WITH A VOICE IN DECISION-MAKING
- A COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARDING
- WORK WITH RUGBY LEAGUE CARES

PLAYER CENTRIC

ENSURE PLAYER WELFARE SHAPES THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPORT

Ensure player welfare is of utmost importance when considering rule changes.

THE GAME PROVIDES PLAYERS WITH A VOICE IN DECISION-MAKING

Look at ways to enhance how players are represented at decision-making forums, with a strong relationship with the players' union.

A COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARDING

Continue to have best practice & sector leading safeguarding policies and procedures.

WORK WITH RUGBY LEAGUE CARES

Work with Rugby League Cares to ensure that players get the most out of their involvement in the game, both during their playing careers and post-retirement.



FAN FOCUSED

- KEEP THE SPORT RELEVANT
- CELEBRATE AND PROMOTE PLAYERS
- DIGITAL TO UNDERPIN FAN CONNECTION
- A GREAT SPECTATOR EXPERIENCE

KEEP THE SPORT RELEVANT

Collaborate with strong broadcast partners.

Stage major events/ events of national importance.

Develop new ways for all people to engage with the game, especially via digital platforms.

Use enhanced communication, especially through digital platforms, to listen and understand what fans want from Rugby League.

CELEBRATE AND PROMOTE PLAYERS

Celebrate and promote players.

Increase awareness of leading Rugby League players, especially those representing the England teams.

Build partnerships with media to tell the best stories about the sport.

Promote/market participation by celebrating player stories at community level.

DIGITAL TO UNDERPIN FAN CONNECTION

Grow first-party database.

Offer live streaming and enhanced short-form clips.

Build out further personalised, participatory and connected experiences on Our League and connected platforms.

Use ever-evolving products from social networks to tell stories and engage fans.

A GREAT SPECTATOR EXPERIENCE

Ensure the contest on the field of play is entertaining.

Deliver outstanding major RFL events at world-class stadiums.

Work with public and private partners to support clubs in delivering enhanced spectator facilities at major grounds.

Deliver brilliant broadcast experiences for fans.

Work with clubs to ensure all matches are played in safe, welcoming and inclusive environments.



OUTSTANDING ELITE COMPETITIONS

- DOMESTIC GROWTH
- INTERNATIONAL GROWTH
- REVENUE DIVERSIFICATION AND GROWTH

OUTSTANDING ELITE COMPETITIONS - DOMESTIC GROWTH

DOMESTIC COMPETITION CALENDAR

Restructure and deliver competitions aimed at optimising reach and engagement for the Men's, Women's and Wheelchair game.

Develop and implement a top class Performance Pathway allowing Match Officials to achieve their potential from Community through to Elite.

NEW FORMATS

Use audience research and consultation with the game's partners to explore reinvigorating existing competitions and developing new competition formats, as part of a reconstructed calendar.

CHALLENGE CUP

Build the Challenge Cup's reputation, sell out finals, and drive interest in the competition.

GEOGRAPHIC GROWTH

Explore further growth potential in the UK and beyond.



OUTSTANDING ELITE COMPETITIONS - INTERNATIONAL GROWTH

HIGH PERFORMANCE SUPPORT TO ENGLAND TEAMS

Support all England teams through the England Performance Unit.

DELIVERY OF MAJOR INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

Support the delivery of the RLWC2021 (to be played in 2022).

Maximise the event legacy of RLWC2021.

Consider future event hosting strategy.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGULAR INTERNATIONAL CALENDAR

Work with and influence IRL to establish a regular international series, with a minimum of 4 opportunities for the England Men's, Women's and Wheelchair teams.

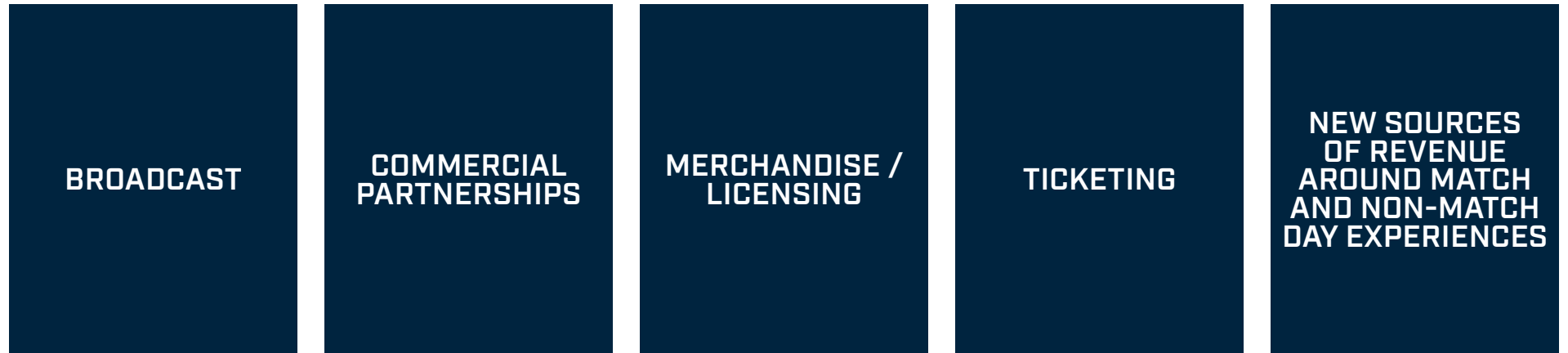
Provide support for the growth of the international game in the Northern Hemisphere for the ERL and IRL.

COMMITMENT TO EXPLORING OTHER GROWTH AREAS

Explore other major event opportunities e.g. reinvigorated World Club Challenge/ Nines/ Other major multi-sport events.



Revenue Generation



Revenue Distribution

DISTRIBUTE REVENUE BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF REWARDING CONTRIBUTION BACK TO THE SPORT AND DRIVING POSITIVE, GROWTH BEHAVIOURS



WELL GOVERNED AND INCLUSIVE

- GOVERNANCE
- EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
- ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

GOVERNANCE

The RFL will be the sole governing body of the game, led by an independent skills-based board, with a diverse, high-performing, socially responsible and inclusive culture at its heart.

The development of a commercial arm that will promote, market and monetise the sport.

Meet and exceed the requirements of the Code for Sports Governance.

Regulate across all tiers with independence, transparency and integrity, and in line with sector best practice (including in relation to medical standards).

Lead discussions with key stakeholders on behalf of the sport, including Government, at a national and UK level, attracting public investment into the sport, building on the positive social impact the sport delivers in our communities.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Continue to be accessible and inclusive to all, at all levels, through a range of participatory offers.

Continue to deliver a sport wide action plan, through Tackle It, to remove discrimination from the sport, and develop the next game EDI strategy until 2030.

Build on the 4 existing strategic goals being:

Widen the reach and impact of Rugby League.

Diversify Rugby League's Talent Pool and Workforce.

Improve the culture of Rugby League.

Clarify processes, instil confidence in, and encourage the reporting of discrimination, and ensure appropriate sanctions are in place.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Lead the sport in driving a more environmentally sustainable future.

Following an audit of the sport, develop a sport wide sustainability action plan and work with clubs and other stakeholders to deliver.



MEASUREMENT - WHAT WE WILL ACHIEVE BY 2030

WHAT WE WILL ACHIEVE BY 2030

THE GRASSROOTS UNDERPINS EVERYTHING, INCLUDING RUGBY LEAGUE'S UNIQUE POSITIVE TO DELIVER POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACT IN OUR COMMUNITIES

- Numbers of coaches delivered to annually on our courses to be at least 700 per year
- Deliver Match Officials courses to 450 people per year and ensure efficient succession 'coaching' and planning for Full Time MO's
- 150,000 annual Rugby League participants
- 1,500 learners a year through the Our League Life national hub + 50 Our League Life local hubs
- A further £15 million community facilities investment
- 10,000 additional volunteer hours per week delivered by new volunteers

PLAYER CENTRIC

- Increased player representation on current or new decision-making forums
- 80% of players being career engaged
- Increased employment opportunities for ex-players within the game
- Maintain highest ranking from the Child Protection in Sport Unit

FAN FOCUSED

- England players – Instagram follower targets for top 5 players across Mens, Women's and Wheelchair
- 25% of the population are interested/very interested in Rugby League
- England's top players have high public visibility
- 500,000+ Our League members

OUTSTANDING ELITE COMPETITIONS

- 2022 – Commercial Revenue as per RFL budget
- 2023 – 2025 Commercial Revenue to grow in line with new Financial Plan
- Revamped competitions at domestic and international level, for men's, women's and wheelchair games, that increase broadcast viewership and ticket sales
- Sell out England, Grand Final, Challenge Cup events and grow cumulative attendances while achieving 75% occupancy across all competitions
- England winning teams at World Cup for men's, women's and wheelchair events
- Strong broadcast and commercial partners that optimise reach and revenue
- Revenue distributed based on the principles of rewarding contribution back to the sport

WELL GOVERNED AND INCLUSIVE

- Comply with the requirements of the Sports Governance Code
- Governance structure in place which best supports delivery of the objectives of the Sport
- Diversity in all areas and tiers of the sport including at Board level + a game that is free from discrimination
- Plan to be carbon neutral by 2038

