



a guide to sustainable
RUGBY CLUBS



Why sustainable rugby clubs?

A sustainable rugby club relies upon the sum of a number of key/critical parts working together efficiently, effectively and with one direction. It cannot be defined as a club with a mini/junior section, or with five adult sides, or indeed with a women's/girls' section. Sustainability is achieved by understanding who you are, what you are doing, where you want to be and how you are going to get there. The club will acknowledge that others can help it achieve this. The club must understand what it is that makes it and rewards it. The club must acknowledge and plan a way forward.

In order to understand the road to sustainability and future development, it is clear that Community Rugby clubs regardless of size, legal position and/or ambition on the field need to view themselves as a 'small business'. In order to become 'sustainable', they need to undertake a planning process (a business or whole club development planning process) which will incorporate the six key areas (see page 4), according to needs, size and scope of the club.

The management of Community Rugby clubs and indeed sport in general has moved towards a more professional culture. This is partly as a result of changes in legislation, but also largely from a desire to adapt to the needs of the modern leisure market. The depth to which those areas are considered will be the club's ambitions.

There are a number of consistent messages that are applicable to all rugby clubs:

1. Every club should be considered a small business
2. Every club needs to plan for the short, medium and long term (one, three and five years)
3. Every club needs to address the six key areas within its planning process in relation to the individual and its aspirations



Why bother to plan?

Identify and prioritise the aims, aspirations and actions for the future.

Improve whole club 'buy in', as members and all sections are involved in the process and should be aware of common focus.

Forward planning is essential for sustainability.

Succession planning for club roles.

Ensure a 'professional'/business approach.

Monitor and evaluate - the club can check its progress against targets/aspirations.

Will assist club in coping with a changing environment, can be proactive rather than reactive.

Recognise where the club has come from and where it is now and articulate where it would like to be in the future.

Use resources (human, financial, equipment) more effectively and plan for future need.

Key when looking to access external funding sources.

Vital to avoid lost knowledge and information.

Will show how statutory, legal and financial obligations are being met.

Useful recruitment tool for new members/players/volunteers.

Develops team work away from the rugby field.

“A sustainable rugby club is one that continually meets its objectives”

The objectives can be summarised succinctly within six key areas which are commonplace to all Community Rugby clubs, but in differing degrees depending on the make up, size and circumstances of an individual club; the key areas are not separate but linked.

Administration



Volunteers, leadership, team managers, management structure, personnel, first aid, marketing and promotion, club policies, accreditation, job descriptions, etc.

Facilities



Pitch, changing rooms, floodlights, equipment, kit, maintenance, clubhouse, kitchen, bar, etc.

Finance



AIB fundraising, record for income/expenditure, annual statement of accounts, gift aid, cash flow, budget, accounts, audit, VAT, tax, rates, asset/equipment register, depreciation, facility hire, etc.

Legal



Constitution, incorporation, insurance, health and safety, risk assessment, child protection, etc.

Playing



Male, female, juniors, mini, coaches, referees, development and education, recruitment, competition, fixtures, disability, etc.

Social



Community involvement/partnership, school, university and college links, events, bar, enjoyment, etc.

How to produce a business plan

Get the right people involved

Definitions:

Business (development) plan: a medium/long term plan (three to five years). This focuses on the club's 'vision' for the future (i.e. where you want to be).

Business (action) plan: a short term plan (one year). This prioritises the short term actions required to get the club on the right path to achieving the vision.

The most challenging part of business planning is that it takes time. A well thought through and realistic plan will save time in the long term, as effort and resources will be targeted more effectively. The process itself is as important as the final document. There is no right or wrong way of starting and producing a plan, however, there are two key elements that are crucial to getting started - time and people.

In order to provide clear leadership, someone should be appointed as co-ordinator for the plan. The views of all sections of the club must be reflected within the plan in order to get a club-wide view and represent all the interests of the club.

However, it is recommended that a small working group representing these sections is identified to carry out the necessary paperwork and action points. It is important that the whole club own not only the process but the final document produced. External people can assist in this process, such as Rugby Development Officers, Local Authority Sports Development Officers, but they should not lead it.

Business planning can be split into five key areas:

1. History and heritage - Where have we come from?

It is useful at the start of the process to look back over the club history and to capture the nature of the club. A review of the previous five to ten years will set the current process in context, in the terms of where you have come from.

2. The plan - How will they get there?

The plan will identify how the club will work towards the club's vision and achieving its objectives. Each objective will need to be broken down into a number of specific targets to be achieved within the first year (action plan) and proposed objectives for future years (development plan).

3. The vision - Where do we want to be?

A document will begin to emerge, which includes the following:

- Brief history of the club
- Where we are now (state of the club)
- A SWOT analysis
- Where do we want to be (a vision for the future)
- The objectives that need to be realised for success
- The targets to get us there

In order to produce an action plan/development plan, the club will need to answer the following six questions which should fall out of the information collated in areas 1 to 3:

The objective/target	What do you want to achieve?
The action(s)	How are you going to achieve it (it may take a number of actions to achieve one target/objective)?
Timescale	When are you going to achieve it?
Responsibility	Who is going to do it or lead it (this can be an outside agency, e.g. school, Rugby Development Officer or Community Rugby Coach)? This should be identified by a job title/position, e.g. Honorary Secretary not a person's name.
Cost	What will the cost be in terms of money, time, people and facilities?
Success	How do you know when you have achieved your target?

This can be viewed as a simple table:

Objective/target	Action(s)	Timescale	Responsibility	Cost	Success
What do we want to do?	How will we do it?	When do we want to do it by?	Who (nominated by person/title)?	How much will it cost?	How will we know when we have done it?

4. The audit - Where are we now?

By carrying out an audit the club can best understand its current circumstances and practices. Undertaking a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis will allow the club to identify and clarify its position. If this process is undertaken rigorously, it will provide a clear basis for setting some realistic aims for the club's future. It is important to review the club's position within its wider community. It would be worth identifying exactly what role the club currently plays and what opportunities exist to expand its position.

The vision - Where do we want to be?

Having undertaken the audit, established the club's current status (where it is now), the SWOT analysis will have identified actions and issues for the future. This will mean building on your strengths, eradicating the weaknesses, taking the opportunities and planning for the threats. This will begin to develop short (immediate action required) medium (over the next two to three years) and long term (three years plus) objectives for the club, and should now be linked back to the six key areas. It is critical that the whole club takes ownership of and responsibility for the plan, and everyone should pull in the same direction to ensure success.

5. Monitoring and evaluation - How do we review progress?

Once the action plan/development plan has been agreed and is a working document, it is important that the plan is reviewed and updated. This should take place annually. However, it is also advisable that the document forms part of the executive committee's agenda, with sub-committees reporting against their specific area of responsibility.

Monitoring and reviewing the club's progress is essential to ensure that the club continues to move forward. Provided that the targets set in the action plan are measurable, the process should be relatively simple and not too time consuming.

This is a relatively simple process for clubs to undertake, with the scope and the depth of the process dependent on the size, need and structure of an individual club. The club needs to own the process and adopt the plan at the end of the process.

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