



RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

STEPHEN BROWN
ACTING CEO

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Dear Board and Council

Steve Grainger recently circulated a note sharing news about our participation figures as measured by the latest Sport England commissioned Active People survey. Results show an upward trend for Rugby Union, reversing the decline in participation that we have experienced since 2008 with the number of adults who participate once a week having increased from 170,200 in April of this year to 178,900 now. More significantly perhaps, our quarterly figure for the period July – October 2011 is the highest it has been for four years.

Sport England has also provided a formal, qualitative assessment of the RFU's progress against the outcomes commissioned in return for the investment made during the 2009-13 funding round. As with the participation results, the feedback recognises the beneficial impact current developments are having on delivery, with the key points summarised below:

- Sport England believes the RFU is on track to achieve its revised annual and four year growth target (after a lower renegotiated target was recently agreed for the funding period);
- Whilst there is concern that the existing planning, performance management and delivery process is complicated, there is recognition that the restructure recently announced within the Development Department will help streamline and bring clarity of focus to this area;
- Sport England recognises that the RFU has had a very difficult 6 months reputationally, and that the Slaughter and May report will be challenging to implement, but can see the opportunity for productive progress looking forward;
- The appointment of five new Heads of Function has been seen as a positive development, with particular mentions given to the Head of Growth position and the integration of all education responsibilities;
- The core purpose of “strengthening our member clubs and developing rugby in the communities around them” has been acknowledged as providing clarity and consistency for the future, with the addition of the core purpose to all relevant job descriptions seen as a very progressive move;
- Progress with the investment into talent development and elite women's rugby was described as excellent, with the recent matches against New Zealand highlighting the depth and quality of women's rugby at higher performance levels;
- Finally, Sport England expressed the opinion that the new Executive Team is working well, with a 'one organisation' culture being instilled across the RFU.

I hope you will agree with me that the above is a helpful third party evaluation of the excellent work currently being carried out. I know that Steve, Rosie and their teams will move into 2012 determined to continue along this path.

With best wishes

Steve Brown