

What's happening at the Rugby Club ?

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1. **How is the Club coping ?**

Like most businesses, the Club has experienced significant financial impact from the pandemic : the loss of a month's rugby which included two fully-booked sponsorship Saturday fixtures and a Women's semi-final; cancellation of fund-raisers like the Mini/Junior Festival and Golf Day; and events booked at the Club during the summer. This has been mitigated by government support through grants coordinated by East Riding of Yorkshire Council, and the staff furlough scheme.

Since the beginning of April, Hull & East Yorkshire Smile Foundation has been using the clubhouse to support their food bank hub. From July, Humberside Police hope to restart holding their Speed Awareness Courses in the Club (if regulations permit).

We were in a financially stable position when the crisis started, and cut costs where we could – we placed all staff at the club on furlough, apart from Veronica in the office, groundsman Nigel and housekeeper Richard.

On balance, we are bearing up well so far and looking forward to getting back to providing sport for our community as soon as it is safe.

2. **Senior Rugby : Plans for return to competitive playing**

The RFU has published adapted community competition plans for adult and age grade rugby in the 2020/21 season, to allow for three date windows depending on progress against the risks of Covid-19. You can read the full announcement on the RFU web page at

englandrugby.com/news/article/return-to-competitive-playing-for-202021-season

It refers to the Return to Rugby Roadmap, which can be seen here :

englandrugby.com/news/article/return-to-community-rugby-roadmap

It seems likely that the 'windows' are for a start between the :

- start of September and end of October
- start of November and end of December
- start of January and end of the season

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The models vary according to league size and offer flexibility to manage any potential Covid-19 interruptions, with the season able to be extended to the end of May if it helps support delivery of a meaningful competition. They all involve splitting each league in two, to give at least 12 fixtures. If conditions allow, teams will then play teams in the other half.

3. Age Grade Rugby

The start of the season will be dictated by reaching stage F in the Return to Rugby Roadmap referred to above. The aim is to maximise participation and retain as many current age grade players of all ages and levels as possible. As with the adult game, in the event of a delayed start to the season, the season can be extended to the end of May.

4. Annual General Meeting

The Executive Committee met virtually on Tuesday, 16 June via Zoom – a first for many of the committee – to discuss the club's plans in the light of the ongoing pandemic and for the 2020-21 season.

This included discussion about how and when we might be able to hold the AGM, originally planned for Tuesday, 14 July. Although it seemed likely that the government would relax social distancing restrictions before then, the Executive took the decision, out of an abundance of caution for the health of our more vulnerable members, to postpone the meeting.

We will take a decision on when to hold the meeting once the risks seem more manageable, and Dominic Thompson would welcome your thoughts on how and when to hold it.

The AGM is traditionally when subs for the coming season, and the new President and Senior Vice President, are agreed – these decisions have been deferred until we have better clarity on when the season will be able to start.

5. Coaching Team

'Bash' and 'Coops' have been hard at work securing a top-class coaching setup and exciting squad. Kyle Dench is leaving his role as backs coach, moving to Otley to become their coach. Taking his place is another former Driffield back, Karl Birch, who returns to where he started in senior rugby. He played at 10 for numerous seasons before moving to Hull Ionians, and returns to us for his coaching debut.

Another addition, and a significant boost to the 1st XV squad, is the return of Ed Falkingham as forwards coach / player. Ed, like Karl, started his senior rugby at Driffield, helping us win promotion out of Yorkshire One. After a year in Australia playing for Southern Districts 1st Grade, in the process playing and winning the Shute final out there, he returned to play for Doncaster Knights in the Championship. However, injury hit in the pre-season, which meant he missed his chance. Ed went to Hull Ionians on loan for the remainder of that season, before making it permanent that summer. He has spent the last three seasons at Ionians, and became one of the first names on their team sheet.

Richard Mitchell-Williams continues as 1st XV coach and Stuart Cooper as Director of Rugby.

Chris Young remains as 2nd XV coach, with Alex Piercy helping him.

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6. Captains

- 1st XV – Rob Mewburn will continue as skipper, with Matthew Jenkinson as Vice-Captain
- 2nd XV – Sam Parker stands down, and a decision on a replacement will be made in the coming weeks
- 3rd XV – Rob Norman will once again look after the victorious Cents
- 4th XV – Pat Kneeshaw is standing down, and his role taken by Hugh Boughton
- Ladies XV – Lucy Grantham continues in the role

7. Chairman's Award 2020

Our Ladies XV is a finalist in the Team of the Year category of these annual awards, and will find out at the end of July if they are the winners.

8. International / Six Nations tickets

It seems probable that it will be some time before Twickenham, and other major stadiums, will be able to have full stadiums. As there is likely to be a dramatic reduction in the number of tickets available for each game, the RFU Council has taken the decision to introduce changes to the international ticket allocation process for the 2020/21 season.

The RFU is under extreme financial pressure, with an anticipated loss of £85m if the four planned Autumn Internationals are not played in front of a full stadium. The RFU Council has agreed to temporarily suspend the current ticket distribution policy and entitlements and adopt an income-focused approach by fulfilling contracted ticket groups, wherever possible, for the 2020/21 season only. They anticipate that, when a capacity of 50,000 is allowed, they will return to a proportionate allocation system.

In summary, there will be much fewer tickets available to club members this season.

9. Post Covid-19 law variation options announced by World Rugby

World Rugby has approved 10 optional domestic law trials, designed to reduce COVID-19 transmission risk if required. These are temporary measures to be used as the game re-starts, and it will be up to each individual union whether they choose to bring these Laws into play or not, so there may well be differences between the home unions!

Unions can apply to implement one or more of the temporary law amendments as domestic trials at elite or community levels on a needs-basis and we are waiting to see if England RFU adopts them. You can read about them at [world.rugby/news/56988](https://www.world.rugby/news/56988)

World Rugby has also announced that it will no longer be possible to score a try by grounding the ball against the post protector.

Stay Safe

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