

# KENT COUNTY RFU INFORMATION SENDOUT OCTOBER 2022



## 1. UPDATE ON ITEMS FROM CHAIR AND KENT RFU COUNCILLOR FROM THE SEPTEMBER EDITION.

### DISCIPLINE

The weekend of 22-23 October saw a rash of red cards and one case of Match Official Abuse (MOA), which is likely to cause the premature retirement of a referee.

The County made its position on MOA absolutely clear at the start of the season. Match Official abuse will not be tolerated. The Executive Committee is considering whether, like the RFU and other CBs, to publish the outcome of all disciplinary cases, and especially where Clubs and players are guilty of MOA.

### AGE-GRADE AFFILIATION

Thanks to all of those Clubs with Junior sections who have added to their Age Grade affiliations in the last 4 weeks.

As a result, Kent has now reached 9,000 affiliated players which is a figure which has passed last year's final affiliation by some 250. However, an analysis of the current position suggests that in some cases clubs have only 50% of their Age grade sections registered.

It is essential for Cup Competitions and Festivals at Mini, Midi, and Youth levels that players are affiliated. Could those responsible for this please make a final effort before Christmas to get us to a more accurate full position which we still estimate to be closer to 12, 000 players than the current 9,000.

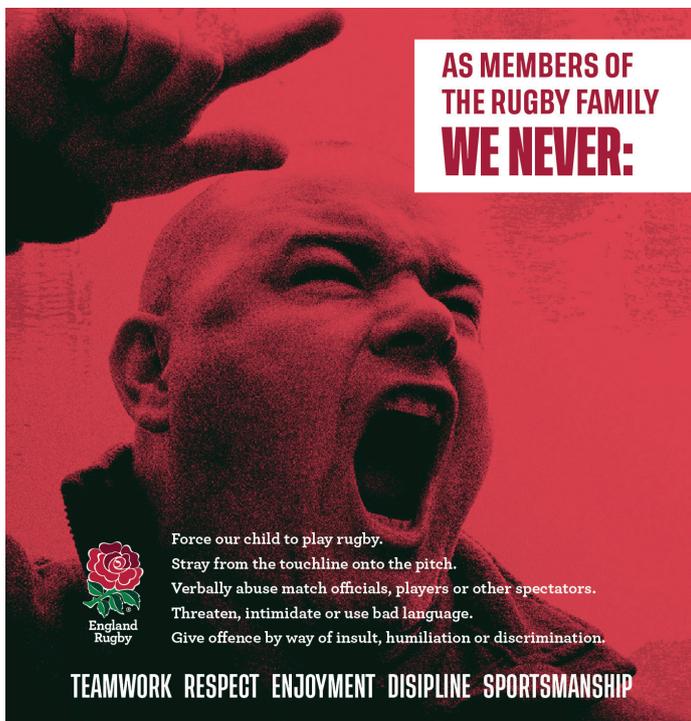
### ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND THE COST OF UTILITIES.

Across the country, some clubs are coming up with some alarming cost figures for continuing to heat and light their facilities as well as to provide warm showers and in some cases, fully floodlight their pitches.

Treasurers are encouraged, if they haven't already done so, to do a detailed analysis of how budgets for 22-23 are affected and even more importantly to do these calculations for budgets from April 2023, when any Government price support is currently being signalled to end.

Thanks to Clubs who have filled in the DCMS questionnaire which will help Govt to determine what extra support might be required across Sport in general.

We hope to receive within the next few weeks some clear advice and examples of good practice in helping to reduce energy costs, for example through solar panels, boreholes, heat pumps, insulation, etc. . In some cases, some quite staggering potential savings have or are expected to be made by clubs across the country, albeit as yet, by a minority of clubs, only.



More on this in the next bulletin as the County Executive will meet on the 1st of November and this topic will feature on the Agenda and in our discussions with the County Discipline Committee.

## MATCHES PLAYED EACH WEEK COMPARED WITH PREVIOUS SEASONS.

Our League Secretaries and the RFU are monitoring the number of games postponed, walkovers awarded or teams withdrawing from the Leagues.

Since the last bulletin, the number of matches being played at RFU league levels has improved. The position regarding Merit Tables games is, however, not as straightforward with over 30 games postponed in the Metropolitan B and C leagues already.

We are continuing to monitor carefully and through Mark Finnis – RFU Club Developer and Kevin Cope, Chair of Club Development help is being provided to clubs who are struggling weekly with the number of players they currently have.

On a more positive note, an average of 5 games a week are being organised through the County Facebook fixture exchange and a larger number of games are being played utilising 'Game-On' principles.

## 2. PROGRESS IN HELPING CLUBS TO FULFIL FIXTURES AND RECRUIT PLAYERS

Clubs throughout the country are struggling to field teams each match day; Kent sadly has one of the poorest match completion records this season. The Kent RFU & the RFU have been working in partnership for some time trying to identify where additional support might improve individual club's ability to ensure their players play rugby.

A small working group; Roger Clarke (Kent RFU Chair), Mark Finnis (RFU Club Development Officer, London & SE), Kevin Cope (Kent RFU Club Development Chair), and John Day (Kent RFU Competitions) weekly review match completion and results across our leagues. Together with information, we are actively acquiring from our ongoing local Club Cluster meetings, we build a strategy of support.

As a result, a concerning number of clubs from both the metropolitan and rural areas have been identified as needing more intensive intervention, and together we are working closely with each of these clubs to identify the problems and find ways to help them grow and play rugby. Targeted funding has been set aside, with a number of these clubs already benefiting from grants supporting advertising, local community recruitment events, improving the club welcome, joint training sessions, etc.

'Game On' remains one method by which teams that are short of players have a flexible opportunity to play matches. This is available to all teams in both the Kent Merit and RFU lowers leagues; it requires both teams to put rugby and the camaraderie of our game first and not win at all costs. NB: Four merit table matches have been completed under 'Game On' rules so far this season, ensuring eight teams got games and circa 100 players took the field.

We are in this together. Losing clubs from our game will only hurt the future of our sport, resulting in fewer playing offers and less player choice, longer match-day travel, less money in the game, and overall lower participation. Therefore, it is essential that clubs encourage growth by helping to protect playing opportunities; winning isn't the mantra of success, playing should be our celebration.

## 3. KENT PLAYING FIELDS ASSOCIATION

Clubs may not be aware that as part of their membership of Kent County RFU, we also purchase block membership of Kent County Playing Fields Association.

Clubs are able to apply for grants or loans or general advice via KCPFA and clubs should visit their website for full details of their services:

<https://www.kentpfa.org.uk/>

## 4. ARTICLES FOR IN-TOUCH

Do you have pictures and reflections about the Women's World Cup or any club news/success stories that you think will be great items for the County's bi-annual newsletter, 'In Touch' and would like your article to be part of our January/Feb 2023 publication?



If so please send written articles with any good quality (large size) images for possible inclusion in the publication by the 3rd of January 2023, to [office@kent-rugby.org](mailto:office@kent-rugby.org)

## 5. WALL OF REMEMBRANCE

A reminder about the RFU's Wall of Remembrance. This may be something you are already familiar with but might offer some comfort to some that have lost loved ones.

As and when you hear of any losses amongst the rugby community, use **this link** to help to celebrate the lives of those that have given their time to support our great sport.



## 6. CLUB RESPONSIBILITY FOR REPORTING RED CARDS

When a player receives a red card it is the responsibility of the offending club to report the red card to Kent County Discipline Secretary within 48 hrs. The county will then chase the red card report from the relevant Referee Society to get the process underway swiftly. Failure to report could significantly delay the player getting back on the field.

### Please Note

If a player receives a red card they cannot play until the KCRFU discipline committee has delivered a sanction. This applies whether the player pleads guilty or not guilty.

## 7. NEW PLAYER SUPPORT AND WELL-BEING PILOT

Player Support and Wellbeing officer/Pilot Project

In August of this year, we began a pilot project across Kent, aiming to work with 5 clubs, introducing a well-being model, focusing on mental health support and well-being for players and volunteers.

Player welfare and mental health support are a vital part of our duty of care to our players and communities, as outlined in the RFU document **Mental Wellbeing, Keeping the Rugby Community Healthy**.

Since the pilot began and we asked for expressions of interest, 10 clubs are now involved and preliminary visits have begun.

The programme will include visits to those clubs or a virtual introduction to the model via a presentation. The model can then be tailored to the club's specific needs and demographics.

The presentation will demonstrate to clubs how to set

up a confidential email facility, run it successfully and sustainably, how to access training to provide mental health first aiders in cross sections of their club (including access to free MHFA training), provide policy and guidelines, and offer signposting to other organisations and possible partnerships (such as Blokes, The Harlequins Foundation, and Mindset Sports).



Our new well-being lead, Ali Boyd (Beckenham RFC), who has set up the project, will present the model and work with the clubs to establish the programme and provide mentorship to those clubs. We will then evaluate the project with those clubs and hopefully expand it further next year.

Ali won the social inclusion award at this year's Kent Volunteer awards for the initiative, and will now be working across the county to run the pilot.

Ali's background is in 1st XV management and player support at Beckenham, and as a nurse specialist, she specialises in emotional support within the NHS cancer workforce at Chelsea and Westminster NHS FDN Trust.

We are excited to be offering this initiative across Kent, for the benefit of all our players/volunteers, from 16-seniors and beyond.

For any further questions please contact: [well-being@kent-rugby.org](mailto:well-being@kent-rugby.org)

## 8. SELECTION CRITERIA FOR REFEREES: DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The RFU is reviewing its assessment and selection criteria for referees following a complaint regarding potential barriers to progression and feedback provided to match officials, based on body size, weight, or shape. This led the RFU to commission an external investigation.

Responding to the investigation's findings, the RFU acknowledges that body shape and/or appearance should form no part of the selection criteria to appoint and develop referees. The KCRFU strongly supports the RFU's position and will work closely with the Kent Society of Rugby Football Union Referees, to ensure that any individual wishing to be a referee receives all necessary training, development and encouragement to do so.

